By Jim Kendrick

On Oct. 20, Donala Water and Sanitation District General Manager Kip Petersen presented the first draft of the 2017 Donala budget to the board, which included a Jan. 1 water rate increase of 4 percent that is estimated to increase water revenue by $108,000 and a $1 per month increase in the sewer charge that is estimated to increase water revenue by $33,276. These increases are intended to help the district’s operating and maintenance costs as has been done in the past. Director Bob Denny responded that this practice is “recommended and traditional.” Director Ken Judd said this is a “best practice.” President Dave Powell noted that property tax is now being used to buy additional renewable water rights and putting in new pipelines.

Petersen added that the district’s property tax revenue, about $1.6 million per year, is now being used to replace older pipes that have been in the ground for 50 years or more and that he plans to replace 10 percent of these pipes per year over the next decade. Office Manager Betsy Bray stated that Donala will no longer be receiving significant tap fee revenues as the district nears buildout and the board had adopted the policy of working toward funding operations and maintenance entirely with service fees five years ago.

Financial reports

Petersen noted that Donala’s budget items remain in line with the 2016 budget through the first three quarters. Summer water sales had increased due to irrigation during the recent dry spell. He expects to complete more capital projects in the fourth quarter that will be financed with a low-interest state loan. There will also be some capital projects completed in the fourth quarter at the Upper Monument Creek Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility (UMCRWWTF), which Donala operates for itself and the two co-owners, Triview and Forest Lakes Metropolitan Districts.

Of note was a brief discussion of how to build new water tanks or rebuild existing tanks if the board decides to begin reuse of its treated effluent from UMCRWWTF, which would require a new portable reuse water treatment plant and distribution piping for this reuse water supply. No decisions were made on this option.

Petersen stated that the Triview board had provided a full single-payment reimbursement of $151,943 for the emergency water Donala supplied July 4-9. (See ocn.me/v16h.htm and usgs.gov/sir/2007/5028/pdf/SIR07-5028_plate1.pdf)

Petersen stated that Yocam Construction LLC had completed rebuilding the Monument Creek streambank reinforcements next to UMCRWWTF, and the secondary access road to the facility that goes under the adjacent railroad track trestle, before the Sept. 30 deadline for winter hibernation noise restrictions for the adjacent Preble’s meadow jumping mouse habitat imposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The streambank and road were damaged by a stormwater event earlier this year. Future flood waters will flow over the reinforced banks, along the new roadway, and back into the channel.

Petersen also reported that El Paso County will not repair the adjacent portion of its Santa Fe Trail in 2016, but plans to perform this work in 2017. He noted that the county’s repairs are critical to prevent overtopping the trail and a recurrence of the damage to the double culverts under the trail that Yocam just repaired.

Operations report

Petersen said the district’s Holbein and R. Hull water treatment plants would be shut down in turn for annual cleaning and rehabilitation.

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There will be no regular board meeting in November on the board’s traditional annual long-range planning workshop with the district’s engineering and legal consultants, which will be held on Nov. 17 at 9 a.m.

The next regular board meeting will include the final 2017 budget hearing and will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Dec. 8, in the district conference room at 13850 Holbein Drive. Information: 488-3063 or www.donalawater.org.

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