

Praise for STPUD's fiscal oversight

Publisher's note: The letter writer is wrong about the rate increase. On Wednesday, all board members except Mary Lou Mosbacher were in favor of increasing sewer and water rates by 4 percent starting July 1 and to have it brought back for a formal vote. This would equate to an average increase of \$2.70/month for residential customers. The increase is not a done deal. Ratepayers will have 45 days to comment on the proposal starting April 1 after a letter is sent to them.

Letter to the publisher,

On March 3 at 1pm, I attended the South Tahoe Public Utility District Budget Workshop. For the public, this was the first time to see the 2010-2011 budget. The STPUD staff used a slide show to show every detail of the proposed budget. Two hours later I had to leave before getting a chance to speak, so I want to speak now.

The slide show started with a slide showing the proposed rate increases for some neighboring districts: Tahoe City 85 percent, El Dorado Irrigation District 18 percent, Placerville 72 percent. This is not good when the unemployment rate in our area is 17 percent. These districts are not as good as our district when it comes to prudent financial planning. STPUD has excelled in this area and as a result, our community is now the recipient of many benefits.

For example: our infrastructure is in good shape, our drinking water tastes good and it is reliable, the district has a prudent reserve for emergencies, the district will probably never need to levy a special assessment like Lukins might have to do, the district has very low employee turnover, they have a great health plan and a great retirement plan that has

attracted many high-quality employees. The district is able to deal with large disasters and long droughts, the district continues to obtain large state and federal grants, the district has won several national award for excellence, and most important of all the district has many happy customers.

Because our district has excelled at “prudent financial planning” for so many years they are now in a position to give us customers another zero percent rate increase for the second year in a row. I thank God I do not live in Tahoe City or Placerville and I thank God for the staff at our district. They have developed our district into an outstanding organization able to withstand two years of zero rate increases while continuing to maintain the highest quality of services. We owe them our deepest, most sincere expression of gratitude.

Hats off to STPUD.

Ernie Claudio, South Lake Tahoe resident and former STPUD board member