STPUD board to vote on budget, rate hikes

By Kathryn Reed

The public was all but missing from Thursday night's public hearing regarding the 2015-16 South Lake Tahoe Public Utility District meeting.

Two people attended the meeting, with one person getting a tutorial in how the district works based on the one-on-staff dialogue he had.

The board is expected to approve the budget at the May 21, 2pm meeting. Water rates are slated to go up 6.5 percent and sewer rates 6 percent. Combined this would add $14.45 to residential quarterly bills starting July 1.

Last year the board went through the Proposition 218 process that gives the public a chance to protest proposed rate increases. Not enough people protested the five-year rate increase plan that was eventually adopted. This set the maximum percentages the board may raise rates.

It was clear from the few comments that were made May 7 that the board is not in agreement about what is going on.

Board member Jim Jones would like to reopen the Proposition 218 process because he believes the rates should be raised even more in order to keep the infrastructure working.

Board member Randy Vogelgesang worries that any increase will adversely impact ratepayers, especially those on fixed incomes.

Board members Kelly Sheehan and Chris Cefalu were silent. Board member Duane Wallace was out sick.

Paul Hughes, chief financial officer, said if the rates are changed from what is on the table, then it will be up to staff to figure out what gets cut.