

Nov. 3, 2017

Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors
County staff

Ladies and gentlemen,

Within, please find comment on **Ordinance No. 2017-38**, relating to **wastewater, Item 30** on your **Tuesday, Nov. 7 agenda**.

Staff from the **Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department** has done well to reach out to business organizations, such as the **Greater Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce**, regarding the **commercial rate increase proposal** before you today. I attended the **Oct. 16 open house** regarding the case, and have had **informative correspondence** with staff afterward. I thank them.

I've learned some things, among them that you have a complex challenge before you. Please note – this is a **staff-level comment**, not one considered by the Chamber's board of directors.

Without expertise, may we observe ...

* It became clear from presentations and from the consultant's report that Pima County has a **hard time measuring the strength of wastewater** collected from **each commercial enterprise**. We don't have meters at every business in a strip mall or business park; thousands of businesses move their wastewater through a master meter, and you're about to increase their rates **regardless of their relative wastewater strength**. That's how it is, and we understand.

Moving forward, isn't there a way for Pima County **to incentivize** the installation of **more meters in new commercial complexes with multiple tenants**, allowing **more exact sampling of wastewater strength**, and resulting in **fair, appropriately assigned charges** for the many users now **lumped into the commercial billing class**? A dentist's office is not a roofing company is not a chiropractor is not a counseling center, among the uses in our own office complex. Yet we're all on one meter, of course at the landlord's prerogative.

* Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation is **aggressively trying to repay the debt we all incurred to improve and expand our system**. Expedited repayment is prudent, of course, particularly given the seeming certainty that interest rates will rise over time. If I understand correctly, this **debt should be retired by 2028**, just over 10 years from now. If, as staff indicated, this enormous physical plant improvement "*provides for the wastewater capacity needs of the community for at least 25 years into the future,*" will ratepayers begin to see a **stabilization**, or perhaps a **decrease**, in wastewater treatment bills **once debt is retired and facilities remain at adequate capacity**?

* Lastly, **it's clear you're going to increase rates**, and – while the **percentage is attention-grabbing** -- the overall dollar amount of \$6.5 million is not punitive when spread over up to 20,000 commercial accounts. Staff is recommending a **16 percent increase**, with the suggestion of a phased implementation of **8 percent a year over 2 years**, which will "*more than likely negate any future sewer user fee increase for the next few years.*" (Let's hope that's so!) It appears an **8 percent increase over 2 years** is actually a **16.64 percent increase**. If you'll raise rates by a total of 16 percent, can we adjust accordingly?

I appreciate your time and service.

Respectfully submitted,



Dave Perry
President / CEO
Greater Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce