

STPUD passes sewer-water rate increases on split vote

By Kathryn Reed

It took five motions Thursday afternoon before the board voted 3-2 to increase sewer rates 2 percent and water rates 2.5 percent.

South Tahoe Public Utility District customers can expect to see higher bills beginning July 1. Based on the quarterly billing system the South Shore district uses, the average residence will see an increase of \$2.94 on each water bill and \$1.71 for the sewer bill. This amounts to an \$18.60 increase per year for sewer and water combined.



STPUD board member Mary Lou Mosbacher is against raising fees. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Board member Mary Lou Mosbacher had her finger on the “no” button most of the day. She was against all of the ideas except the one brought forward which was to have no increase at all.

Also in the no category on the final vote was Jim Jones. He

avored a 4 percent increase on sewer and water.

Although the proposed rate increase has generated a lot of chatter, in the end only 87 of the 17,000 ratepayers protested the increase in writing. About 10 people were in the audience on May 20 – with half being staff. No one from the public spoke.

Much of Thursday's dialog among the board centered on whether the public in this economy could handle another increase of any sort and the infrastructure needs of the district.

At the May 6 budget review-rate hike meeting, it was agreed the 4 percent across the board rate hike proposed by staff would be brought back at 2 percent.

The vote of a 2 percent hike on sewer and water failed 3-2, with members Dale Rise and Chris Cefalu the two in favor of it.

Board member Eric Schafer said he would revise his vote and resubmit the motion. However, for legal reasons that is not allowed. That's how the half percent came about. It appeared to be the only way a majority would agree.

"I respect the process used today," Schafer said after all of the votes. "When you are elected, you are elected to vote and not abstain for some ridiculous reason."