STPUD locks in rates for people with water meters

By Kathryn Reed

Although the South Tahoe Public Utility District board was offered more options in how to bill metered water customers, the board on Tuesday voted unanimously to stick with the original proposal.

This means residential customers with meters will see 55 percent of their bill a fixed rate and 45 percent based on consumption at a rate of $2.05 per 100 cubic feet.

While the topic brought out the masses May 5, only two people attended the May 24 morning meeting.

However, at a different meeting that same day resident Jim Long brought up the inequity of the rate structure with state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville. Gaines was in town talking to constituents at the Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe.

Gaines said his staff will follow-up on the question to see if there is a better way for the state to be dealing with metered customers in tourist areas where consumption averages fluctuate because of the number of second homeowners.

It’s the people with large lawns who will see the most difference in their rates. Long said he is one of those people.

Dennis Cocking, spokesman for South Tahoe PUD, said staff will be looking at ways to help people who end up with exorbitant bills, but he stressed they will also have to come up with a

new landscaping design.

It’s the state of California that is mandating meters be put in. The idea is this will lower consumption. But no money was put in the bill for the installation of meters. Nor does the state allow water districts to wait to bill customers based on consumption until all meters are in by 2020. This is why STPUD customers now have different rates instead of everyone continuing on with the flat rate.

California water districts with less than 3,000 customers do not have to install meters. This means on the South Shore that Lukins, Lakeside and Tahoe Keys water customers under the current law will not have meters installed.

Nevada water customers have meters because the state said do it or lose funding.