

Changing water meters could save SLT cash

By Kathryn Reed

Water meters not being used at South Lake Tahoe fire stations are costing the city about \$30,000 a year, according to South Tahoe Public Utility District.

The 4-inch meters were put in when the stations were built; before the city was incorporated. The idea was the fire engines would be filled with water while in the bay at the station. That doesn't happen. Firefighters tap hydrants for water.

The larger the meter, the higher the price. If the city were to downsize to 1-inch meters, that is where the savings could come from. According to STPUD, this is a relatively easy procedure that any plumber in town should be able to do.

City Manager Nancy Kerry was not aware of the meter issue until *Lake Tahoe News* called.

"They have never told us there was a potential for saving money on any kind of metering," Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The city and STPUD have had a less than friendly relationship for a couple years. In part it has to do with the city's thinking it should be operating the water-sewer district. It also has to do with the city's now paying about \$100,000 a year for water, which for most of its existence it never had to do.

In 2015, the city and South Tahoe PUD ended a multi-decade agreement that included the city's getting water for free and the district's not having to pay encroachment fees within the city right-of-way.

It was at that time when the district was researching how to go forward that it was discovered the fire stations have larger meters than what are needed based on use. But apparently no one told the city about the potential savings.

It's even a bigger waste of money at station 2 because no fire trucks are even kept there.