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Marin Water board delays rate increase a second time due to COVID-19

Citing the continued financial hardship for customers resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, Marin Water's Board of Directors voted unanimously Tuesday to defer for a second time a planned 4 percent rate increase, delaying it until April of 2021.

The board initially deferred the increase in May, moving it from July 1, 2020, to January 1, 2021. The second deferral pushes the increase back an additional three months.

"Water is an essential service, especially during this pandemic when handwashing is one of the ways to stop the virus from spreading," said Board President Jack Gibson. "We understand these are difficult financial times. People are losing jobs and are hurting. We want to do our part. We are all in this together."

The deferral also applies to other district fees, including the capital maintenance and watershed fees. Delaying the rate increase is part of a series of actions taken by the district to address the pandemic. In March, the district adopted a "no shut-off" policy for customers who were unable to pay their bills, a policy that the state later implemented in April. In addition, the district eliminated late fees for those who fall behind on their payments during the pandemic.

Deferring the increase by nine months will cost the district more than \$3 million in revenue, which will result in delays in the replacement of aging pipes and equipment, and delaying or eliminating other programs.

"It will have an impact," Gibson said. "As the state's oldest municipal water district, many of our pipes are more than 100 years old, and the treatment and delivery of safe, high-quality drinking water comes with a cost. There will be tough choices to make as we decide what we can do with the limited revenue we have. But we are an important part of this community and we have a responsibility to do what we can so that we get through this pandemic together."

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