Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board of Directors,

Because I am not sure that the technology that will be used for tonight's April 7, 2020 teleconference Board meeting will function properly for members of the public, I am hereby submitting written comments that I hope to make during the meeting tonight. I appreciate the District's compliance with County COVID-19 restriction policies to promote public health and safety.

I have asked that Consent Agenda Items #4.1, #4.3, #4.8, and #4.10 be pulled from the Consent Agenda. Ms. Olin acknowledged receipt of my request on April 6, 2020.

I respectfully ask that the Board accommodate my request.

Public Comment on the following Items:

**Item #4.1**
I respectfully ask that you reject the Draft March 3, 2020 Minutes as submitted due to lack of information regarding transparent governance.

The March 3, 2020 Board meeting was NOT recorded, according to Ms. Olin, due to technical problems. The Draft March 3, 2020 Board meeting minutes are void of any meaningful notes regarding Board responses to public comments, or even a summary of what the comments were about. Only three years ago, your Board minutes included this level of information for public benefit and Board transparency, but now do not.

When I have publicly asked your Board about re-instating substance to your minutes, the reply was that the video recordings of the Board meetings supply that detail. The absence of substance in the existing Draft March 3, 2020 minutes coupled with the lack of audio or video recording of the proceedings leaves the public essentially with no information at all about the substantial decisions your Board made that evening.

The citizens who could not attend your meeting, held on Election Night when many citizens may have been unable to physically attend and in an unorthodox location with no convenient public transportation (Cabrillo College Horticulture Building is a 1/4 mile steep walk up the hill from Soquel Drive bus stops) with NO information about your decisions during that night's meeting.

Therefore, please reject the Draft Minutes of March 3, 2020 and ask staff to include better notes of discussions that occurred that caused the Board to make critical decisions that will affect the District ratepayers and return on April 21, 2020 with the amended Draft March 3, 2020 Minutes for Board consideration and approval.

**Item #4.2**
I note that this action would re-instate the Board meeting on April 21, at which time your Board will consider approval of **ISSUANCE OF INTERIM DEBT FOR PUREWATER SOQUEL PROJECT** as well as the May 5 Budget Hearing (page 14). I respectfully request that District staff publicly notice the April 21 and May 5 Board meetings via the Soquel Creek Water District e-newsletter blasts that have been used on other occasions and inform all ratepayers regarding how to access those meetings.

I also ask that this new method of public participation in District Board meetings, observing COVID-19 restriction policies, be made available on local radio and print advertisements to increase District transparency in budget, finances and governance.
Item #4.3
I note in the Financial Director’s report that there are new rules for customer rate assistance that could offer a 35% credit directly on water bills or PG&E bills (the District's high rates comes within 29 cents of qualifying low income customers for a 50% credit) (page 16 with AB 401 report on page 19)

I respectfully request the Director of Finances to discuss these new potential rate assistance policies related to AB 401 and if the rate increases of 9% scheduled to become effective January 1, 2021 will cause the District to implement a 50% credit policy to those customers who qualify.

Item #4.4
I note that General Manager Ron Duncan submitted Purchase Order payments for three PureWater Soquel Project components, totaling $5,749,902 (page 68)

That is a tremendous amount of money that is beyond the February 29, 2020 deadline for reimbursement by State monies, as he claimed is the valid cut-off date in a sworn legal Declaration filed February 20, 2019 in Santa Cruz County Superior Court re: Case 19CV00181 proceedings.

Item #4.5
I note that the Warrants include payments:

1) Best, Best & Krieger $18,610 to oppose my Motion to Strike Costs the District demanded that I pay, a little over $2800 (page 71)

2) Many costs for the PureWater Soquel Project, which is still under legal appeal:

$391,708 to Brown & Caldwell for PureWater Soquel Project tertiary plant/injection well design (page 72)
$30,870 to ESA for environmental analysis to support PureWater Soquel Project (page 76)
$58,207 to Montgomery & Assoc. for PureWater Soquel Project injection well modelling but also work on Anti-Degradation Analysis Report (page 76)
$12,928 to Gutierrez to prepare PureWater Soquel Project grant and loan applications (page 79)
$36,515 to Hanson Bridgett for legal review of PureWater Soquel Project consultant contracts (page 80)
$5,000 to Sherman & Boone for Purchase Agreement of PureWater Soquel Project Chanticleer Site land (page 90)
$191 costs for PureWater Soquel Team interviews (page 91)
$2,063 to Tom Burns (former County Planning Director) for PureWater Soquel Project planning (page 91)
$800 to Twin Lakes Church for monthly rent of injection well site (page 92)

[A total of $536,214 for the month of February alone]

I respectfully request staff to provide a report on the Water Transfer Pilot Project status, and explain what is involved with the sampling procedures and to make publicly available any results of the lab analysis related to the costs below:

3) $2,200 to Miles Clifford Farmer for water sampling services of the pre-1914 water transfer purchase (page 83)
   $11,520 to Monterey Bay Analytical to test water of pre-1914 water transfer purchased water (page 84)
   $28,613 to Santa Cruz City for the pre-1914 water transfer purchase (page 89)

4) I respectfully request that staff provide the number of customers who have required the District to pay for legal services due to late bill payments, if not now, to include this in the May 5 Budget Session and Rate Review presentation. Will the District cease this type of legal action against customers now, even if they do not request the abeyance?
   $6,170 to Vermyden & Maddux legal services for customer late bill payments ($425 late fees and $5,745 legal services) (page 93)

5) I note that the District paid $10,000 to Corona to figure out the ammonia problem at O'Neil Ranch Well
I respectfully request that staff provide a status report on the continuing problem of ammonia plaguing the O'Neill Ranch Well, and ask the Board to formally consider using the O'Neil Ranch Well as a recharge well rather than production well.

**Item 4.8**
I am baffled that this item is on the Consent Agenda!
Approval of Stage 3 Water Emergency without charging emergency rates (page 114) Note that on the bottom of page 114, staff states: "Currently, there is no reduction in production capacity, so an evaluation of this trigger condition is no applicable."

I want to draw special attention to the graph on page 116 showing cumulative rainfall is approaching Stage 1 and not an emergency. (you can find the criteria for different stages of water shortage on page 120)

Also at the bottom of page 116, it states "As described in the 2019 Annual Report by Montgomery & Assoc., there has been an improvement in groundwater conditions based on rising groundwater levels in the Basin in Water Year 2019 when compared to conditions shown in the GSP based on Water Years 2016 and 2017. These improvements are attributed to: 1) lower water consumption and thus, lower groundwater pumping over the past five years; 2) Water Year 2019 is classified as a wet year, which is the second wet year in three years; and 3) pilot tests that provided surface water from outside of the Basin into the Basin as groundwater recharge and for in-lieu use to reduce groundwater pumping."

I am delighted to see that staff and Montgomery & Associates consultants are recognizing the significant value of the Surface Water Pilot Project with the City of Santa Cruz and that if your Board takes decisive action to extend the agreement with the City, as well as pursue Temporary Urgent Water Rights for water from the San Lorenzo River with the State Water Boards, as you have been advised you can do by County Water Resources Director Mr. John Ricker, in 2014, the PureWater Soquel Project would not be necessary. Your ratepayers would be relieved of the tremendous debt burden they now face, and energy-dependency would remain nearly constant with current demands. That would make your District operation much more sustainable in the future.

**ITEM 4.10**
I note that this would grant Ron Duncan broad decision and policy-making powers under current State of Emergency...this is concerning. If the Board cannot meet, the President & Vice-President can make full decision for the Board. (page 125)

This action merits better public discussion and should be delayed until the April 21, 2020 meeting.

**Item 7.2** Changes to meetings re: COVID-19.
I respectfully request that the Board deny this as proposed, but only allow REPAIRS of existing infrastructure to qualify as "Essential". This is more in compliance with the Santa Cruz County COVID-19 restrictions, defining "essential" infrastructure projects as repairs and necessary to support public health and safety concerns. I feel that the General Manager's definition of "essential" future projects would be focused on ensuring the PureWater Soquel Project moves forward, even though it does NOT meet the definition of the County and State's interpretation.

I am concerned that these large PureWater Soquel Project contracts will necessitate importing workers from out of Santa Cruz County, and thereby promote the increase of potentially placing Santa Cruz County residents AT RISK OF INCREASED INFECTION of the COVID-19 problem.

"Given the fluidity of the situation and potential need for rapid response, it should be noted that the Board may act upon an item not appearing on a regular agenda upon a finding by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the
members present, or by unanimous vote (if less than two-thirds (2/3) but more than a quorum of members are present), given that there is a need for immediate action, and the need for action came to the attention of the agency after the agenda was posted. The Board can also add items in response to an emergency. (These allowances are part of the normal Brown Act rules.)

Here is what could be approved in the Resolution, and would require all PureWater Soquel Project work to keep going full-steam ahead...

"designate the District’s General Manager or designee, acting as the Director of Emergency Services, is hereby authorized to declare that any of the District’s current or future public works projects constitute an Essential Governmental Function under the terms of the County of Santa Cruz’s shelter-in-place order dated March 31, 2020 as it may be amended or any future similar order issued by a regulatory agency;"

Item 7.3 Seawater Intrusion Prevention (SWIP) Recharge Project of the Pure Water Soquel Program, CWO 20-3000, Adopt Plans and Specifications, Call for Bids and Adopt Findings of Project Substantially Complex (it begins on page 139)

The District will solicit bids until May 12, 2020 when a bid opening will take place at 2pm. The bids will be evaluated and presented to the Board for award on May 19th. Construction will begin in early June 2020 and the successful bidder will have 226 calendar days to substantially complete the project.

The Engineer’s estimate is $1,847,000
I want to register formal protest of this action.

ITEM 7.5 WATER QUALITY REPORT FOR 2019
This report results are on page 187. Why is Chromium 6 absent from the report? Your Staff and Board actions toward the public at meetings does not support the claim below:
"GET INVOLVED IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT YOUR DRINKING WATER The District encourages public participation in its decision-making processes."
(page 189)

Item 7.6

I protest this action to authorize Entering into a Professional Services Agreement for Operations and Maintenance AtRisk (OMAR) Services for Phase 1 of the Pure Water Soquel Advanced Water Purification Facility Project

The Review and Selection Committee came to a decision to recommend that the contract be awarded to Jacobs.
As this OMAR Phase 1 work includes advisement on the operability of the Treatment Facilities Project and the engineering design by the Treatment Facilities Project’s design builder, the contracting entity to provide services under this agreement is CH2M Hill Engineers, Inc., a Delaware Corporation and subsidiary of Jacobs Engineering Group.

The Consultant's long-term services contract could be for operations and maintenance of the AWPF.

Respectfully submitted,
Becky Steinbruner
831-685-2915
Dear Ms. Olin,

Thank you for acknowledging my request. I would like those Consent Items pulled and placed on the Regular Agenda because I feel there is significant information and policy-making inherent and that therefore, the items should be addressed individually for improved transparency.

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner

On Monday, April 6, 2020, 09:43:55 PM UTC, Emma Olin <emmao@soquelcreekwater.org> wrote:

Ms. Steinbruner,

We have received your email requesting that consent agenda items be removed for discussion. The Board will announce during the meeting if the items will be pulled or not. If you remember, at a previous meeting the Board requested that people indicate why they would like an item pulled.

Also a reminder, people wishing to address the Board during a Board Meeting on an item not listed on the agenda (Oral Communications – Item 5.0), or any item listed on the agenda, will need to submit a Request to Speak form (attached) to me via email (emmao@soquelcreekwater.org). Request to Speak forms must be submitted by 3 pm, on the day of the Board Meeting.

The meeting will be recorded.

Take care.
Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board of Directors,

Please pull Consent Agenda Items 4.1, 4.3, 4.8, 4.10 on the April 7, 2020 Board agenda.

Will the meeting be audio recorded for placement on the District website?

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Becky Steinbruner
April 17, 2020

Shaunda Smith
Email: backwoodslilgirl11@gmail.com

Subject: Response to Email Received April 5, 2020

Dear Shaunda Smith,

Thank You
On behalf of the Soquel Creek Water District, thank you for your email addressed to the Board of Directors. We appreciate you sharing your concerns during this unprecedented and challenging time.

District Response to COVID-19
As the Soquel Creek Water District (District) continues to monitor the outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), we first want to reassure you, and our community, that this virus is not impacting the safety of your drinking water, or our ability to supply water.

While we continue to provide safe, reliable and available water, the District has adjusted its policies to be flexible and ease the stress of this rapidly changing situation. Water service will not be terminated for nonpayment of bills due to financial difficulty directly resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. Also, customers who are facing hardships, and contact District staff and make payment arrangements, will not be charged late fees. These temporary policies will remain in effect until further notice. Customers are still responsible for their water bills, and once the current public health crisis has passed, normal policies will be restored.

For additional information on the District’s response to COVID-19, customer service and water quality, please see the District’s website: https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/news/latest-news/covid-19update
We stand with our customers and aim to do what is right.

However Still More to Do – We Stand By You
Even though we have taken the steps above, we will continue to monitor the situation and work to respond appropriately and make adjustments as the situation evolves. We believe this is key. This is an unprecedented situation that has required our community and staff to adjust our normal practices. We thank you for your patience and understanding in these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

SOQUEL CREEK WATER DISTRICT

By __________________________
Ron Duncan
General Manager
Hello. I hope this email finds you well under these circumstances. I sincerely hope that you all can help all of the soquel creek water customers during these trying times. As you are aware people are losing their jobs and our children are out of school. Days are getting scarier and more stressful then ever. Please lower your rates and help our community make it through this process and recover the tremendous losses we are experiencing. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I sincerely hope you will do the right thing.
April 17, 2020

Jane Parks-McKay and Tim McKay
Email: janerparksmckay@gmail.com

Subject: Response to Email Received April 5, 2020

Dear Ms. Jane Parks-McKay and Mr. Tim McKay,

Thank You
On behalf of the Soquel Creek Water District, thank you for your email addressed to the Board of Directors. We appreciate you sharing your concerns during this unprecedented and challenging time. Also, we recognize and appreciate all the coordination you have had with our Water Conservation Specialist, Mr. Roy Sikes, over the years to conserve water.

District Response to COVID-19
As the Soquel Creek Water District (District) continues to monitor the outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), we first want to reassure you, and our community, that this virus is not impacting the safety of your drinking water, or our ability to supply water.

While we continue to provide safe, reliable and available water, the District has adjusted its policies to be flexible and ease the stress of this rapidly changing situation. Some actions we have taken include water service will not be terminated for nonpayment of bills due to financial difficulty directly resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. Also, customers who are facing hardships, and contact District staff and make payment arrangements, will not be charged late fees. These temporary policies will remain in effect until further notice. Customers are still responsible for their water bills, and once the current public health crisis has passed, normal policies will be restored. For additional information on the District’s response to COVID-19, customer service and water quality, please see the District’s website: https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/news/latest-news/covid-19update

We stand with our customers and aim to do what is right.

However Still More to Do – We Stand By You
Even though we have taken the steps above, we will continue to monitor the situation and work to respond appropriately and make adjustments as the situation evolves. We believe this is key. This is an unprecedented situation that has required our community and staff to adjust our normal practices. We thank you for your patience and understanding in these uncertain times.

Sincerely,
SOQUEL CREEK WATER DISTRICT

By
Ron Duncan
General Manager
Hello: We wanted to say a gigantic thank you for all the work you all do, we know there have been a lot of challenges with water quantity over the years. The creative strategies being considered we appreciate it.

Let’s talk about the request we and many others are hoping that your District will give us through the Covid-19 crisis and the Sheltering in Place. Most of us are using far more water than we would like because of washing our hands. I’ve never washed my hands more ever and neither has my husband. I shudder to think how much more water we will all be using.

Is it possible to give us all a break and I’m not talking a loan. We are all trying so very hard and we know you are too.

Thanks for considering this.

Jane Parks-McKay and Tim McKay, Santa Cruz county homeowners/residents
Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board,

Below is the third and final photo of the Granite Way Well site taken from the Trout Gulch Road side of the intersection with Cathedral Drive today. Note the protruding bundle of electrical wires sticking up out of the tall weeds and that the view of the historic Hihn Apple Barn is obscured. This type and imposing height of fencing is nowhere to be found in the Aptos Village area and is completely out of character with the neighborhood. Please address this problem immediately.

Please acknowledge your receipt of this final message. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Becky Steinbruner
Dear Soquel Creek Water District,
Here is the second of three photos of the Granite Way Well site from the Cathedral Drive and Trout Gulch Road intersection, as referenced in my correspondence previous.

Please acknowledge receipt of this message. Thank you.
Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner
ITEM 5.0 - ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS
Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board,

I written your Board a number of times about the aesthetic problems at the District's Granite Way Well and most recently have pointed out the apparent fact that the District has not upheld required mitigation measures required in the 2010 Well Master Plan Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Because no one has ever responded to any of my correspondence about this issue to date, I assume that you are not aware of how the site actually looks to those in the Aptos area who are affected by the visual problem. Therefore, I am hereby sending photos taken today, April 5, 2020, of the Granite Way Well site, taken from the intersection of Cathedral Drive and Trout Gulch Road.

Note that the view of the historic Hihn Apple Barn in the background is completely obscured from public view, which violates the conditions stated in the Mitigated Negative Declaration and associated environmental review.

Also note that in the immediate foreground, to the left of the white markings painted on the sidewalk, there is a bundle of electrical wires (with red wire insulation) protruding from the ground. Are these wires live, creating a safety hazard?

Please adhere to the mitigations required and approved in the 2010 Well Master Plan for the Granite Way Well and remove the offensive and out-of-character fence from the site, replacing it with a more aesthetically-acceptable fence as Mr. Dufour assured me would occur in 2015 when the Aptos Village Project modifications were approved by the County Planning Department and Board of Supervisors. I have previously supplied your Board with that communication.

I will send two additional photos in e-mails to follow.

Please acknowledge that you have received this message and the two that will follow with additional photos of the Granite Way Well site taken today. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner
Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board,

Because the District's new Granite Way Well is so aesthetically unsightly, and is in a very high-traffic and publicly visible location, I have requested a number of times that there be landscaping to improve the site. Nothing has happened.

I have written your Board multiple times about this matter, but received no response. At your Board's March 3, 2020 meeting, I publicly asked that the District plant vines on the imposing fence around the Granite Way Well site to soften the unsightliness. Mr. Taj Dufour assured your Board that there is landscaping planned for the site.

However, in truth, it appears that NO landscape plans exist, according to Ms. Olin’s response to my Public Records Act request to view them.

The District’s Environmental impact Report (EIR) for the 2010 Well Master Plan included mitigations 3.13-2a and 3.13-2b on page 3.13-18 to address this aesthetic impact of the Granite Way Well. At that time, the well was to be located within the Aptos Village Project and near Village Drive, a much less publicly-visible location than the current site, which was approved in 2015. The new location at the intersection of Trout Gulch Road and Cathedral Drive, directly across from the Aptos Post Office, is much more visible to the public.

The District must adhere to the Mitigations included for the Project as agreed to in the 2010 Well Master Plan EIR. The design of the Granite Way Well fence violates the Mitigations 3.13-2a and 3.13.2b.

The fencing is not consistent with the character of the existing neighborhood, and significantly detracts from the nearby historic Hihn Apple Barn, which is listed as NR-3 historic status and eligible for the National Historic Registry. The SCADA antenna extending well above the unsightly fence further adds substantial degradation of the existing visual character and quality of the site and it’s surroundings, and the attached light creates a new source of glare and degradation of night time views in the area.

Once again, I ask that Soquel Creek Water District fulfill the Mitigations approved for the Project, and act as a good neighbor for the Aptos area residents and business owners. Those who must daily view the Granite Way Well and its obtrusive fence surrounded by high weeds and bundles of buried electrical wires protruding above ground deserve better.

Please address this problem as soon as possible.

Other District well sites have landscaping. Why is the Granite Way Well in the historic Aptos Village any different?

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner
3441 Redwood Drive
Aptos, CA  95003
Dear Ms. Steinbruner,

Please see attached response to your public records request dated 3-24-20.

Sincerely,

Emma Olin | Executive Assistant/Board Clerk
Soquel Creek Water District | 5180 Soquel Dr., Soquel CA 95073 | www.soquelcreekwater.org
direct 831-475-8501 x126 | main 831-475-8500

Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.
April 17, 2020

Robert Stevens
Email: bsoquel.comcast.net

Subject: Response to Letter Dated March 31, 2020

Dear Mr. Stevens,

Thank You
On behalf of the Soquel Creek Water District, thank you for your email addressed to the Board of Directors and the creative suggestions to help. Also, we want to recognize your over 40 years as a District customer. I hope we have served you well over the years and continue to do so into the future. We appreciate you sharing your concerns during this unprecedented and challenging time.

District Response to COVID-19
As the Soquel Creek Water District (District) continues to monitor the outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), we first want to reassure you, and our community, that this virus is not impacting the safety of your drinking water, or our ability to supply water.

While we continue to provide safe, reliable and available water, the District has adjusted its policies to be flexible and ease the stress of this rapidly changing situation. As you recognized in your letter, water service will not be terminated for nonpayment of bills due to financial difficulty directly resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. Also, customers who are facing hardships, and contact District staff and make payment arrangements, will not be charged late fees. These temporary policies will remain in effect until further notice. Customers are still responsible for their water bills, and once the current public health crisis has passed, normal policies will be restored. For additional information on the District’s response to COVID-19, customer service and water quality, please see the District’s website:

We stand with our customers and aim to do what is right.

Rates and Your Good Idea
Your main suggestion was that it might be beneficial if we could increase our Tier I threshold by one unit of water during the COVID crisis. While we salute your creative thought and suggestion, it is not legally feasible or otherwise. The District is constitutionally required to set rates based on the cost to provide water service under a law called Proposition 218. This law is in place to protect citizens, but it can also limit how flexible agencies can be with rate modifications despite how sympathetic we may be to the circumstances. Unless the costs to provide water decrease significantly, there are no defensible means to lower rates under Proposition 218, and in a public health emergency costs increase rather than decrease.

Water is a seriously constrained resource in our area because seawater is intruding into the underground aquifer that provides our sole source of water. We do not have enough water to meet everyone’s need, so the amount of water we can remove from the aquifer without causing further harm is evenly divided by the number of customer accounts to arrive at the Tier 1 allocation of 5.99 units of water to each household. The cost for this water is about one cent per gallon. This may not provide enough lower cost water for every household’s lifestyle, but it should provide enough water for basic public health needs such as handwashing, laundry, and dishes.
Response to Letter Dated March 31, 2020

Water use above the Tier 1 threshold is not sustainable long-term without developing an additional source for water, and development of new sources is much more expensive than the groundwater on which we have previously relied. Some households may need to utilize Tier 2 water depending on their household size, lot size, or way of life. The cost for this water is a little over four cents per gallon.

We understand there is a current acute crisis and people will need help and we are trying to balance our approach based on the chronic crisis of the critically overdrafted groundwater basin. The good news is the District is actively working to put a new water supply in place that can help us restore our aquifer and ensure we have enough water for our community for many years to come.

**However Still More to Do – We Stand By You**

Even though we have taken the steps above, we will continue to monitor the situation and work to respond appropriately and make adjustments as the situation evolves. We believe this is key. This is an unprecedented situation that has required our community and staff to adjust our normal practices. We thank you for your patience and understanding in these uncertain times.

Sincerely,
SOQUEL CREEK WATER DISTRICT

By ________________
Ron Duncan
General Manager
Soquel Creek Water District
5180 Soquel Drive
Soquel CA 95073

March 31, 2020

RE: Community Stress Amid the COVID-19 Crisis

Dear Ron Duncan, General Manager and Board Members

I first want to express that it is greatly appreciated of the current action you have taken to ease the stress during this COVID-19 situation.

- Water will not be terminated due to non-payment of customer bills.
- Providing possible payment options
- No late fees

Since we are required to “stay at home” during this crisis, we are without doubt using more water for everyday use and more importantly for sanitation reasons to stop the spread:

- Frequently washing of hands with soap and water.
- Frequent wiping and cleaning surfaces with soap and water, especially due to shortages of sanitizers.
- Keeping clothes and other household items free of virus with soap and water.

Since the forced closure of schools and non-essential businesses, they are not using as much water and some of that water is now being consumed at residences. While we completely understand our responsibility to make every effort to cut back on water usage, at this time, we should not be penalized for necessary additional water usage in our homes due to us doing our part to fight this invisible enemy.

Please consider increasing tier 1 by one unit during this pandemic. Current tiers

- Tier 1 1 unit @ $7.01
- Tier 2 1 unit @ #31.82

Increasing tier one by just 1 unit will reduce the cost to a residential customer by $24.81 a month. Many customers have very little if not zero income because of the “Stay at Home” order. This would be a temporary measure based on state and county mandates. The modification in the rate involves only one unit.

I urge the district consider this proposed change. It can make the difference of a bill being paid and not being paid, as $24.00 can be used for food and other necessities.
On a personal note, I have been a customer for over 40 years and raised my family and grandchildren, who are also still members of our community. As a customer and not just an account number, I plead for your assistance to all of your customers.

Please respond to let me know if there has been any discussion or considerations regarding this matter.

Yours truly,

Robert Stevens
Email: bssquel@comcast.net
Account Number: 04-12575-00

cc:
Dr. Bruce Daniels, President
Rachel Lather, Vice President
Dr. Tom Lahue
Carla Christensen
Dr. Bruce Jaffee
Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board,

I forgot to include, for your convenience, the link to the Twin Lakes Church Pilot Injection Well Landscape Project Specifications wherein the information I described is documented:

Please acknowledge receipt of my messages.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner

On Wednesday, March 25, 2020, 01:13:36 AM UTC, Becky Steinbruner <ki6tkb@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board of Directors,

I have written you before about questionable charges that I noted in the landscape contract for the Twin Lakes Church Pilot Injection Well Project. One was a $300 fee the District paid to arborist Nigel Belton to certify the 17 oak trees to be planted at the Well site were in good health.

Because I am a gardener, I take an interest in restorative landscape plantings, such as what Soquel Creek Water District has paid to accomplish at the Twin Lakes Church Pilot Injection Well Project. I note that the very small oak trees planted at the site are NOT 15 gallon trees, for which the ratepayers were charged $152.94 each by Ecological Concerns in the contract CWO-20-3020 awarded. At best, the trees are five-gallon nursery stock size, and certainly not worth $152.94 each.

I also have counted only 12 oak trees on the site, when the bid award included 17, for a total of $2,599.98. Where are the other five trees? Was there an adjustment to the contract price commensurate? Are the other trees being planted elsewhere on the Twin Lakes Church campus?

I would appreciate your response. I have written your Board before about this landscape project, but never received an answer. I have copied that unanswered inquiry below. I would still appreciate answers to those questions.

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner

***********************
Becky Steinbruner <ki6tkb@yahoo.com>
To:Soquel Creek Water District Board of Directors, Emma Olin
Cc:Becky Steinbruner
Sat, Oct 12, 2019 at 9:12 PM

Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board of Directors,

Because I am a gardener, I wanted to see what the Twin Lakes Church Well site landscape plan looked like. The landscape plan included in the bidding information on your website is difficult to read on a screen, but I noted that there are a large number of trees and plants listed for planting on the relatively small highly-disturbed Twin Lakes Church Well site and extend beyond the actual project area.

Plan: https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/sites/default/files/projects/project-plans/Landscape_Plans.pdf

The Project description states additional work planting 153 native shrubs at the Twin Lakes Church site. The planting list totals 170 plants. There is also a two-year maintenance agreement, but only for 14 oak trees; the planting list includes 17 oak trees. Please explain these discrepancies.

Many of the plants are NOT native shrubs, such as the 49 Fortnight lilies and the 14 Australian Fuchsias. These plants also have full-sun requirements, so I am wondering if the 100% success rate after five years, as is the requirement stated in the Project's MMRP, will be able to be attained? Please explain.

How did the District select Mr. Gregory Lewis, the landscape designer, to create the landscape and irrigation plan for the site? Was this work put out to bid or does Mr. Lewis do other work for the District at facility improvement sites and is therefore already on contract? Please explain.

Also, I am aware that part of the Twin Lakes Church new development nearby that is described as a coffee house also includes expansion of the Twin Lakes Church School athletic field near the Well site. Construction of the associated retaining wall could begin next year when the development, according to signs on the site, are to take place. The landscape plan for the Well seems to include planting and irrigation to an area that could be disturbed by the construction of the athletic field expansion retaining wall. How will this affect the landscaping at the Twin Lakes Church Well? Please explain.

Whatsmore, I find it very unusual that Nigel Belton, the arborist contracted by the District, is required to inspect the nursery stock chosen by the bid-award contractor to ensure acceptable quality of stock is used. That the District is paying Mr. Belton $300 (noted in the September warrants for consultation work at TLC) is an unusual and excessive payment for a publicly-funded project. Please explain this requirement.

I note that the landscape irrigation plan intends the irrigation source water to be recycled water, and that Mr. Lewis used language templates from Scotts Valley Water District regarding the matter. If the PureWater Soquel Project is built, and the Twin Lakes Church Recharge Well is used as one of the three injection well sites, that recycled water would not be available for irrigation at the Twin Lakes Well landscaped area until after 2023. Will there be a separate irrigation water meter installed with the landscape plan implementation to accommodate the landscape's irrigation requirement? Who will pay for the cost of this irrigation water and at what fee structure rate? Please explain.

Finally, I am curious about the power source for the drip irrigation timer that is required for the Well landscape plan. There does not appear to be an electrical outlet in the area, with the exception of the adjacent parking lot lights. How will this requirement be accommodated? Please explain.

In closing, I still find it very disappointing that the District chose to construct the injection well at this location when it could have done so on the Cabrillo College campus, directly across Cabrillo College Drive from the Twin Lakes Church injection well, and would not have had to remove so many healthy oak trees that were known habitat for endangered bat species.

Constructing the well on Cabrillo College property would also have provided the opportunity for the District to supply the public College with free irrigation water for 50
years, rather than using State Prop. 1 grant money to provide this generous gift to Twin Lakes Church, a private religious entity. Gifting 3.5 AcreFeet/Year of irrigation water to Cabrillo College instead would also have allowed the College to decrease pumping from their three large private wells that currently supply irrigation water to their extensive athletic fields, and thereby could have helped support sustainable groundwater levels in the Midcounty Groundwater Basin.

Please explain why the District chose to construct the injection well at the Twin Lakes Church site instead of the Cabrillo College site adjacent that inherently would have caused much less environmental damage.

Please respond in writing. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner

Becky Steinbruner <ki6tkb@yahoo.com>
To:Soquel Creek Water District Board of Directors, Emma Olin
Cc: Ron Duncan, Steven Nascimento, tricia.carter@waterboards.ca.gov, Robert@Waterboards Reeves

Thu, Nov 7, 2019 at 6:40 PM

Dear Board of Directors,

At the November 5, 2019 Board Meeting, I presented a copy of information detailing the arborist’s recommendation for planting oak trees at Twin Lakes Baptist Church at the District’s Pilot Injection site for PureWater Soquel Project, but also other areas of the Church campus. I publicly asked the question about whether it is allowed to use public Prop. 1 Grant money for landscaping at the Church property in areas not associated with the PureWater Soquel Project. The Twin Lakes Church SWIP injection well is funded by Prop. 1 Grant funds. Your Board did not respond but General Manager Ron Duncan did, saying I had stated misinformation about the landscaping being funded by public money. He did not clarify the funding source.

At the end of the meeting, I asked Mr. Duncan about the funding source for the landscaping at the Injection Well site, but he refused to answer, simply stating that I had to leave the room for Closed Session deliberation. I did so.

However, the question remains: What is the funding source for the landscaping at the Twin Lakes Church SWIP Pilot Injection Well site? Also, please answer my question about why the District would pay to plant Oak trees in other areas of the Twin Lakes Church campus? If there are tree mitigations at other sites, as the arborist’s recommendations allude, why isn’t the District planting the trees at those sites, such as at the O’Neill Ranch Well and Granite Way Well, where the impacts have occurred?

Also, no one from the District has yet responded to my written correspondence in your October 15, 2019 Board packet regarding the Twin Lakes Church landscape bid, which requires a $300 payment to arborist Nigel Belton to simply inspect the oak trees that the landscape contractor purchases for planting at the site. I again asked about this very unusual requirement during public testimony at your November 5, 2019 meeting, but received no response from either your Board or staff.

I look forward to your response in writing. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner
Dear Soquel Creek Water District Board and Staff,

Today, I received a notice from the small private water company that serves my community. This little company struggles yet in the face of the economic hardships of the coronavirus orders, the owners are offering financial relief to customers who are suffering.

I have copied the text of the message below so that you may see what other water companies in the area are doing to help customers. I sincerely hope that Soquel Creek Water District will follow this kind course of action, given the District is much larger and more readily able to absorb the financial impacts of such an offer.

Please extend rate relief to District customers.

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner

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**Important Information**

**FROM PURESOURCE WATER**

*Serving Redwood Drive, Forest Park Lane, and Pacific Heights Drive*

**PureSource Water’s Response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Crisis**

At PureSource Water (PSW) our first priority is to provide safe and reliable water to you, our Customers. PSW provides an essential service to our community. We want to assure you that we have been closely monitoring the situation with COVID-19.

Please know that the water delivered by PSW is safe and meets all current federal and state drinking water requirements. You can continue to use and drink water from your tap as usual, as COVID-19 is not present in drinking water supplies.

To ease the stress of this rapidly changing situation, *effective immediately, water service will not be terminated for nonpayment of customer bills due to financial difficulty directly resulting from the current COVID-19 crisis*. In addition, *Customers who are facing these hardships, and contact us to make payment arrangements, will not be charged late fees. These temporary policies will remain in effect until at least June 1, 2020. Customers are still responsible for their water bills, and once the current public health crisis has passed, normal policies will be restored*.

For those Customers not struggling financially as a result of COVID-19, your continued prompt payments will help minimize the impact on our tiny water utility. As always, if you are having difficulty paying your water bill, please contact us at (831) 688-8476.
or accounts@psh2o.com.

Sincerely,
Martin and Jennifer
Dear Board of Directors,

Given the current Santa Cruz County Health Officer mandates for shelter-in-place, and the inherent economic crisis that the order is causing, will the Soquel Creek Water District provide any relief at all to ratepayers for hardships in paying their water bills?

I recall that at a past Board meeting, Ms. Leslie Strohm, District Financial Director, described her investigation into a possible partnership with the PG&E CARE assistance program and that Soquel Creek Water District customers could possibly obtain extra discounts on their power bill that could then, in theory, be applied to their District water bill. I have not heard any follow-up reports at Board meetings about this approach.

However, given that the Board is scheduled to review Emergency Water Rates at the April 7, 2020 Board meeting, it would be an appropriate time for Ms. Strohm to provide an update for such economic assistance approaches. Given the economic hardship imposed by the County’s March 16, 2020 Orders to shelter in place, your discussion of ratepayer relief would be indeed timely.

Please place the issue of possible economic assistance to low-income District ratepayers on the April 7, 2020 agenda for public discussion. I noted at the March 11, 2020 Coastal Commission hearing for the PureWater Soquel Project consolidated permit that Commissioner Rice asked about financial assistance for the District’s customers who are struggling with the rate increases imposed to pay for the Project. I remind the Board that you have approved annual rate increases of 9% annually for the next three years, and possibly 8% annual increases for another two to three years following.

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner
Dear Mr. Duncan and Board of Directors,

The President today declared a National State of Emergency regarding the COVID-19 problem, and the County Board of Supervisors declared a local emergency on Tuesday, March 10.

The common advice to the public is to increase the duration and frequency of handwashing to prevent the spread of the virus. This will cause water use in many family households in your District to increase water usage and possibly elevate their rates to the higher Tier 2 rate. This could cause financial hardship.

Would Soquel Creek Water District consider waiving Tier 2 water usage rates for the duration of the National and Local Emergency to promote public safety? The President today announced that all student loan payments would be waived until the pandemic is declared eradicated.

Are you willing to take bold measures to lead in promoting public health and safety? I do hope so.

Sincerely,

Becky Steinbruner
March 27, 2020

Sandi Kates
Email: sjkates@verizon.net

Subject: Response to Email Received March 13, 2020

Dear Ms. Kates,

On behalf of the Soquel Creek Water District, thank you for your email addressed to the Board of Directors. We appreciate you sharing your concerns during this unprecedented and challenging time.

District Response to COVID-19

As the Soquel Creek Water District (District) continues to monitor the outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), we want to reassure you, and our community, that this virus is not impacting the safety of your drinking water, or our ability to supply water.

While we continue to provide safe, reliable and available water, the District has adjusted its policies to be flexible and ease the stress of this rapidly changing situation. See below:

1. Water service will not be terminated for nonpayment of customer bills due to financial difficulty directly resulting from the current COVID-19 crisis.
2. Customers who are facing hardships, and contact District staff and make payment arrangements, will not be charged late fees.

These temporary policies will remain in effect until further notice. Customers are still responsible for their water bills, and once the current public health crisis has passed, normal policies will be restored.

For additional information on the District’s response to COVID-19, customer service and water quality, please see the District’s website: https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/news/latest-news/covid-19-update

District Rate Structure

I would like to take this opportunity to provide perspective and background regarding the District’s current rate structure. Rates were developed over a two-year process with public input and participation. A Water Rates Advisory Committee (comprised of District customers, board members and staff) was formed to assist with the evaluation of rate alternatives and make recommendations. After the committee held nineteen public meetings between May 2017 and December 2018, a two-tier rate structure was approved in February 2019. The two-tier rate structure is based on sustainable water use per household, and the breakpoint for the second tier (6 hundred cubic feet or 4,488 gallons), represents water consumption above the sustainable beneficial use per household. Due to the State designation of our groundwater basin being in critical overdraft and the presence of seawater contamination, unsustainable water usage is billed at a higher rate.

Since our rate structure is based on encouraging people to use water within our sustainable groundwater limits, you will see your bill significantly decrease if you are able to use within those limits. Typically, high water use stems from outdoor irrigation. If you are interested in ways to conserve water (indoor and outdoor), then I encourage you to investigate our robust rebate program and review on how your usage changes during the irrigation season. Our Conservation Specialist is also available for personalized consultation – at no charge. Our rebate program is available at https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/conserving-water/rebates.
Most residential customers right now, with the shelter in-place order in effect, should still be within the Tier 1 rate, which is less than 1 cent a gallon; if water consumption goes into Tier 2, this will be 4 cents a gallon. The District has instituted temporary policies (see above) to help those who are struggling financially during this time due to COVID-19.

Finally, you indicate in your email that the District "has the highest fees;" however, enclosed is a “Monthly Water Bill Comparison.”

This is an unprecedented situation that has required our community and staff to adjust our normal practices. We thank you for your patience and understanding in these uncertain times.

Sincerely,
SOQUEL CREEK WATER DISTRICT

By ____________________________
Ron Duncan
General Manager

Enclosure - Monthly Water Bill Comparison
Monthly Water Bill Comparison – Using 6 units 5/8” residential meter
From: Sjkates
To: bod
Subject: Lower water rates for extra use during corona virus pandemic
Date: Friday, March 13, 2020 11:46:51 AM

In lieu of the recent corona virus pandemic, could we PLEASE issue a break on fees for California residents (especially those of us in the Soquel Water District which has the highest fees). I think it is very important that the residents be focused on washing their hands more frequently, washing their clothes more frequently and on the sanitize option or with hot water and keeping things in their home generally cleaner. Those people on a budget will be more worried about the super high water fees and might be skimping on hygiene and cleanliness. Let’s be proactive! Let’s be the leader in the nation to put this into action. Be a hero! My husband has to fly a lot. He flies out of the Southwest Terminal at San Jose International, where 3 TSA gents have tested positive for Corona Virus. When he left last Sunday, I washed the sheets on the sanitize setting and I sanitized the floors and washed his clothes he was wearing on the plane in hot water. I should not be penalized with over usage fees for trying to keep myself and others from getting sick. The residents in Santa Cruz County take water conservation to extremes. One woman at the hair salon recently bragged that she hadn’t washed her hair in a week because she was doing her part to save water. Gross. I can totally see this becoming a problem in Santa Cruz with the Corona Virus spreading because the people here don’t want to use any water. We need to be on top of this!

Regards,
Sandi Kates
Aptos

Sent from my iPad
Dear Ms. Olin,

Thank you for your reply. It is unfortunate that a Board meeting involving such critical decisions and approvals of the PureWater Soquel Project Design/Build contract are not available to the public. Thank you for the link to the announcement, however I do not see any notation on the website under "Board Meetings and Standing Committee Meetings", where many members of the public look for your Board's proceedings.  [https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/who-we-are/board-meetings-standing-committees](https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/who-we-are/board-meetings-standing-committees)

Did any portion of the meeting at all get recorded? I remember seeing staff go to the camera/tablet video recording station a couple of times during the meeting to check on something. I wonder if the problem was perhaps related to when Ms. Flock unplugged the electricity to the microphone when I was speaking about Mr. Duncan's February 20, 2019 legal declaration regarding PureWater Soquel Project urgency?

Will you provide more complete minutes of that meeting to better reflect the discussion and public comments?

Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, 03:38:23 PM UTC, Emma Olin <emmao@soquelcreekwater.org> wrote:

Ms. Steinbruner,

The March 3, 2020 Board Meeting video is not available due to unanticipated technological difficulties while filming at the at the Cabrillo Horticulture Building.

We have updated our website to inform the public that the March 3, 2020 Board Meeting video is not available: [https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/events/board-meeting-2020-03-04-020000](https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/events/board-meeting-2020-03-04-020000)

I apologize for any inconvenience.

Emma Olin | Executive Assistant/Board Clerk
Soquel Creek Water District | 5180 Soquel Dr., Soquel CA 95073 | [www.soquelcreekwater.org](http://www.soquelcreekwater.org)
direct 831-475-8501 x126 | main 831-475-8500
[Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.](#)
Dear Ms. Olin,

I note that the video of the March 3, 2020 Soquel Creek Water District Board meeting, held at the Cabrillo College Horticulture classroom on Election Night, is not yet available on the District website. When will members of the public be able to review that video?

The Board made a number of significant decisions that evening, including approval of over $6 Million for the PureWater Soquel Project Design/Build Phase 1 contract, and approving another staff trip to Washington, D.C. in June, 2020.

Thank you for recording the meeting.

Sincerely,

Becky Steinbruner