Some Insight On
Why Woodland's Water & Sewer Rates Have Increased

In April 2005, the City Council approved a phased increase in water and sewer rates, resulting in a combined monthly rate of $61.80 for a single family home on a medium sized lot, effective July 1, 2008. (The combined rate for water and sewer was $34.79 a month for a similar home in April 2005.) Thereafter, rates are to be adjusted annually for inflation, based on the Construction Cost Index. Rates for other property types were adjusted accordingly. (Note: residential properties are billed every other month, so the bi-monthly bill is twice the amount stated above.)

The water and sewer rate increases are necessary to comply with regulatory requirements, ensuring system reliability, and to maintain proper performance of these utilities. These systems provide service to over 14,000 properties through over 500 miles of pipe lines, some of which are over 100 years old. It is important to remember that your utility rates support your water and sewer systems and not new development. Development is required to pay for the construction of all new utility systems, including new wells and wastewater treatment plant expansions, necessitated by development. The utility staff (both water and sewer) is now required to meet state certification requirements to work on the system, necessitating additional training and increasing the competition for certified staff.

In general, your sewer rates pay for many services including:

- Collection and treatment of wastewater from homes and businesses
- Operation and maintenance of pipes, pumps, and the treatment plant
- Insuring compliance with ever changing state and federal regulatory demands for water and sewer system operations, and for wastewater treatment.

Your water rates pay for many services including:

- Maintaining wells that provide drinking water, water storage, and general water system maintenance (e.g., replacing water mains, pumps, valves, fire hydrants and other infrastructure)
- System upgrades and processes necessary to meet new state and federal regulations
- Increasing construction, operation, and maintenance costs.

A few highlights of how your rates are being utilized are listed below.

SEWER

The new wastewater rates are key to a $32 million expansion and upgrade project, scheduled for completion in the summer of 2007, $10.5 million of which was rate based and the rest charged to development fees. The project included membrane filtration as mandated by the State of California, and flood protection for the plant. We have also removed the chlorination gas disinfection system and installed a safer and more environmentally friendly ultraviolet light disinfection system. These changes have significantly higher operating cost associated with them but also provide significant benefits for the environment.

The City has increased its efforts to enhance system reliability to prevent sewer blockages or failures, as required by a new state mandated Sanitary Sewer Management Plan. We now clean

and video inspect the sewer system on a five year cycle, and are able to schedule repairs and maintenance based on inspections instead of line failures/sewer overflows. For the inspection of the sewer system, the City purchased two high velocity water jet/vacuum cleaner trucks and the closed circuit video equipment/van, which are used on a year-round basis for both inspections and repairs. This system uses high pressure water to clean the grease buildup and to eliminate tree roots inside the pipelines. The high velocity vacuum capability increases productivity in cleaning manholes, spill cleanup, and spot excavations for repairs. Major repair/rehabilitation projects are scheduled on a more frequent basis. Additional staff has been hired for cleaning/inspection work, and to handle the increased repair workload.

WATER

The City operates 20 wells that produce 5 billion gallons of safe drinking water each year to the City of Woodland. Two employees inspect and test these wells to keep the system operational and fully compliant with federal and state water quality requirements.

The City now has an improved systematic flushing program. Two employees are flushing the water mains on a year round basis to remove sediment and improve water quality to our customers. Furthermore, this program provides a condition assessment on all fire hydrants and generates repair orders as problems are discovered.

To insure that we can quickly close down and isolate failed water pipe segments for repair, it is important that the distribution valves are periodically operated and checked. This program is now underway. Two employees are dedicated to exercising and evaluating every valve in the water distribution system. Valves needing work are scheduled for repair or replacement by the in-house crews.

As the utility systems age, major components need to be replaced. The City has performed major rehabilitation to the water distribution and sanitary sewer infrastructure in conjunction with the annual road projects that are funded with the local sales tax measures (Measure H and Measure E). In the near future it will be necessary to replace the 54-year old elevated water storage tank at Camarena Field and several wells.

Although some of the rate increase is due to inflation, the majority of the rate increase is used to improve system reliability and comply with new regulatory requirements, all of which means a better product to the customer, and reduced impacts to the environment.

On a related note, the public outreach that occurred with the April 2005 water and sewer rate increases advised of a proposed Storm Drain fee increase to $4.80 a month. The current Storm Drain rate of $0.48 per month has not changed since inception in 1994. The cost to operate the storm drain system far exceeds revenues for many of the reasons stated above. The procedural requirements for increasing Storm Drainage rates are different than the requirements for water and sewer rates, so it is being handled separately and that process has recently started.

If you have any questions, please contact Doug Baxter, Utility Infrastructure Engineering, at 661-5962.