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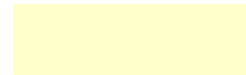
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03/27/06

**Commission meeting tonight**

Water, sewer rate hikes to be considered

NORTH PORT -- Commissioners will  
consider tonight whether to raise water and  
sewer rates.

The city's Draft Utility Water and Wastewater Rate Study will be presented tonight at the Commissioners' 6 p.m. meeting. The draft study recommends a 15 percent surcharge for utility customers who live outside North Port's city limit, as well as a bulk rate increase from \$1.90 for every 1,000 gallons to \$3.98 for every 1,000 gallons. The change would take place incrementally over a four-year period.

The draft study also advises an increase for both residential and commercial water and sewer rates. For an average utility customer who uses approximately 4,000 gallons per month, water rates would increase from \$20.56 to a proposed \$25.15 by 2007. Sewage costs would also rise, going from \$38.14 to \$40.66.

The Utility Rate Study is not yet finalized, so these changes are not definite. However, staff will recommend that commissioners approve the draft so that it can proceed to first and second readings at subsequent commission meetings.

In other business, the commission will hear the first reading of an ordinance specifically increasing the Transportation Impact Fee expenditures by \$2,000,000 and increasing the Transportation Impact Fee Fund Balance by \$2,000,000. These funds will pay for the second phase of the Sumter Boulevard widening project, from U.S. 41 to Heron Creek Boulevard.

Commissioners will also hear a presentation on a possible art exhibit at North Port High School. The presentation, entitled "Embracing Our Differences," hopes to encourage diversity and its benefits. The exhibit will be on display at the high school from mid-May through mid-June.

Other general business will include the discussion of the duties, responsibilities, and structure of the Tamiami Trail Appearance Review Board.

Commissioner Vanessa Carusone will also present a request to donate

\$1,000 to the Heron Creek Community Caring Foundation and an additional \$1,000 to the Travis Truesdale Memorial Fund.

Commissioners may also approve budgeting an additional \$500 for Veterans Services.

Consent agenda items include appointing Pat Mumper and Debbie Metzger to the Ad Hoc Art Committee and John Nolan to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Other consent items commissioners will consider are sponsoring the Eighth Annual Tree Festival, city rental of the North Port Performing Arts Center for a special commission meeting on April 25, and approval of a \$249,310 contract for Bellomo Herbert to design the Community Park and Ball Fields near Toledo Blade Boulevard.

In addition to regular business, commissioners will present certificates of appreciation to several citizens, including:


- \* William Ealahan for years of service on the Economic Development Advisory Board.
- \* Carol Ealahan for years of service on the Charter Review Advisory Board.
- \* Len Wheat for years of service on various Advisory Boards.
- \* John Kennedy for years of service on the Code Enforcement Board.

Fire Rescue and Road & Drainage Regular District meetings will begin at 4 p.m. tonight in commission chambers at City Hall, 4970 City Hall Boulevard. The regular city commission meeting will follow at 6 p.m.

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**By ANNE KLOCKENKEMPER**

Staff Writer

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