

(Donated)

# Alternate Water Plan Is Forged

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A second — and in some cases more severe — water rationing proposal for the Santa Cruz City Council to consider Tuesday was forged Friday by the city water commission during a lengthy and sometimes stormy special meeting in the city hall council chambers.

The second proposal will be submitted as an alternate to one already taken under study by the council. But in forging this alternate the commission majority said it still stands behind the first rationing proposal both as a good way to meet the current crisis and to preserve the financial integrity of the water system.

However, the commission put together in the new proposals a number of changes intended to meet objections voiced by the council last week to some of the provisions in the first proposal.

Basically, the alternate proposal would give a water ration to members of single-family, duplex and triplex households on a sliding scale, so that persons living alone won't be shorted while persons in large households will have water to spare.

On average, the ration would be a maximum of 80 gallons per person per day (it was 87 gallons per day in the first proposal) and this ration would go to all single-family, duplex and triplex dwellings. It is stressed, though, that persons living alone would get more than 80 gallons per day and that those in large households would get less on the sliding scale.

In another important change, the commission agreed to place all other multiple-dwelling units in the same category as commercial, industrial and agricultural users. And instead of trying to figure out how many persons are living in such units and basing the rationing allocation on population, the commission assigned a ration equal to 70 per cent of the water use made by the multiple-dwelling complex in 1975.

Further, the commission cut all the other users to the same ration: 70 per cent of their 1975 water use.

This change is expected to end local bickering over whether an apartment resident will get more than a single family, duplex or triplex resident.

Provisions are made for figuring out allocations for multiple-dwelling units built since the end of 1975.

The commission left unchanged, however, its original and highly controversial proposal to charge residential customers "minimum" and "maximum" rates and to boost all other rates a flat 18 cents per 100 cubic feet from the very first drop.

The minimum of 25 gallons per day would still cost, under the alternate proposal, at the rate of 38 cents per 100 cubic feet

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water department will incur a \$434,000 loss this year because of falling sales due to the shortage. It has contended several times that if the expected deficit is not made up by increased rates then the council will have to make up the deficiency from federal revenue-sharing funds or taxes or some other source.

Commissioner Arthur Hackwood several times said this decision on financing is the council's business, not the commission's. And sentiment was to leave all this to the council, if changes are wanted.

The sliding scale developed for persons in single family, duplex and triplex dwelling was adopted as follows by the commission as an alternate to its first proposal:

One person - 900 cubic feet bi-monthly, or 112 gallons per day. Second person in the household - 600 cubic feet bi-monthly, or a total of 174 gallons per day for the two. Third person in household - 500 cubic feet bi-monthly (about 62 gallons per day). Fourth and all others above four - 400 cubic feet bi-monthly per person (nearly 50 gallons per person per day).

In a special chart showing the effects of increased rates, it was indicated that the average bimonthly bill for 2400 cubic feet bimonthly for city residents is \$11.68. With maximum usage of water in a family of three under the proposed rationing ordinance, the bill would be \$13.24 bi-monthly. But if just the minimum allocation were used there would be no rate increase for customers in the single-family, duplex and triplex residences.

The commission was told that mobile home parks will be classed with apartment houses, condominiums and other multiple-dwellings as "commercial" unless the mobile homes are equipped with individual water meters.

Commissioner Mel Calender took exception with recent statements by Mayor John Mahaney and Water Director Morris Allen that the city and all its customers are not in a "panic or crisis" situation.

"This is a mistake," Calender said. "We are in a panic situation and it is time we said so."

Hackwood took sharp exception at the outset of the meeting to critical statements on the city's handling of the water shortage. He said the commission meets month after month, that the meetings are open to the public, that most meetings are unattended by the public and that "now, all of a sudden, all are becoming experts."

The council will get the new proposal Tuesday at a special hearing on the water question at 4 p.m.

Commission Chairman Jim Hammond tangled a couple of times with DePalma over the purpose and reason for the meeting.

DePalma said that all the council had asked for last Tuesday was information from which the commission had developed its first proposal. She said this request had been misunderstood.

Hammond had the meeting continued, however, so that recorded objections of the council to the first proposal could be considered and met.