

*Sentinel*

*Water Supply*

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# 20-year-old city water code may get review by commission

Santa Cruz City water commissioners may set a special meeting this month to take another look at the 20-year-old municipal code that regulates water main extensions.

Commissioners were told Monday that the cost for the 181 parcels in the city that may someday require extensions will vary from a high of \$55,650 for a parcel to \$525 for one that is within 50 feet of a main.

The average cost is \$10,972 and the total involved if all parcels develop someday would be nearly \$2 million.

The issue of the cost of extensions surfaced at the city council level this summer when a property owner complained the costs to extend a main was in the thousands of dollars.

Councilmembers sent the issue to the water commission for review.

City Water Manager Morris Allen reported to the commission that his office believes the new developer should pay all costs of extensions, since they are the ones

who benefit. He also said that the new service should in no way depreciate the existing services along the street.

Allen noted the city attorney had suggested that assessment districts could be used to spread the costs over a number of years, but Allen said he believes the benefit of that would be slight.

"Staff feels the existing policy is by far the most fair and equitable to require individuals and/or developers to pay the cost to upgrade facilities to the level of service appropriate to their needs," Allen's report stated.

It concluded, "Staff does not feel that existing customers have any obligation to pay for facilities to serve new customers, since the additional customers and facilities do not provide a substantial benefit to existing customers.

"Also, the city has an obligation to insure that the interests of existing water customers are not jeopardized in the interest of allowing additional connections to substandard mains."

In other action, the commission has indicated it will accept a five-year improvement program offered by staff.

It includes existing programs at Graham Hill plant, Tait Street intakes, instrumentation, the Beltz wells, the booster station on the Majors Creek pipeline and land purchases at Newell Creek.

Also on the list are "new needed facilities" which include Pasatiempo tank and booster station, a water quality laboratory expansion, a tank at Rolling Woods, additional water storage in Live Oak and a headquarters building at Loch Lomond.