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Montverde awaits water-plant vote

Owners of new homes, businesses may have to pay one of area's highest fees

Robert Sargent

Sentinel Staff Writer

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MONTVERDE

New residents may be forced to pay huge impact fees to cover the cost of a new water plant.

The town has operated for years with two aging water plants to serve more than 650 customers. The utility is reaching its limits, and some worry what may happen if one of the plants were to break down.

A proposed third plant would bolster the town's water system and provide utility access for hundreds more homes and businesses. Construction could cost up to \$2.4 million.

Question is, who should pay?

The Town Council is expected to vote Tuesday for what could become one of Central Florida's highest water-impact fees. New homes and businesses that connect to Montverde's utility may be forced to pay \$4,532 each to cover the cost of the new plant.

The council meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall on Sixth Street.

"People are going to have to pay for what they want," Mayor Dale Heathman said.

Montverde already has land on which to build the water plant near County Road 455 and Fosgate Road. The plant could cost \$1 million, and a new well could cost \$350,000, according to town reports.

An elevated tank to provide up to 250,000 gallons per day would cost another \$450,000. Extending water lines from the new plant, through a proposed development area and back through the town's existing utility is \$462,000. Montverde could pay \$40,000 for consultants to help get a water permit from the St. Johns River Water Management District.

The town has about 1,200 residents. It expects to add 475 homes and 55 commercial properties in the next 19 years.


Splitting the \$2.4 million for the new water plant among those new homes and businesses would create the proposed impact fee of \$4,532. The town charges \$1,800 to hook up new customers and to add a water meter on their properties.

Montverde raised water-use rates a few months ago -- an average increase of about \$5 per customer -- to cover the

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rising expense of providing water in town. Officials say another hike is needed as the utility expands.

Council member Billy Miles said the town has charged low rates for years, but the increases are needed to keep providing water.

"We've been so low," Miles said. "We've got to have water."

Montverde now has two water facilities -- a 150,000-gallon water tower and a 40,000-gallon pressurized water tank. Town officials say that if the tower site fails, they can serve current customers with the other facility.

But as the town grows, they say, there will not be enough water to go around. That makes the third water plant even more important as Montverde adds new homes.

Proposed developments include the 78-home Montverde Estates on C.R. 455 and more than 100 homes planned at the Osgood Groves site off Lake Apopka.

Robert Sargent can be reached at rsargent@orlandosentinel.com or 352-742-5909.

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