

State and Local

New rate structure to increase electric costs for CS residents

Plan intends to make all utility departments self-sufficient

By Yvonne DeGraw
Staff Writer

Changes in College Station's utility rate structure that raise residential rates are intended to make all departments — water, sewer and electric — self-sufficient and attract new business to the area.

Linda Piwonka, utilities office manager, says the 10-percent increase in water revenue and 16-percent increase in sewer revenue are the first step in a plan that should culminate in five years.

College Station City Council approved an option that lowers electric revenues by 50 percent of the increase in water and sewer revenues.

However, because electricity generates almost 86 percent of all utility revenues, electric rates won't go down 5 to 8 percent.

Instead, electric rates will decline 1.3 percent this year and will actually increase for residential users.

The increase in residential rates comes because of three goals the council had, Piwonka says.

First, they wanted to make the water and sewer departments pay for themselves.

"The water and sewer departments have been subsidized and are being subsidized by electric rates," she says.

In the late 1970s, the city decided to build a water system and a sewer treatment system, she says. To do this, the city borrowed money for at least 20 years.

An average profit of \$5.13 million

ELECTRICAL:

Average residential use: 921 Kilowatt hours		
Average commercial use:		
Small commercial - 914 kwh	\$109	\$104
Medium commercial - 14,300 kwh (53 KW)	\$1192	\$1147
Large commercial - 264,350 kwh (710 KW)	\$18,517	\$16,764

WATER:

Average residential use: 10,000 gallons	\$18	\$20
Average commercial use:		
Small commercial - 15,000 gallons	\$25	\$29
Medium commercial - 49,000 gallons	\$73	\$80
Large commercial - 450,000 gallons	\$634	\$681

SEWER:

Average residential use: Flat rate	\$10	\$11
Average commercial use:		
Small commercial - 15,000 gallons	\$15	\$18
Medium commercial - 49,000 gallons	\$25	\$51
Large commercial - 450,000 gallons	\$170	\$436

OLD RATE:

NEW RATE:

COST TO

in the electric department from 1985 to 1987 has been offset by an average loss of \$2.42 million by the water department and \$1.78 million by the sewer department.

Second, the council wanted to make customers pay rates that reflect the cost of providing the service, Piwonka says.

She says it costs more per unit to provide service to a residential customer than a commercial customer.

It will take about five years to reach this goal, she says.

The third reason is the impetus for all the changes. The council wanted to encourage businesses to locate in College Station.

"The council was very interested

in being able to be competitive," she said. "(They wanted to) keep the commercial business that they have and encourage other commercial businesses to locate here."

"The businesses look at it as an economic incentive."

A recent study comparing utility rates in 13 Texas cities with similar populations and growth patterns shows that College Station is least competitive in electric rates and most competitive in sewer rates.

The same study shows the first year's rate changes will make the city slightly more competitive in electric rates and less so in the other areas.

Piwonka says electric rates are the most important component of the

rate structure to most businesses. The plan will set the stage for a rate decrease when the contract with Gulf States Utilities expires in about five years. Piwonka says the city hopes to find a rate with lower rates at that time.

Kevin Buchman, city councilman from Texas A&M's State Government, says he supports the rate plan.

"It should benefit the students in the long run," he says. "Electricity should eventually go down if the way they plan."

He says he was most concerned about electric rates because many students live in apartments and directly pay water and sewer bills.

Group of Aggies accepts invitation to serve on Texas space commission

By Gina Goetz
Reporter

Twelve appointees, half of which are former students and former or present faculty members of Texas A&M, accepted an invitation from Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby to serve on the newly created Space Science Industry Commission to explore the existing Texas space industry.

Although the designated chairman, state Sen. J.E. "Buster" Brown, isn't an Aggie, he said the six Aggie members were not purposely chosen because of A&M's involvement in the Shuttle's research, but that it is certainly a compliment to the science-related programs at A&M. They will be assets to the commission's responsibilities, Brown said.

"We will identify issues for further development of existing industry," he said. "We want to find out the difficulties to space-related activities and make recommendations on how to deal with the restraints."

Furthermore, the commission is to identify the appropriate resources for promoting the space industry, he said.

"We want to make the public aware of what we have," Brown said. "And we hope to attract research dollars."

According to a senate resolution, the commission was established to evaluate the major factors shaping the space science industry, to determine the potential of its growth and to recommend ways of supporting existing facilities while attracting a new space science industry in Texas.

Dr. June Scobee, widow of Challenger commander Dick Scobee, was among the appointees. Scobee also is chairwoman of the board for the Challenger Center, a national space science education program developed to make space a big thing in Texas.

"I believe strongly the need for national support for the space program. To meet that end, we must begin in our own state of Texas."

Dr. June Scobee, widow of Challenger commander Dick Scobee

Oran Nicks, director of the Texas A&M University Space Research Center, said that state involvement is a top priority.

"One of our aims is to help our statewide community become more involved in a new field that helps counterbalance the losses that we've sustained," Nicks said.

Nicks said it pleases him that the commission has so many Aggies on it. And he said he thinks this indicates that A&M has played a vital role in the development and ongoing success of Texas' industry and it suggests that we will have the tal-

ent needed to make space a big thing in Texas.

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Dr. June Scobee, widow of Challenger commander Dick Scobee

Other members of the commission are Dr. Hans Mark, chairman of the University of Texas Space Services Inc.; Dr. Tom Stauter, president of the University of Houston at Clear Lake; Margaret, president of Space Industries Inc.; and state Sen. O.H. "Burr" Harris, chairman of the Senate Economic Development Committee.

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