

ANOTHER VIEW

Average Joes will pay for what chambers want
by David Klar

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Warning: By the year 2020, San Antonio Water System will have implemented a 16 percent monthly water rate increase for the next 30 years to pay for an unnecessary \$3.4 billion water pipeline.

This will be a huge burden on an already struggling middle-class household trying to make ends meet each month. This is because the chambers of commerce wish is for SAWS to exploit exorbitantly expensive water from another region instead of continuing to implement sustainable water conservation programs that reduce our yearly water consumption.

In February, the SAWS staff recommended a fiscally responsible and diversified water supply plan that will meet predicted future economic growth projections for many, many future decades. At that time it had excluded the very controversial and costly Vista Ridge pipeline but is now reconsidering it.

San Antonio will have the largest inland desalination plant in the nation, delivering 33,000 acre-feet when fully completed in 2026. We have the third-largest aquifer storage and recovery project, or ASR, in the nation, which currently holds 70,000 acre-feet of stored water and that is even after years of continued severe drought. It has the potential to store up to 200,000 acre-feet underground to meet future economic growth.

SAWS will charge high-volume water users higher rates to encourage more efficiency. We have a nationally recognized water conservation program that continues to reduce our water consumption per day per person to one of the lowest in the nation. There is even more potential to lower water consumption via our outdoor landscapes.

SAWS should increase outdoor water conservation rebate programs to require business and residents to reduce grass and install native landscapes to conserve water, just as other Southwestern cities located in semiarid climates do in a major way.

Desalination, underground water storage (ASR) and continued water conservation are the least-expensive ways to provide a sufficient water supply to meet predicted economic growth in a smart, sustainable pattern.

Finally, third-party water experts predict the proposed pipeline has a high probability of not delivering the agreed amount of water toward the last years of the 30-year contract. Additionally, the Post Oak groundwater district has indicated that it will reduce water delivery to San Antonio when water wells are affected due to excessive pumping.

So why would we build a pipeline fraught with uncertainty and which may not deliver? This proposed pipeline looks very similar to the ill-fated Applewhite project in the 1990s. Call the mayor and your City Council representative immediately and encourage them to vote "No" against the proposed expensive and unnecessary water pipeline before they vote on Thursday.

David Klar is a concerned SAWS ratepayer in District 10.