

From: B. donelle Stephens [mailto:bdonellesdrawer@yahoo.com]
Sent: Saturday, November 05, 2016 3:17 PM
To: Frevert, Kathy@Waterboards
Subject: Synopsis of letter sent earlier

November, 2016

Re: Synopsis of our letter to make the issues simple

Dear Ms. Frevert,

*There are:
191 disadvantaged homeowners who pay: \$5,289/year to have water
and sewer services which = \$1,010,199.00 paid to Napa County this
year to run the water/sewer system.*

*The national average that homeowner's spend for water and sewer
in the United States is \$474.00 per year per household.*

*The T-1 Tax that we are paying is 4% compounded interest which
means that every year the money spent for water and sewer is
increasing from this source alone which is added to our property taxes,
creating another financial burden when tax time comes.*

*Should we be paying this much? Should it cost this much to run the
water/sewer system?*

*It seems ironic that a low-income community especially is paying
such exorbitant costs for one of the necessities of life: water and sewer.*

Sincerely,

Francis Freibert
franzi@sonic.net
707-965-9210

B. Donelle Stephens
bdonellesdrawer@yahoo.com
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From: B. donelle Stephens [mailto:bdonellesdrawer@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 01, 2016 1:00 PM
To: Frevert, Kathy@Waterboards
Subject: Comments on low-income rate assistance

31 October, 2016

*Ms. Kathy Frevert
California State Water Resources Control Board*

Re: Low-income rate assistance

Dear Ms. Frevert,

Every month the 191 homeowners living in the small community, the Berryessa Estates, in Pope Valley, California, struggle for existence. The costs to meet their ever-increasing water and sewer bills which far exceed the national average, continue to escalate, with no cost-ceiling in sight.

Background:

Our water/sewer plant, the Lake Berryessa Resort Improvement District is governed by the Napa County Supervisors under the direction of a district engineer.

The Berryessa Estates qualifies as a disadvantaged community with a mean household income of \$45,000.

Our problems are manifold and intertwining. Property insurance is more expensive as we live in the highest fire risk coverage zone. Our property taxes are high because we have both the T-1 Tax and a Bond Measure added to our property tax bills which are for water and sewer .

To qualify for some grants for the LBRID the water/sewer bi-monthly, minimum, fixed rates were raised from \$359.00 to \$574.00 to show sustainability. This increase put many families over their capability to sustain themselves, causing massive foreclosures on many homeowners who had lived here 20+ years, new homes not to be built, properties not to be sold. Fewer homes create a smaller pool of rate payers in the community, creating a need to keep the water/sewer minimum rates higher to cover basic operating costs. This in effect, fuels the spiral, keeping potential buyers and builders away, keeping the rate-payer pool too small and the costs too high.

According to Value Penguin.com: "Average household budget in the U.S. in 2013: average income by household: \$63,784.00. Spent 11% of income for ALL (my emphasis) utilities and other household expenses" which was equal to \$495.00 per month.

The Berryessa Estates has been designated as a “disadvantaged” community, but here is what it costs per month, not for “all utilities AND (my emphasis) other household expenses,” but for the cost of the water/sewer alone, if the minimum is not exceeded:

Bi-monthly MINIMUM fixed-rate water/sewer bill: \$574.00 bi-monthly = \$287.00/mo.	\$287.00
Bond for improvements to system, \$711.30/yr. = \$59.27/mo.	59.27
T-1 Tax for 2016: \$874.00/yr = \$72.83/mo	<u>72.83</u>

Total MINIMAL amount per month for water/sewer :
\$419.10

Value Penguin’s assessment was based at 11% for all utilities and other household expenses on an income of \$63,784.00. The Berryessa Estates’ household median income is \$45,000. If you add the cost of the water/sewer, electricity, propane (we have only propane to heat our homes and water), trash pickup, phones, internet, TV, it would be a much larger percentage of income than the national average because of the smaller level of income.

According to an article written by Michael McDonald: October 6, 2015:

GOBankingRates.com

Here’s Why It Costs \$1,126 a Month to Maintain the Average American Home

By [Michael McDonald](#) - October 6, 2015

“The average American household spends about \$474 each year on water and sewage charges...”

Berryessa Estates homeowners are spending, at a minimum, almost \$420.00 per month which is \$5,0289.00 per year, not \$474.00 per year, for water and sewage.

And again:

Reference.com

“The average American household water bill is \$45 per month as of 2014.”

(This equals \$540.00 per year.)

Another issue needs to be dealt with, the T-1 Tax which is assessed interest by Napa County, at the rate of 4% compounded annually, placing a heavy load on our property tax bills. This year the T-1 tax amount is \$874.00. This is homeowner's money. Why are we being charged interest on our own money, especially compounded rather than simple interest. Is this amount necessary in order to run and maintain the water/sewer plant?

Other community members have questioned why Napa County did not think more progressively when renovating the LBRID. What about the utilization of gray water and incinerator toilets which might do away with the need for, or reduce the need for as many, sewer ponds? Seems that the best interests of the residents and making this community affordable to live in was not taken into account.

If California would change their gray water regulations to include kitchen and dishwasher water then we could bypass the sewer system altogether and our water bills would be less than half what they are today.

Thank you for holding this meeting and being concerned about the ability of homeowners to pay their bills and sustain themselves. Water is a precious commodity. We are thankful for Putah Creek, the wildlife and the pristine beauty of this place. We would like to see it protected and enhanced as a dwelling place not only for ourselves and our children, but for their children as well. Any and all help from all sources will be so gratefully appreciated and hopefully, will turn the spiral off and create a community where people find it affordable to buy, build and live here.

Sincerely,

Franci and Donelle

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