



Water rate increases in works

Monday, April 11, 2005

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HADLEY - Those who use the least amount of water probably will see a lower rate increase than those using a disproportionately higher amount of water.

The Board of Selectmen last week discussed potential rate increases with Joseph Lanzafame, the town's water resource coordinator.

Comprehensive Environmental Inc., which has been reviewing the town's water issues, is scheduled to meet with the board April 20 and will present more precise numbers.

Increases are being considered because of rising operating costs and an additional increase would be needed if the town chooses to build a facility to treat the Callahan wells.

The town had to shut down one of its Warner wells because the chemical perchlorate was found in the water in parts believed to be unsafe. In the meantime, the town began using the Callahan wells but those are contaminated with manganese and iron.

The town has been treating the wells, but the treatment is not a long-term solution. The town is considering building a \$3.9 million treatment facility with a 2 percent state loan.

Hadley could pass on the cost of that treatment facility to taxpayers or have only the water users pay. Lanzafame said there are about 5,000 water users in town with another 500 who use well water. But he said all would benefit from having clean water.

The tax rate would rise 40 cents per \$1,000 in valuation if the board decides to put the cost of the \$3.9 million treatment facility there, said acting town administrator Bernard R. Kubiak. The tax rate is currently \$10.03.

If water users paid, the price would depend on how much water is used.

Lanzafame said those who use the least amount of water might see a \$25 increase in yearly water bills for operating costs and another 58 cents per year for the Callahan treatment facility. But homeowners using more than 450 gallons a day could see an increase of \$126 per year in operational costs and \$365 with the well treatment facility.

Comprehensive Environmental Inc. still needed more information from the board so the rates are preliminary.

Selectman candidate John S. Mieczkowski said that if the cost of the facility was added to the tax bill, homeowners could deduct the cost from their income taxes.

Kubiak said only about a third of homeowners use the property tax deduction, but the board would look into which way to pay the costs. The board is the town's water commission.

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