

Supervisors considering 85% hike in dump fee

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Calaveras County's homeowners could see an 85 percent increase in the annual parcel fee that supports the county's solid waste system.

In addition, a 90 percent increase in the cost of services will be under consideration for the county's commercial entities.

The county's Board of Supervisors received a fee study and comprehensive review of the county's solid waste system Tuesday from the consulting firm of Gresham, Brickner & Bratton Inc.

The solid waste system is running at a budget deficit, according to the consultants, and with the board's recent approval to enter into a \$9.6 million contract to open a new solid waste disposal cell and extend the life of the Rock Creek Landfill, the board needs to consider an increased annual \$150-a-year- parcel fee. The \$150-a-year fee on each homeowner's property tax statements dates back to 1991.

Supervisors voted 5-0 to notify the public a proposed fee increase will be considered at a June 27 board meeting.

Consultants presented the board with several fee hike proposals, with supervisors at the end of Tuesday's meeting deciding upon a modified version of the suggestions. Supervisors at the June 27 meeting will consider increasing the annual \$150 parcel fee to \$277.30. Consultants had suggested a high of \$330 a year. To keep the parcel fee increase at \$127.30 over the original fee of \$150, the board decided to extend pay-back of a \$4 million loan to help finance the landfill cell expansion from five to eight years and not charge any interest on the loan.

The board also left open the possibility of coming back next year and increasing the parcel fee and commercial charges.

The fact sheet presented by the consultants indicates 75 percent of the county residents self-haul their solid waste to the landfill or transfer stations.

"If we do get rid of the landfill, we'll never get it back," said District 5 Supervisor Benjamin Stopper, and was a large consideration in his mind moving forward.

Waiting 32 years to revisit the parcel fee makes any increase look like a "more extreme measure at this time," Stopper added.

District 2 Supervisor Jack Garamendi supported Stopper's observation saying if you go back over the years, the proposed increase is very close to the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index.

"If you put this in perspective, it's not crazy," Garamendi said of the proposed parcel fee hike.

Garamendi and District 3 Supervisor Martin Huberty also added maintaining the landfill and transfer stations reduce the instances of people leaving their garbage on the side of the road.