



MEMORANDUM

Date: September 19, 2017
To: Council Members, Sean McGlynn, Gloria Hurtado, Sue Gallagher, Daisy Gomez
From: Bennett Horenstein, Director of Water
Subject: Letter in Opposition of SB 623 (Monning) Water Quality: Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund

On August 21st, the attached opposition letter was sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee regarding SB 623. SB 623, if passed, would establish a Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund to be administered by the State Water Resources Control Board to assist those in disadvantaged communities who do not have access to safe drinking water.

While access to safe and affordable drinking water is a critical issue throughout California, the City already provides safe drinking water to our community and recent changes proposed by Senator Monning could result in additional expense to our water ratepayers. SB 623 recently became of great concern when Senator Monning expressed his intent to amend the bill during the legislature's summer recess to establish a "ratepayer assessment" (i.e. a tax or fee) on residential water bills as a funding source for the measure.

A tax on local residential water bills could potentially have a negative impact on local control and resources by redistributing valuable local resources to other communities throughout the state and hindering local efforts to maintain safe and reliable water infrastructure at a reasonable price for all customers. Additionally, the potential increase in water costs due to the tax could increase the need for Santa Rosa Water customers to enroll in our innovative "Help 2 Others" local assistance program.

Because it is anticipated that SB 623 will be amended to include the ratepayer assessment shortly after the legislature reconvenes on August 21st and prior to the bill being considered by the Assembly Appropriations Committee, which could occur shortly thereafter, there was insufficient time to bring this matter to the Council for consideration and therefore the expedited process set forth in Section C(2) of Council Policy 000-40, legislative Advocacy, was invoked.

Opposition to SB 623 is consistent with the City of Santa Rosa’s Council Policy 000-40 “Legislative Advocacy.” SB 623 directly conflicts with the City’s legislative advocacy policy, which supports legislation that “enhances local control or resources,” “protects local funding sources,” and “supports and protects opportunities for legislations and funding that enhance best practices for water supply, water distribution, wastewater collection, wastewater treatment, reuse, resource recovery and associated environmental initiatives.”

Thank you.

Attachments:

SB 623 (Monning) Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund
Letter of opposition for SB 623