

Help 2 Others Program Update

Board of Public Utilities

March 5, 2026

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Program Overview

- The Help 2 Others (“H2O”) water bill assistance program provides financial assistance to qualifying residential customers for a portion of their monthly water and sewer service charges
 - 100% off the monthly fixed service charge for water
 - 100% off the monthly fixed service charge for sewer
 - Estimated savings are approximately \$45.15 per month, based on water and sewer service charges starting July 1, 2025.
- Participants responsible for paying the full amount of any water and sewer usage charges incurred
- Applications are accepted until funds are exhausted, and a waiting list is maintained

Program Participant Requirements

- Water use efficiency audit
- Bills must be paid on time
- Financial workshop with Sonoma CAN
- Income eligibility screening
- Bill in participant's name
- Renew eligibility application annually

Persons in Household	Combined Annual Income
1	\$52,850
2	\$60,400
3	\$67,950
4	\$75,500
5	\$81,550

History

- 2014 - 2016: City Council and BPU express interest in Santa Rosa Water developing a program to assist low-income residents with their water bill
- Due to Prop 218 requirements, funding can not be from rate revenue
- Cell phone tower lease revenue and donations provide funding for the program
- 2016 - H2O Program established offering a 50% subsidy on fixed charges after being accepted into the program and having a water audit
 - Santa Rosa Water contracts with Sonoma CAN (formerly Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County) to manage program intake

History

- March 2019 – Subsidy is increased to 100% of fixed charges
- October 2024 – Program reached capacity and Santa Rosa Water stopped enrolling new applicants. Waitlist created. **315 on waitlist**
- June 2025 – T-Mobile ends R5 lease. Loss of \$63,000 beginning with FY26
- January 2026 – Dish cancels all lease agreements. Loss of \$59,000.
- March 2026 – Currently 724 customers

Program Costs and Revenue

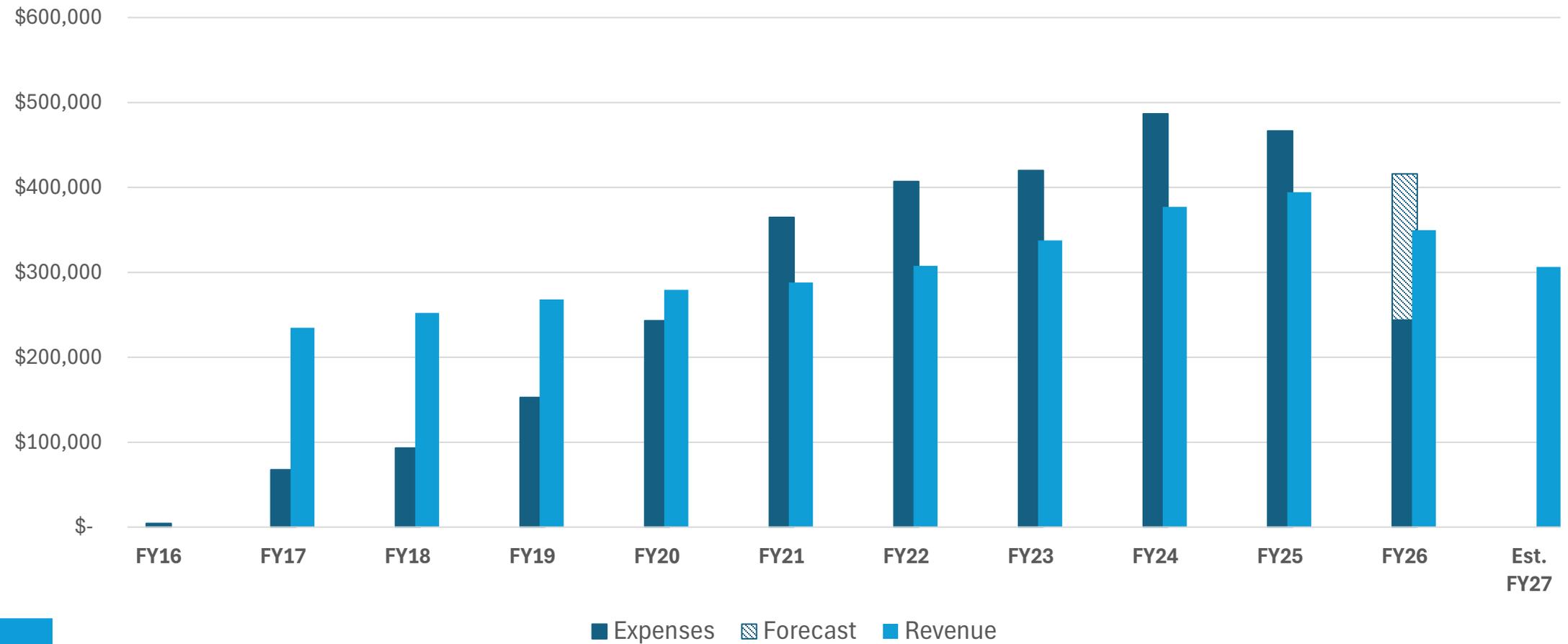
EXPENSES

Salaries/Benefits	\$6,100
Sonoma CAN	\$21,000
<u>Subsidy</u>	<u>\$401,000</u>
	\$428,100

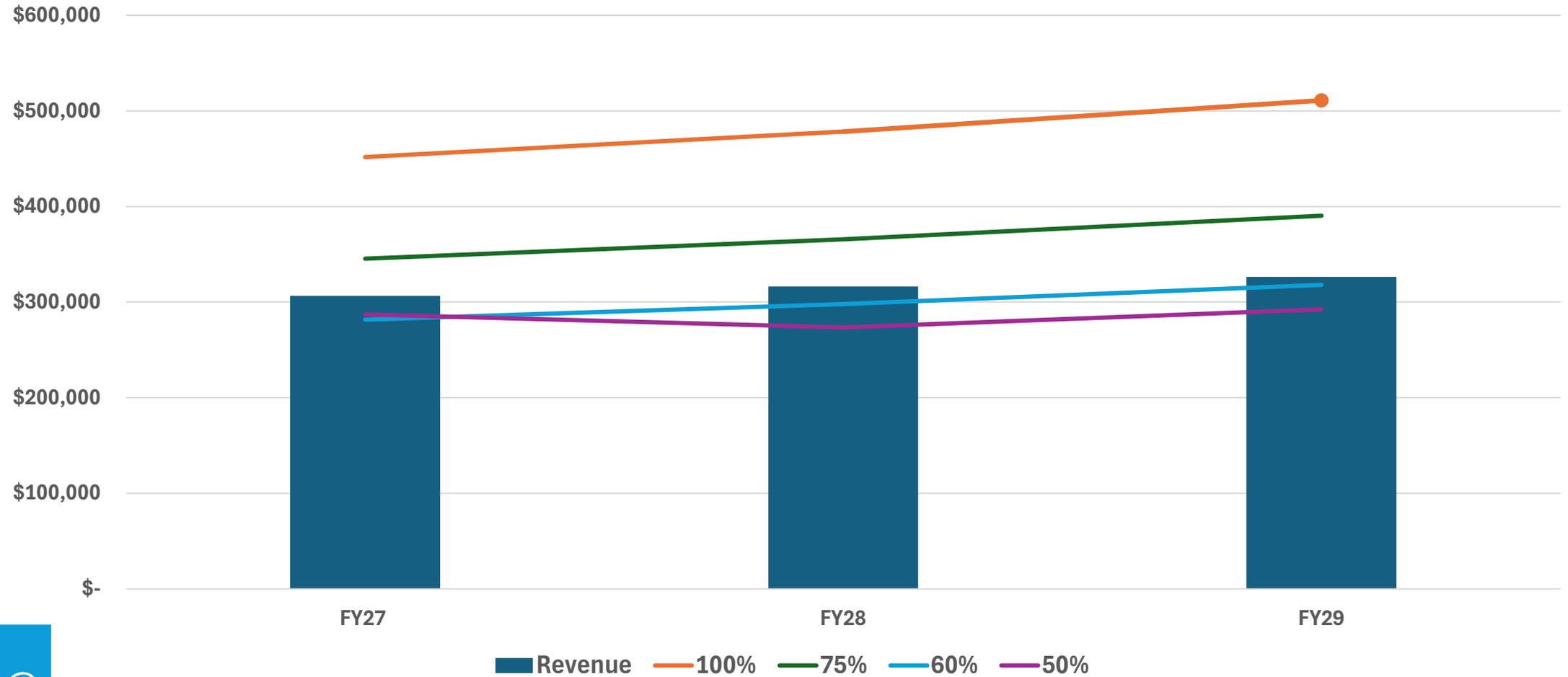
REVENUE

Dish Wireless	\$48,800
T-mobile	\$140,000
AT&T	\$74,000
Verizon	\$83,100
<u>Dish – sublease</u>	<u>\$7,800</u>
	\$353,700

H2O Subsidy



H2O Future



Program Options

- Adjust the H2O subsidy to 75% of fixed fees
- Adjust the H2O subsidy to 60% of fixed fees
- Adjust the H2O subsidy to 50% of fixed fees
 - Program could accommodate an additional 50 participants

Discussion and Direction