



Published September 19th, 2018

Lamorinda EBMUD directors project continued water rate increases

By Nick Marnell



John Coleman Photos provided



Marguerite Young

The Lamorinda board members for the East Bay Municipal Utility District ran unopposed in the 2018 general election, so John Coleman and Marguerite Young will retain their seats for the next four years, a period in which they foresee water rates continuing to rise for their customers.

"I am proudest of my efforts to accelerate the replacement of our distribution infrastructure, 4,200 miles of pipeline with an average age of 70 years," said Young, Ward 3 director. She pointed out the acquisition of Carr Ranch in Moraga and the major upgrade to the Orinda Water Treatment Plant as other major accomplishments during her tenure.

Young, whose ward includes Moraga and Orinda, said she will remain focused on the distribution pipeline, accelerating the pace of replacement to ensure reliable service and minimize main breaks. She expects to see pipeline and reservoirs being replaced throughout Moraga and Orinda prioritized based on risk of failure, changing water demand and other benefits such as improving pressure for firefighting and coordinating with public road repair and repaving.

She acknowledged customers' frustration with disruptive EBMUD activities over the last two years. "We have stepped up our coordination with local jurisdictions including Moraga and Orinda, which I hope will lead to smoother operations and less community disruption during projects that of necessity tear up streets or disrupt traffic patterns. This is especially challenging in Orinda and Moraga with their narrow streets and limited detour options."

Young does not back down from the need to raise water rates, citing that pipeline replacement "is very costly and is the major driver behind the rate increases that I've supported. I do expect our rates to continue to increase even while water use declines, as we come to grips with the need to address periods of water scarcity due to our changing climate and to upgrade our infrastructure to ensure that we can continue to deliver clean safe reliable water to our taps 24/7/365."

Ward 2 Director John Coleman represents Lafayette. He sees his job as a customer advocate. "I try to protect the ratepayers. I opposed the last two budgets because the rates were too high," he said. Coleman would like to see a debate to have rates based on need and usage, such as on lot size, weather conditions and where customers live.

"People have done an excellent job of conserving water. We're selling less than we did in 2013. Our job is to sell water, but there is a fine line between selling and conserving," the director said. He delivered the same warning as Young. "Rates are not going to be reduced. We have capital needs, and the pipelines are very old."

Coleman said the district is looking at testing models for the new Lafayette Reservoir tower. "We want to preserve the tower, unless it will cost millions of dollars. Then we will be hard pressed to do it." The tower project is slated for completion in 2020.

Other Lafayette projects ahead include repaving the trail around the Reservoir, which Coleman said will be completed in 2019. "And we will be tearing down the Leland Reservoir and putting in two smaller reservoirs, to improve water quality issues," Coleman said.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA