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## Red Bank votes to raise sewer, water rates

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COASTAL MONMOUTH BUREAU

RED BANK — The vote to raise water and sewer rates by 10 percent on Monday evening came with some venting by borough officials about state aid and a dissatisfaction with a lack of response from district 12 state legislators.

The council tabled a vote on changing the zoning designation for the Community YMCA to April 12 because it didn't have a final resolution from the planning board. The planning board voted on March 15 not to recommend the change to the council, meaning the council has to pass the change by a supermajority of four of the five members eligible to vote.

Council members voted unanimously to increase the water and sewer rates after resident Kim Senkeleski presented a petition signed by 100 residents in two days, asking the council to delay raising the rates until cost saving suggestions made by residents had been considered.

"Every drop of water that comes out of my sink is being increased 10 percent," she said. "Can we look at cost saving measures first?"

Senkeleski questioned the borough transferred \$270,000 in surplus from water and sewer to the general fund.

"Water and sewer fees are being used for the general fund, my municipal taxes go to the general fund," she said. "I see it as a 10 percent tax on my water."

Chief Financial Officer Frank Mason said the increase will primarily pay for about \$999,000 borrowed since 2004 to finance water and sewer improvements.

Councilman Michael DuPont said that suggestions made by residents, which was organized by Senkeleski were being considered and would be discussed at a budget workshop on April 28 or 29.

"We looked at the suggestions and some were good, some are being digested by department heads and some, we can't do statutorily" DuPont said, adding that the borough lost \$517,000 in state aid.

The discussion gave Mayor Pasquale "Pat" Menna an opportunity to vent about not hearing from State Senator Jennifer Beck or Assembly members Declan O'Scanlon and Caroline Casagrande for the last month when Menna asked for consideration for the high number of tax exempt nonprofits in the borough which make up 16 percent of the tax base.

"We didn't ask for a hand out, we asked for our state legislators to lobby for us," Menna said. "We carry a lot of burden for a lot of nonprofits and only two have stepped up to the plate."

Riverview Medical Center and the Monmouth Yacht Club both make voluntary payments in lieu of taxes to the borough, he said.

The basic water charge will increase from \$4.84 to \$5.32 per 100 cubic feet of water and the per quarter charge that varies by size of meter also will increase from \$40 to \$44 for the smallest 5/8 and 3/4 inch meter. The largest meters, from 3 inches and up will increase from \$320 to \$352 per quarter.