

BIG MESA SPRING NEWSLETTER 2018

Through diligent work by your Board and extra effort by your Office and Water employees, on March 2nd Big Mesa submitted an application to the New Mexico “Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund” (DWSRLF) for a grant and/or loan to fund projects to maintain reliable and safe drinking water for our community! These projects will be discussed at the April 14th board meeting. The DWSRLF application required information on these projects, detailed technical documents, extensive managerial and financial information, all of which Big Mesa submitted by the deadline. Although a selection won’t be made until summer, Big Mesa can augment the submitted information for a short time which hopefully increases our chance of being awarded a grant or low interest loan for needed projects to continue to bring your water system into the twenty first century.

Big Mesa’s financial condition remains in good standing in spite of the additional expenses required for operational improvements. Our good financial standing and reserve accounts helps demonstrate to the DWSRLF our ability to efficiently use grant or loan funds. Our efficient and effective operational capability were recently exemplified by Manager Bruce Ford and Field Tech Jay Allen, who completed the underwater dock line repair, replacement of piping to filter #1, and replenishing the filter media. By completing these difficult projects in-house, we were able to minimize expenses to hire contractors. We also reached a mile stone by having both pumps and filters run simultaneously. Please take the time to thank your water and office staff for their recent efforts with the DWSRLF submission and project repairs.

We have encountered several continuing members “issues” which relate to long unenforced By-Law requirements and the age of our water delivery system. Per your Rules & Regulations and By-Laws, all meters and risers are the property of Big Mesa and are not to be “tampered” with (operated) by Members. Also, per the By-Laws, every property is “required” to have a separate shut-off valve installed within 3 feet of their water line from Big Mesa’s meter to their structures. With a shut-off valve, Big Mesa’s meter can remain in the “on” position while Members control the “on/off” supply of water through the shut-off valve, without operating (tampering) with Big Mesa’s meter. Unfortunately, this shut-off valve By-Law requirement has never been enforced. Thus, Big Mesa’s staff is facing this Member “issue” much more frequently at significant cost to your water operations. For example, last week, a member had a meter valve twisted off which required our staff to repair the valve at 1 am and they worked most of the night to repair it. We lost 2.5 feet of water out of the storage tank before the valve was repaired.

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Various corrective policies have been attempted in the past, such as locking of meters, so only Big Mesa employees could operate Big Mesa's meters. Member complaints forced the rescission of that policy. We are all still caught in between "a rock and a hard place". Therefore, your Board is creating a new policy to address the continuing problem. If a Member/property does not have a shut-off valve installed and the Member operates the meter and it mysteriously breaks, the Member/property will be subject to a \$300 charge for tampering as well as a \$20 per month upcharge until the required shut-off valve is installed.

It is unfortunate that your Board needs to create another policy to attempt to enforce the By-Law requirements that all Members agree to abide by, but it is unfair for Members with a shut-off valve to bear the costs of numerous and expensive repairs at Member-without-shut-off-valve locations. This policy focuses on required By-Law compliance while only minimally penalizing out-of-compliance Members. As Big Mesa legally can't install shut-off valves for Members, Big Mesa will try to help non-compliant Members through creating a list of qualified plumbers. Members may hire plumbers to install the required shut-off valve. Our staff will also attempt to help as best they can if Members call in and seek oversight advice on shut-off valve installation.

Big Mesa's staff is underway on the required Fire Hydrant Flow Test of all 62 community fire hydrants. Without having the Fire Hydrant Flow Test completed it will result in a significant increase in Home Owner Insurance rates for our community. The testing program is expected to be completed by late summer.

Per the By-Laws your Board has made a final selection for a candidate to fill the vacant Board seat left by long-time secretary Tim Isengard. The candidate will fill the vacancy until the next Big Mesa election. In April, Big Mesa will extend invitations for Members to run for the June 23rd election to the Board for the 3 seats available with 3-year terms.

Also, at the April 14th Monthly Meeting, a presentation will be made by Miller Engineering. Miller Engineering is the engineering firm that won the bid for Big Mesa's Preliminary Engineering Report (PER), paid for through the \$50,000 grant Big Mesa received. Miller Engineering will report to the Board and Members on progress of the PER to date as well as recommended projects to our water distribution system. The Board encourages all Members to attend this very informative presentation on Saturday, April 14th at 9am at the Water Building.

Sincerely, Your Big Mesa Water Board