

## IWVWD discusses recycled water, increased fees, and GM declining pay increase

By Michael Smit For The Daily Independent  
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The Indian Wells Valley Water District held a brief board meeting on Nov. 12. The board discussed a variety of topics, including updates on the proposed recycled water project and reasons for plans to increase rates, and praised new general manager George Croll for his decision to decline a scheduled pay increase.

### Recycled water

The IWVWD is preparing initial planning steps to investigate the feasibility of a recycled water project.

At the moment, just about all water in the IWV comes from a large underground water basin, but this basin is overdrafted and has been for decades.

A local sustainability agency called the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority is responsible for drafting and enacting a groundwater sustainability plan. Their plan focuses on an imported water pipeline – a significant project in terms of scope and cost.

However, the Water District opposes the imported water pipeline and believes the basin can achieve sustainability through multiple smaller projects, such as increased conservation and this recycled water project.

“The project is becoming more real,” Croll said.

### Rate increase

The district is conducting a rate study that will likely increase water rates. It typically does this every five years, but at a previous board meeting, the district stated it needs to do this one ahead of schedule due to multiple changing factors.

The district cited inflation, but also higher rates of conservation than expected. While conservation is good in a desert region like the IWV, it also means less money coming in the form of water rates. Less water use does not always equate to lower costs for the district, as it needs to maintain its staff and infrastructure no matter if the water use is high or low.

More than anything, the board stated that the largest impact to its costs is the fees it must pay to the IWVGA to support its mission to ensure water for the future of the IWV. These are new costs the district has only begun paying in the last few years, and the district seems to still be working out the best rate structure to acclimate to this new situation.

### **General manager declines pay increase**

Croll declined a scheduled pay increase that would have included both a cost-of-living adjustment and a merit raise. Croll said he did not want to add to the district's financial burden, a gesture that drew praise from the board members.

"I think it's a huge witness of his character," said IWVWD board member Chuck Griffin.

The board will next meet in December, where it is expected to elect which of the members will serve the next year as board president and vice president.