

LMWD Provides Cutting-Edge Tech with Lower Taxes; New Projects Call For Bond

The Laguna Madre Water District has been successful in providing more with less. You may not have noticed, but in the past several years, the LMWD Board of Directors has voted to lower the District's tax rates since 2016; from 0.04502 (2016) to 0.04386 (2017) to 0.040101 (2018) to its current rate of 0.038821 (2019). Although the District has marginally raised water use rates, it still remains one of the lowest in the Valley. However, all these savings to the community have not prevented the District from reinvesting in new technology for its customers.

In January 2019, the District began the New Meter Project. They replaced all old meters with new "smart meters" and completed that project by October 2019. According to their website, www.lmwd.org, these new meters "use wireless radio frequencies—just like wireless Internet and cable TV—to send and receive water use information to and from the Water District. The meters and communication system meet all federal safety standards and codes." The purpose is to "automate the collection of meter readings, provide customers with a better understanding of their water bills and help identify leaks that are responsible for property damage and the loss of water".

But what good would all this data do, without the ability to access and use it? Well, this past September 2019, the District introduced their new WaterSmart Customer Portal, which can even be added to your mobile device like an app, even if you can't find it in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. It can be accessed on the District's website by clicking on "My Account/ WaterSmart". Once registered, it is easy to add a shortcut by clicking "Add to Home Screen" on any mobile device for quicker access. Some of the benefits of the smart meters and WaterSmart Customer Portal are: more consistent and accurate consumption readings, easily monitor water consumption, daily and monthly usage charts, compare current usage to previous periods, 24-hour leak detection, high and low consumption e-mail or text alerts, and the ability to set budget and conservation goals. The days of requesting a report from customer service to see if you have a leak or a copy of your bill are over. Now you can log in and review your data, pay your bill and much more.

Although the Laguna Madre Water District has been successful in keeping the tax rate low for several years, while still providing cutting edge technology and upgrades, new plans are in the works to meet growing community needs that will soon require a larger commitment. The Board of Directors, with the help of staff, consultants and the bond committee (made up of community members), have identified short-term projects that will be carried out with their general revenue funds, and three large, high-priority infrastructure projects that will require a bond to fund, which is expected to be on this May's ballot. District personnel have begun presenting information on these projects to the public and are inviting all residents to attend. Information on these bond presentations can be found on the LMWD website and Facebook. Currently, presentations are scheduled on:

- Friday, January 24 at 8:30am at Pirate's Landing (PI Chamber of Commerce Meeting)
- Tuesday, January 28th at 7:00 pm at PI City Hall (Port Isabel City Commission Meeting)
- Friday, February 7th at noon at Marcello's (Rotary Club Meeting)
- Tuesday, February 11th at 5:30pm at LV City Hall (Laguna Vista Town Council Meeting)
- Tuesday, February 18th at 6:00pm at PIISD Central Admin (Point Isabel ISD)
- Wednesday, February 19th at 5:30pm at SPI City Hall (South Padre Island City Council Meeting)
- Saturday, February 22nd at 2:00pm at Property Owners Who Care Meeting
- Thursday, February 27th at 9am at Padre Island Brewery (SPI Chamber's Coffee & Conversation)