



# LAS CAMPANAS

WATER & SEWER  
COOPERATIVE

July 2018

## *Message from the President – Gene Mroz - Water Forecast for 2018*

It's been my privilege to serve on the Cooperative's Board of Directors for 6 years, the last two years as president. As members and owners of the Cooperative, you are well-served by an excellent staff led by General Manager, Kim Visser. Our award-winning Jacobs Engineering team, led by Gerardo Gonzalez-Ortiz, is deeply committed to providing quality potable water and wastewater services to the community in the most cost-effective manner possible. I thank them all for making my job much easier.

The Cooperative has stabilized and advanced since the dark days of 2008 when the developer's bankruptcy loomed over all of Las Campanas. Today the Cooperative is in sound financial condition with adequate water rights that will allow complete build-out of Las Campanas. Credit for this outcome goes to the people who served on the Board since that time.

Major accomplishments of the 2017-18 Board include a significant reduction in the monthly sewer rate. We also formed a

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Water Sustainability Committee whose mission is to encourage prudent use of that precious resource. The Eye-On-Water pilot study is proving successful. We are hopeful that this technology will be available to all Cooperative members by the end of the 2018. It will be of immense help in managing your water consumption and rapidly identifying possible leaks thereby conserving water and saving you money.

Less visible, but essential to the efficient operation of the Coop, is an initiative to build a Geographic Information System (GIS) that will digitally map all of the Coop's infrastructure (pipelines, valves, meters, residential connections etc.). Once in place, this system will reduce the need for referral to hard copy drawings which will improve the efficiency of our water and wastewater operations. We are also conducting an evaluation of the condition of our infrastructure to identify potential problem areas before they occur.

Challenges remain. The Water Sustainability Committee continues to look for ways to encourage residents to reduce the proportion of water used for outdoor irrigation. The Coop's working relationships with the Club, the City, the County and the Buckman Direct Diversion ("BDD") are all generally positive and improving. However, each of these relationships has its own unique set of both opportunities and challenges that will need close attention in the coming years.

The biggest immediate challenge facing the Coop is how to respond to requests for water services from newly proposed and controversial development projects within the Coop's

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service area. At this point, there are more questions than definitive answers. The incoming 2018-2019 Board will be working to define the processes needed to make these decisions.

The results of the election of the Board of Directors for 2018-2019 will be announced at the July 18 Annual Meeting, I hope that many of you will be able to attend and get to know the members of the Board. They deserve your support.

## *Landscaping in the Summer – Can we still plant?*

If you enjoy gardening, as most of us do, we have a desire to continue to plant well past the spring planting season. Tracy Neal, the landscape consultant for the HOA, addresses the issue of planting in the summer.

### ***Tracy's advice on summer planting:***

People often wonder if it's possible or advisable to plant new plants in the summer in our high desert environment. It is indeed possible to successfully install a new landscape in the summer, as long as the new plants are adequately watered throughout the growing season. The critical factor is to irrigate them frequently enough that the roots never dry out completely. This can mean watering every day or two with small plants (defined as 1-gallon size and smaller) and every two to three days for larger plants (defined as 5-gallon size or larger). Don't expect new plants that are not native to a hot climate to grow much in the heat of the summer; when the temperature is over 85 F.

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Many plants in the high desert go “semi-dormant” and many new plants will wilt from heat stress even if the soil is moist, which is an indicator that the heat is making it hard for plants to “root in”. When it starts to cool off and (if we’re lucky) the rains come in July and August, they will start to grow better. A lot of root growth happens in late summer and fall, so it’s critical to keep irrigating your plant on a regular basis until plants go dormant, adjusting, of course, your watering schedule based on the temperature and possible soaking rains. It should be noted that it is equally important to water every two to four weeks in the winter to keep new root systems hydrated in our relatively warm and dry winters.

Although we can continue to plant during the summer season, we should take the challenges of the high desert climate and the ongoing drought into consideration. The fall season (September through November) is a very good time to plant healthy and reliably hardy perennials, grasses and woody plants, as long as someone will be around to water them through the winter (as noted above every two to four weeks after your irrigation system is turned off). Keep in mind that nurseries don’t bring in a lot of new stock late in the season; they are trying to get rid of plants so they don’t have to overwinter them. Field-grown ball & burlap (“b

& b”) trees are dug in late winter for the next season and in late fall (November or early December) for the fall season. This means that most plants you will find in the nurseries in late summer and early fall have been there a while and some of them are “the last of the litter”, they are ones that didn’t sell during the main part of the season. You may not be able to find the plants you want or healthy specimens in the fall, in which case you may be better off waiting until the next season.

An exception to the plants recommended for fall planting is the group of desert-adapted plants that grow best when it’s hot—agaves, bear grass, cacti, desert willows, yuccas and similar plants. These are best planted by the end of July so they will have plenty of time to get rooted in before winter arrives. Most of these plants are also more drought tolerant the first season and don’t need watered as often as non-desert plants. A yucca in a 5-gallon size pot can usually get by when watered only once a week, and cacti should be watered only every two to three weeks the first season. Most of these plants do not need to be watered in the winter, and true cacti shouldn’t be watered in the winter. Given that we are in an extreme state of drought at this time, you might want to put off adding any new plants to your landscape until later in the summer or even next year. Again, one exception might be very drought tolerant native plants that don’t need as much water the first year and will require minimal watering after they are established.

### *Let’s Not Forget the Classroom!*

We will continue to post on the Cooperative’s website a list of gardening events in and around Santa Fe. In addition, we are working towards bringing in a series of guest speakers to help us meet the goal and objectives of our commitment to a water-wise future without compromising the beauty of our landscape.

### *Suggestions please!*

The Board welcomes any comments and suggestions you may have on how the Las Campanas Cooperative can meet its commitment to water sustainability.

### **LCWSC Contact:**

General Manager: Kim Visser-Weinmann  
505.204.7824  
kvisser@lcwatersewer.coop

Executive Administrator: Heather Roybal  
505.204.7835  
hroybal@lcwatersewer.coop

## **The Committee Members**

*Gene Mroz, Chair, Estates II*

*Ken Kirk, Las Melodias*

*Stephen Raab, Estates VII.2*

*Dennis Johnson, Estates III.2*

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