SICTA President Tom Henry attended the 3/17/09 Council mtg. Here are his thoughts:

Despite a flood of communications protesting the increase in the City's water and sewer rates, the majority of City Council voted to pass the Ordinance. Only Councilman McHale voted No. The sixteen percent (16.0%) increase will go into effect this spring.

SICTA had challenged the rate increase for two reasons. First, our Budget Study raised questions regarding the allocation of costs between the Dept. of Public Works and the Water and Sewer Utility. Second, SICTA's Rate Study showed that the majority of rate payers are being overcharged in order to reduce the costs for large volume users, such as motels and bars. Both Studies can be found on SICTA's website—sicta.org.

During their lengthy discussion of the proposed ordinance in weeks leading up to the 3/17 meeting, members of Council had indicated their desire to work with SICTA to develop a more balanced rate system. The current flat rate system ignores the fact that the City charges $1.50 per 1000 gals for sewerage but pays the County MUA $ 7.10 to treat 1000 gals of sewerage.

SICTA"s goals on this issue remain:

1. Develop an understandable system for allocating costs between the Dept. of Public Works and the Water and Sewer Utility.
2. Develop a fair system for charging the rate payers for water and sewer.
3. Assist rate payers with implementing effective conservation techniques.
4. Implement an aggressive program to reduce the amount of Inflow and Infiltration[1] (I & I) entering the system.

[1] **Infiltration is groundwater that enters sanitary sewer systems through cracks and/or leaks in the sanitary sewer pipes.** Cracks or leaks in sanitary sewer pipes or manholes may be caused by age related deterioration, loose joints, poor design, installation or maintenance errors, damage or root infiltration. Groundwater can enter these cracks or leaks wherever sanitary sewer systems lie beneath water tables or the soil above the sewer systems becomes saturated. Often sewer pipes are installed beneath creeks or streams because they are the lowest point in the area and it is more expensive to install the pipe systems beneath a roadway. These sewer pipes are especially susceptible to infiltration when they crack or break and have been known to drain entire streams into sanitary sewer systems. Average sewer pipes are designed to last about 20-50 years, depending on what type of material is used. Often sanitary sewer system pipes along with the lateral pipes attached to households and businesses have gone much longer without inspection or repair and are likely to be cracked or damaged.

Inflow is storm water that enters into sanitary sewer systems at points of direct connection to the systems. Various sources contribute to the inflow, including footing/foundation drains, roof drains or leaders, downspouts, drains from window wells, outdoor basement stairwells, drains from driveways, groundwater/basement sump pumps, and even streams. These sources are typically improperly or illegally connected to sanitary sewer systems, via either direct connections or discharge into sinks or tubs that are directly connected to the sewer system. An improper connection lets water from sources other than sanitary fixtures and drains to enter the sanitary sewer system. That water should be entering the storm water sewer system or allowed to soak into the ground without entering the sanitary sewer system.