SWEETWATER SPRINGS WATER DISTRICT

TO: Board of Directors **AGENDA NO. V-H**

FROM: Ed Fortner, General Manager

Meeting Date: January 2, 2020

SUBJECT: Discuss/Action re SB 998, Water Shutoff Protection Act

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RECOMMENDED ACTION:

None.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Unknown, but minor.

DISCUSSION:

California has implemented SB 998, the Water Shutoff Protection Act, effective in February 2020, with new delinquency process rules for water purveyors -- including the Sweetwater Springs Water District -- intended to minimize the number of Californians who have their water service turned off for inability to pay.

What we do now: The District's current delinquency process is printed on the back side of water bills, and on our website. We send out late letters, post the property, and as a voluntary measure call customers to encourage payment. Ultimately, if customers do not respond to our requests for payment their service is turned off about 45 days after the bill is mailed out. This approach has been successful: in 2019 the District only disconnected 80 services for non-payment, an average of 6-7 services each month. Most pay the $50 fee to reconnect, but occasionally a customer has simply abandoned their account and moved on.

What the new law requires: SB 998 mandates that water cannot be turned off until a bill is at least 60 days delinquent, which is a little longer than we currently allow. Further, customers who demonstrate a serious health issue requiring water and an inability to pay must be allowed to pay via an alternative payment schedule. This is something the District does not currently offer. The new law also requires an attempt to notify occupants of a property that a water bill is delinquent even if they are not our customer. This is also something the District does not currently do.

The new law has other requirements, some that we already implement and others -- such as making our delinquency process available in other languages -- that we don't. A full copy of the new law is available at SB998 legislation.

Staff will be presenting amendments to our Policies and Procedures to sync with the new requirements at the February meeting.