



UP THE CREEK

November 1, 2011

Wow, the number of responses to last month's newsletter astonished us here at Up The Creek Amateur Polling, Inc. We have accumulated a thick file of returned newsletters with check marks in all sorts of places, with marginal notes, and on-the-back notes galore.

Thank you for taking time to answer, and for reassuring us that some copies of this page really do get read before proceeding to their ultimate purpose as bird cage liners and/or land fill.

Our analysis so far shows that a majority of respondents look kindly on efforts to reduce the Association's billing expenses. But there is far from universal agreement as to what form such efforts ought to take. Some people have made it clear that they desire no involvement with a computer whatsoever, a position that I personally have sympathy with, after 30 years of experience in programming, using and abusing the things. Some people would like to receive the bill as a postcard, but wring their hands over the possible loss of the newsletter. A common phrase is, "I'd rather have the newsletter than the water." I don't think the water is that icky, is it? A sizable number of you are in favor of receiving and paying the bill without using paper, and without using plastic. A few who favored credit card payment added the provision, "But not if it's going to cost me a fee."

Billing electronically can be done via email. The newsletter could also be attached to the same email message, or could be posted on our website (where the newsletters are now, at least some of them). Paying electronically can be done by automatic direct withdrawal from your bank account, but we advise caution. If you are certain your bill is going to be the same amount month after month, okay. But if you are paying for metered water, and because of an unrecognized leak, a meter reading error, or a billing error, you are hit by a \$500 water bill (it happens) then you might not want that amount automatically sucked out of your account until you have had a chance to talk to us and verify that it is legitimate. It is better for most people to physically see the water bill and knowingly authorize its payment every time. A good method for doing this is with Internet Bill Pay, which is supported by many banks. With this program, you use your computer connected to the Internet to authorize the payment, and your bank sends a paper check to USCDWUA, which is posted and deposited just the way we do now. As far as we know, banks do not charge any fee for this service.

Some of you suggested that we lengthen the billing cycle to quarterly. While this would certainly save postage and printing cost, we are not comfortable with it. It would only be workable in the winter months, when your meter is not read and the bill is predictable. Besides, it is important for us to know our cash position as currently as possible. We have financial obligations that recur monthly, not quarterly. It is better that our revenue stream waxes and wanes monthly also.

Our solution will probably be to implement electronic billing for those who desire it, and to continue with snail mail for those who prefer that. If only half our members go for the electronic solution, that is still a considerable savings. But, nothing at all has been decided yet, as there is some planning and research to be done.

Please be thinking ahead to December 13, the date of our annual Membership meeting. There are some serious decisions to be made that will require your thoughtful advice and vote. Later this month, you will receive a formal notice of the meeting, with details of the issues under consideration. Stay tuned.

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