

# Corpus Christi Caller-Times

## City Council to begin discussion on Garwood pipeline

- By [Denise Malan](#)
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CORPUS CHRISTI - The city is beginning discussions about when to build a new 40-mile water pipeline, a decision that will affect how much the project costs ratepayers.

Figures from the city show the rate for raw water could increase by 36 percent to nearly \$1.20 per 1,000 gallons of water. The raw water charge is one of two categories on a water bill; the other is for treating the water.

The impact would be a 3 percent increase by 2030, when a large portion of the city's already existing water service debt is paid off.

The figures are based on an estimate of \$165 million to build the pipeline in 2027. The estimate to build the pipeline now is \$100 million.

City staff will present the estimates to the City Council today and begin a discussion on when the city should build the pipeline.

"We need to make sure we're providing that water at the best appropriate time - not too early so we have an overabundant supply but at the same time not waiting until we're under the gun and spending extra dollars to meet an unreasonable timeline," Assistant City Manager Oscar Martinez said.

The council could set a trigger to begin the two-year pipeline construction, such as when demand reaches about 80 percent of supply. The current demand is about 65 percent.

The city has received tentative approval for an \$8 million loan from the Texas Water Development Board to plan the project. Final approval is expected next month.

The pipeline would carry water from the Lower Colorado River to Lake Texana, where it could then flow through the existing Mary Rhodes Pipeline to Corpus Christi. The project is known informally as the Garwood pipeline because the city bought water rights from the Garwood Irrigation Co.

The planning and permitting phase is expected to last about two years. Mayor Joe Adame has made planning the pipeline a top priority, saying the project must be ready for construction when Corpus Christi needs it.

At the current growth rate, the city is expected to need more water by 2027. That estimated date jumps to 2020 with the addition of Las Brisas Energy Center, a planned power plant on the Corpus Christi Inner Harbor that would buy billions of gallons of untreated water from the city. Details of Las Brisas' contract have not been finalized.

Las Brisas opponents have criticized the city, saying officials want to build the pipeline specifically for the plant. Officials counter that the city will need the pipeline with or without Las Brisas.

The city bought the Lower Colorado water rights in 1997. It has rights to 35,000 acre feet annually, which some fear could be lost if the city doesn't tap into it sooner rather than later. The city's system currently uses about 175,000 acre feet.

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