

## FAQ – Water & Sewer

Q: I heard that the City raised the rates to pay for the new building. Is that true?

A: Absolutely not. Water funds can only be used for water expenses and sewer funds can only be used for sewer expenses.

Q: Were water or sewer funds spent on building the new building?

A: No water or sewer funds were spent on building the Civic Center. We did spend some sewer funds to replace the sewer line in the alley between Kaiser Park and the Civic Center. It is our policy to replace any old water or sewer lines prior to paving any street or alley. This prevents us from having to dig up new pavement when there is a problem.

Q: Why does it seem like the rates go up every year?

A: Because they do. As expenses for maintaining our infrastructure, operating the pumps and the wastewater plant, and replacing aging pipe increase, so must the income increase to be able to do that. Rates also cover portions of Public Works employees' salaries and any increases in electrical or other costs incurred by the City.

Q: Our rates are already too high. Can't we stop raising them?

A: We may be able to skip one or the other for a year or two moving forward. We finally have a fund available each year for improvements, replacements, and repair in each department. In the past, when we had an emergency repair, we had to borrow money from the Street Fund or the Building Fund to make repairs and then pay it back. However, one major repair or improvement could temporarily wipe out funds in a different fund.

Q: How does the City fund improvements to the water or wastewater systems?

A: Improvements are almost exclusively funded by water and sewer ratepayers. If we have a very large project, we seek grants or loans to cover the cost. All grant and loan providers look first at the rates being charged to make sure they are adequate to maintain the system and/or repay the loan once the improvements are made. Some cities in Oregon have had to make huge monthly increases of \$10-\$25 per month all at once in order to qualify.

Q: Are there any major improvements planned for this year?

A:

- We are replacing several fire hydrants each year. As that is done, we sometimes discover water lines in need of replacement as well.
- We are in the midst of mapping our water lines. In the past, each water line was mapped on paper when a major project was done. If changes or repairs were made later, they may not be reflected on the maps. Over the years, we have accumulated a great many paper maps of both systems that are lacking in accuracy. The water line mapping going on now will provide GPS location data for every line, include type and size of pipe, and much more detail on a single digital map that can be easily updated by staff any time a change is made.

- Finally, we have our engineers doing a detailed analysis of our over 45-year-old wastewater treatment plant. So far, all looks good for years to come, but they will have some recommendations for updating it when the study is completed.