



## SEWER RATES INCREASE Q & A

Nov. 2, 2015

---

**WHAT:** Proposed increase of Sewer Use Fees for the City of Missoula

**WHEN:** Rates would increase on Jan. 1 of 2016, 2017 and 2018.

**HOW MUCH:** 2.5 percent for each category of user. For residential customers, the increase on each six-month sewer bill would be \$2.08 in 2016, \$2.14 in 2017 and \$2.20 in 2018 every six months.

**HOW TO COMMENT:** A public hearing to hear ratepayer comments will be held as part of the regular City Council meeting on Monday, Nov. 2, at 7 p.m. in City Council Chambers at 140 W. Pine St. The public can comment in person or make written comments to City Clerk's Office, 435 Ryman St., Missoula, MT 59802.

**QUESTIONS:** Finance Department, 552-6119 or 552-6111 or Public Works Department, 552-6353

### **Q: Why is this happening now?**

**A:** The City of Missoula takes pride in an aggressive, forward-thinking wastewater collection and treatment system. It protects the quality of our underground aquifer, which provides the water that Missoula Valley residents drink, and of the Clark Fork River, which runs through the city, providing recreation, fish and wildlife habitat and more.

The City has three major improvement projects that require additional sewer revenue to fund. The need for one additional project came to light after the budget was adopted and is covered by the rate increase as well. These four projects will benefit citizens across the City and save ratepayer money by reducing the costs of operating and maintaining obsolete equipment. Two of the projects will also help eliminate risks of sewage overflows.

### **Q: What are these projects?**

**A:** Here are some brief descriptions.

- **Replacement of the Reserve Street Lift Station.** It is at the end of its service life and has significant potential for operational failure; this will also provide capacity future expansion for the sewer service area.
- **Installation of Biogas Electrical Generation.** The installation will allow for the use of biogas (methane) produced at the plant for electrical generation. Currently, excess methane is flared. The installation will provide for a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and potential electrical cost savings of \$85,200 annually.
- **Linda Vista Boulevard STEP System Conversion.** The project involves design and construction of the Linda Vista Boulevard sanitary sewer interceptor. These improvements will eliminate a substantial risk for sewage overflows, enhance capacity and facilitate future residential development while saving operational and maintenance costs.
- **Replacement and Relocation of the Caras Park Sewer Force Main.** The project will install a new, shorter force main to connect with the gravity sewer on Front Street at Pattee Street, abandoning the existing pipe.

**Q: What are the benefits of spending this money on these projects now?**

**A:** These four projects will benefit citizens across the City by saving money on operating and maintenance costs. Two of the projects will eliminate the risks of sewage overflows. In addition:

- The City of Missoula is an advocate of protecting the valley's sole-source aquifer and the water quality of the Clark Fork River.
- Sanitary sewer benefits public health.

**A: Didn't sewer rates go up just a few years ago?**

**A:** The last price increase was 5 percent each year for four years from 2010 through 2013 to fund the major bio-nutrient reactor upgrade. This increase would be 2.5 percent each year for three years.

- There has not been a rate increase since January 2013.
- Missoula has the lowest sewer rates of all major cities in the state.
- The money the City collects for sewer is solely used for the operation and maintenance of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Sewer revenue does not go into the General Fund to support other City services.