

2007 UTILITY RATE INCREASES REFLECT REINVESTMENT NEEDS IN NEIGHBORHOODS, ENSURING ADEQUATE WATER SUPPLY

Increases for water, sewer and stormwater utilities effective January 1, 2007, were approved by the Sewer and Water Advisory Board and Columbus City Council in late 2006. Averaged together, the increases represent a 14.99% change. Specifically, the increases are: 10% for water, 19.09% for sanitary sewer and 8.61% for stormwater services. For a Columbus residential customer with average consumption, the increase will be around \$22.62 per quarter; average consumption is based on 3,000 cubic feet of water. Even with the increases, Columbus remains lower than many other utility providers in the region, such as Southwest Licking County and Ohio American Water.

Driving these increases is the need for reinvestment into Columbus' aging infrastructure and protection of water quality. Other factors include increased growth and insuring adequate service and water supplies. Numerous, some massive, improvement projects are underway or in planning. An estimated \$5.4 billion is expected to be spent on sanitary sewers alone over the next 40 years. This includes \$2.5 billion for a Wet Weather Management Plan to control sanitary and combined sewer overflows into local waterways and reduce sewer backups in basements. The plan was required to fulfill two court orders with the State of Ohio.

In order to fund the sewer improvements, a Project Clean Rivers surcharge began in 2006. The increases shown above include the fee, which for Columbus customers is now \$2.34 per equivalent residential unit (ERU) per month. Single-family residential properties are billed at one ERU, which equals 2,000 square feet of impervious (non-penetrable) surface, so the quarterly amount will be around \$7.02. Customers outside Columbus will contribute to this fund at a rate of \$1.39 per ERU per month, or about \$4.17 per quarter. Non-residential properties are charged by the amount of ERUs the property is assigned, which is based on the amount of impervious surface the property is known to have.

In the past, federal funding was available to help with required improvements to meet environmental mandates but that assistance has not been forthcoming for many years, leaving communities to shoulder the cost. City officials have been in discussions with federal lawmakers to create a new trust fund to help with such issues, which could ease the burden on local ratepayers in the future.

Other improvement projects include ongoing stormwater improvements to solve flooding issues such as on Columbus' east side. Water rates will support the construction of a new upground reservoir to be built in Delaware County to meet current and future water demands. Construction for that project is planned to begin in 2007.

Because water and sewer bills are based on how much water you use, the amount of your bill can be controlled by various conservation methods. Tips to save water include: repairing leaks, turning faucets off when water is not being used (example: when brushing teeth), running washing machines and dishwashers only on full loads, installing low-flow fixtures and not over-watering your lawn.

A low income discount of 15% is available to those who meet eligibility requirements. If you are currently enrolled in assistance programs such as food stamps, HEAP and Medicaid, please complete and submit the low income discount program application on the reverse side. Discounts are also available for eligible seniors over 60. Please call Customer Service at 311 or 645-3111 (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.) for more information on these programs.

For water or sewer billing questions, please call Customer Service at 311, or 645-3111 (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.) or visit the Department of Public Utilities web site at <http://utilities.columbus.gov/>.

APPLICATION FOR LOW INCOME DISCOUNT PROGRAM

NAME: _____
Last First Middle

ADDRESS: _____
Number Street/Road Apartment #
_____ City State Zip Code

TELEPHONE: _____

ACCOUNT NUMBER (from water bill): _____

LOW INCOME PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Check the appropriate box for the participating Low Income Program:

- Food Stamp Benefits
- Ohio Medicaid
- Low Income Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- Home Energy Assistance (HEAP)
- Ohio Works First
- Social Security Disability
- Public Housing Benefits
- Homestead Exemption

This application must have a notarized signature or attached documentation proving participation in a qualifying low income program * above to be mailed to:

**Department of Public Utilities
Customer Service Center
910 Dublin Road
Columbus, OH 43215**

Documents submitted with this application will **not be returned. Send copies of documents only.*

The information associated with this application has been examined by me, and is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true, correct and complete.

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Preparer's signature (if different from applicant): _____

Notary of Public signature (if applicable): _____