

Commissioners Corner



Ron Nowicki

Elected officials tend to be predictable in the way they relate to their constituents. They typically focus on their successes, or talk only about the achievements of the agency they serve. While we certainly have our share of good things to talk about at Lakehaven, I would like to use this opportunity to focus on some of the challenges we face in the coming years.

Despite being well maintained by a dedicated staff of operators, our two wastewater treatment plants are, to be honest, getting a bit “long in the tooth”. Constructed over thirty years ago, much of the equipment is showing signs of age and wear. This is normal for equipment that operates twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year. Just as it would be with your own car, the need to devote more time and resources to maintenance tells us that much of the equipment is getting closer to the end of its useful life.

One example of equipment that needs replacing are the ultra-violet light disinfection systems used at the two wastewater treatment plants we operate. At the Lakota plant, the replacement project, which is currently under construction, will cost over three million dollars alone. Construction is presently scheduled for completion later this year. A study to determine how to best replace the ultra violet light disinfection system at the Redondo plant is also underway. We are also rebuilding the digester at the Lakota Plant and transforming a holding tank into a digester to increase capacity.

The problem with infiltration of storm water into the sewage collection systems during heavy rain events is plaguing both plants. The situation at Redondo is more critical and we have been monitoring infiltration and studying alternatives to reduce the amount of it in the collection basins for the past several years. Depending on which alternative we select, costs for addressing this problem in the sewage collections system could alone exceed forty million dollars.

Regulations over the past thirty-plus years have placed more focus on limiting what is in the wastewater over the hydraulic (flow) capacity of the system. Under the current system, each component is essentially regulated individually. For example, limits on suspended solids and biological oxygen demand are separately considered. This has resulted in differing and stricter operating parameters, which,

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Lakehaven Links

Our Mission

The Lakehaven Water and Sewer District is committed to the continued delivery of safe, reliable and high quality drinking water and environmentally responsible sewer service to our customers.

Board of Commissioners

Len Englund, President

Tim McClain, Vice President

Don Miller, Secretary

Peter Sanchez

Ron Nowicki

Regular Board of Commissioners meetings are held at 6:00 p.m the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month at the Lakehaven Center at 31531 1st Ave South, Federal Way.

Contact Us

Federal Way: 253-941-1516

Tacoma: 253-927-2922

After Hours Emergencies:
253-941-1516

Business Hours:

Monday – Friday

8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

www.lakehaven.org



What a Winter!

Snow in the mountains is great for skiing. It also helps to sustain the water supply and provides a picturesque backdrop to our Puget Sound region.

Snow in the lowlands is another matter. During our brief spell with snow, fallen trees and branches interrupted power service to our wells and sewer pump stations and slick hills made it slow and difficult to move generators around to re-supply services. As if that wasn't enough, heavy rains moved in to wash out the snow. The melting snow, combined with the constant rains, quickly found its way into our sewer collection system, challenging our pump stations and treatment plants with excess flows. Staff spent many hours to contain the extra flows and, in the end, was able to maintain most services with minimal disruptions.

Goodbye winter, hello spring!

2017 Rate Comparison Survey

Included with the current edition of your Newsletter is a 2017 water and sewer rate survey comparing the rates you pay for water and sewer service with the rates paid by the customers of neighboring cities and districts. In order to assist you in understanding the survey, a few items of clarification are necessary.

The survey this year includes a change from the survey the District has provided in prior years. We are now showing the rates charged to customers inside and outside of a city's boundaries where the city maintains differential rates. At Lakehaven, the cost of service, and thus the rates, are slightly different inside and outside of the City of Federal Way. The reason for this is that the City of Federal Way collects a franchise fee on water and sewer service within the City of 3.6% and contributes to the cost of maintaining the portion of the water system that provides suppression capacity within the City. Because the City's payment of the cost of fire suppression facilities within the city is greater than the cost of the franchise fee, water rates are slightly lower inside the City of Federal Way. With the addition of the 3.6% franchise fee on customers within the City, sewer rates are higher by that amount inside the City. The net impact is that the average water and sewer customer inside and outside of the City pays nearly the same amount. The rates we show for the District are the rates charged to customers inside the City of Federal Way and include the adjustment related to the franchise fee.

Most, if not all, cities in the area impose utility taxes on the water and sewer rates they charge. For any given city, we are uncertain whether rates shown by the city include those taxes. Where the rate shown does not include the tax, the amounts shown for those cities will not reflect the full cost of the service.

A couple of final clarifications will be helpful. There are situations where the water purveyors shown in the survey charge different summer and water rates to residential customers. Where that is the case, we show a blended rate to provide the average cost of water over a year. On the sewer side, note that a relatively small number of District customers within the areas that flow to Tacoma and King County for wastewater treatment pay a couple of dollars more a month for sewer service.

Commissioners Corner, cont.

in turn, lead to the need to employ new equipment and technology for the treatment and process control systems.

Because of the aging of the infrastructure and the changing regulations, we will be spending approximately forty million dollars to upgrade our two existing plants over the next seven years. We have been planning and saving for this expenditure for the past ten years, but that does not make the task easier. It is our role to guide the decisions as to what is best for the next twenty-five years. To do this effectively, we need to be mindful of your ability to pay; the future regulatory climate; future capacity needs; and the need to keep the plants operating safely and successfully while we make these changes.

This is part of what we have been up to. I consider it a privilege to be able to work on this important task on behalf of you, the owner/ratepayer. Thank you.