

Commissioners' Corner



Peter Sanchez

My wife and I moved to what was then the unincorporated Federal Way area in 1982. The initial population of 48,000 has increased to close to 100,000 in just the area within the incorporated City of Federal Way.

The District serves approximately 120,000 customers, and our water and sewer system has grown right along with the population. This growth requires more people and equipment to maintain a reliable level of utility service. Like most growing organizations, there comes a time when the current building space is no longer adequate. Lakehaven has come to that juncture.

The two main buildings on 1st Ave South were built in the late '70's and have been remodeled and upgraded several times. The Lakehaven Center, used for Board and other meetings, is a modular building that sits on the grounds of the current French Lake dog park. None of these buildings adequately serves the needs of the District.

It is not just the age of the buildings that makes them inadequate. In the main office and the water shop, all of the available workspaces are being used, leaving employees working "cheek to jowl". Storage space is likewise overflowing. Harsh fluorescent lights provide lighting, with many workspaces lacking windows for natural light. The HVAC systems are outdated, often leaving some areas too hot or too cold. The windows allow heat to escape in the winter and solar radiation to overheat the buildings in the summer. The administrative staff is in the main office while the engineering/field staff are in the water shop, making it inconvenient for customers and difficult for staff to meet.

The question for the Board is what to do about it. The District has been studying this issue for several years and has looked at three options. The first option was another remodel, which was quickly rejected because the core problems would still exist. The next option was to move. We looked at existing buildings and raw land, but nothing deemed adequate was found. We considered just moving the administrative office and leaving field crews in the current location, but that would continue to leave staff fragmented.

Continued...

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

Tim McClain, President
Don Miller, Vice President
Peter Sanchez, Secretary
Ron Nowicki
Len Englund

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

Commissioners' Corner, cont.

The third (and chosen) option is to construct new buildings. District staff and an architectural consultant have looked extensively at current and future facility needs with the aim of having a building that will still be usable fifty years from now. Along with a new office, a building to house the field crews will be constructed. Currently, because of space issues, some of the field crews and equipment are housed at the Lakota Treatment Plant. The new buildings will allow all of the crews and equipment to be under one roof and avoid the need to deal with the sometime difficult road conditions at Lakota.

The concept for the new Lakehaven campus is complete. The next step is to choose an architectural firm for the final design and move ahead with permitting and construction. The District's aim is to have this completed by 2020. Stay tuned for updates!

Leak Adjustment Program Update

To make sure that the Leak Adjustment Program remains efficient for customers and staff alike, the Board has modified the Program to provide that leak adjustments will not be made where the total amount of the adjustment is less than \$50 dollars. This change will become effective May 1, 2018.

Online Bill Display

Lakehaven Water and Sewer District contracts with Retail Lockbox Merchant Services (RLMS) for the processing of our online utility bill payments. When you pay your bill online, you are actually leaving our website and logging into RLMS' secure web payment system. This has a number of advantages and a few inconveniences. One of the most important advantages is that RLMS expends a great deal of effort in keeping your credit card and banking information secure. Since Lakehaven does not store any of your confidential financial information within our system, there is no risk of these records being compromised if hackers somehow breach our network. In other words, nobody can steal your credit card number from us, because we do not keep a record of it.

Unfortunately, this level of security affects the way our payment system works. Lakehaven transmits your utility bill to RLMS on your regular bill date, where you may view it online once you have set up your account and password. If you wait until after the bill becomes past due, you would not see any additional charges such as penalties, interest, shutoff fees, door hanger charges, etc. that have been added to your account on the copy of the bill stored in RLMS' system until the next bill is sent. This can cause some confusion, since the bill shown on your screen might no longer match your current account balance if new charges have been added or payments have been made. If you have any uncertainty about the amount you owe on your account, our customer service representatives will be happy to provide the most up-to-date information and take your payment over the phone when you call.

2018 Rate Comparison Survey

Included with your bill is the "2018 Water and Sewer Rate Survey", which compares the rates you pay for water and sewer service with the rates paid by the customers of neighboring cities and districts.

Please note that District rates are slightly different inside and outside of the City of Federal Way. The reason for this is that Federal Way collects a franchise fee on water and sewer service within the city of 3.6%, and contributes to the cost of maintaining fire suppression capacity within the City. As a result, water rates are slightly lower inside the City of Federal Way. With the addition of the 3.6% franchise fee on sewer customers within the City, sewer rates are higher by that amount inside the City. The District rates we show in the survey are the rates charged to customers inside the City of Federal Way.

Most (if not all) cities impose utility taxes on the water and sewer rates they charge. For any given city in the survey, we are uncertain whether rates shown by the city include those taxes. Additionally, some agencies 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 areas that flow to Tacoma and King County for wastewater treatment pay more for sewer service.

