

## Commissioners' Corner



Laura Belvin

It has been a privilege to serve as your commissioner the last two years. As I have had the opportunity to interact with the public as a commissioner, I have had many of the same questions asked of me. Many of you may also have these same questions, so I'd like to address some of them here.

When I introduce myself as a Lakehaven Commissioner, many people assume that I am employed full time by the utility (with a nice salary). Well no, Lakehaven commissioners are elected officials of a special purpose district that provides

water and sewer service. Lakehaven is like the school district and the fire district in that they are governed by a board of elected officials. Commissioners are paid a per diem of \$128, for days we have meetings (pay limited to average of 9 meetings/month). I put in time daily being a commissioner, so the compensation is merely a stipend for someone like me that has several Master's degrees.

The next question is often; "What does a commissioner do"? We are, in essence, the equivalent of the city council for the utility. We make the 'laws' (set policy) for the utility. We approve the budget, set rates, approve capital projects, and oversee the General Manager and General Counsel. That also means that there are things we don't do. We don't work for the City of Federal Way, and have no jurisdiction over city policy. We have no control over the city taxation of our utility, nor can we do anything we want on city property (like place facilities for the homeless in parks).

Another misconception about the utility is that the water and sewer service is provided by the City of Federal Way. Tacoma is a city that provides water service to some Lakehaven sewer customers, but the City of Federal Way is not in the utility business. Lakehaven is its own governmental jurisdiction providing water and sewer service. We have our own permitting, billing, and engineering departments.

People also assume that because we are a water utility that we take care of surface drainage and stream quality. Surface water management is taken care of by the public works departments of your city or the county. Rainwater needs to go into the storm drainage system, not into the sewer system through the side sewer; it is expensive and unnecessary to treat as wastewater.

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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, Acting Board President  
Don Miller, Secretary  
Laura Belvin, Commissioner  
Peter Sanchez, Commissioner

Regular Board of Commissioners meetings are held at 6:00 p.m the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month. Please check the website for meeting information.

### 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](http://www.lakehaven.org)

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Hopefully you now have a clearer picture of what a commissioner is, and how the utility is separate from the city. Informed customers appreciate the utility more and can help make it better. Since you have read this far in the newsletter, thank you for wanting to be informed.

## Implementation of King County Right-of-Way Rental Charges

As the litigation brought by local utilities challenging the King County right-of-way rental charge winds down, the District is faced with negotiating with King County the rental charge that was upheld by the Washington Supreme Court in its 2019 ruling in the case. This negotiation will result in a charge to property owners in unincorporated King County to cover the compensation that must be paid to King County for the District's location of water and sewer mains in County right of way. The Board will be reviewing the charge during its consideration of rates and charges for years 2022 and beyond. It is anticipated that a rental charge will be added to the bills of residents within unincorporated King County, possibly beginning in January 2022.

## Commissioner Ron Nowicki Retires from Lakehaven Board



Commissioner Ron Nowicki announced his resignation from the Lakehaven Board at the Board's September 23rd meeting. The move, precipitated by his move full time to Arizona at the end of September, ends his sixteen-year tenure of service to the customers of the District.

Ron, a mechanical engineer and former owner of an environmental consulting firm in Federal Way, was instrumental in the District's development of a robust capital improvement plan that will insure the operational reliability of the utility systems for decades to come. He was active in the community and well-known among board members of water/sewer districts across the state.

Acting Board President Len Englund notes "Ron brought a huge wealth of engineering knowledge and dedication to details to the management of the utility. Lakehaven is a leader in the water and sewer industry largely due to Ron's service over the past sixteen years. We will miss his attention to detail, expertise and wonderful sense of humor".

The Lakehaven family wishes Ron and his wife Bonnie the best on their relocation to Arizona!

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## Moratorium on Shutoffs Ends

The Governor's moratorium on shutting off water service to utility customers with account delinquencies, which also prohibited the imposition of penalties for non-payment, expired on September 30th. With that, water utilities are free to resume service terminations and the imposition of non-payment penalties on delinquent accounts.

The Lakehaven Board has chosen to delay shutting off customers with delinquent bills through the end of the year. The purpose for the delay is to allow customers with delinquent accounts the opportunity to make arrangements for paying delinquent accounts. Beginning January 1, the District will begin imposing both interest charges on new delinquencies and penalties, reduced from 10% to 5%, for non-payment. For accounts where payment arrangements have not been made, or met, shutoffs on accounts with delinquencies greater than \$500 will start in March. The same will apply to accounts over \$200 in July. On September 1, 2022, all normal collection activities will resume on accounts where payment arrangements have not be made or met.

Assistance may be available from the King County Multi-Service Center for low income households with account delinquencies. Their number is 253-838-6810. We also have a limited amount of resources in our existing Customer Assistance Program (CAP) for funding assistance.

The District is committed to working with you on arrangements that enable you to pay your account balance and avoid penalties and shutoffs. If you are unable at the present time to pay your account in full, we urge you to contact our Customer Service Department to make payment arrangements. The number to reach Customer Service is 253-946-1516.