

Lake Stevens Sewer District announces rate increase

BY PAM STEVENS | EDITOR

Environmentally friendly means higher costs

Environmental requirements lead to governmental mandates which, in turn leads the Lake Stevens Sewer District Sewer to increase sewer rates by \$10 per month beginning Nov. 1 of this year.

Sewer Commissioners have been concerned about the necessary rate hike for several months and have spent countless hours with experts coming up with what they see as the lowest amount possible to cover the costs of the new Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) that needs to be built within the Lake Stevens Sewer District.

"We've been looking at different things to minimize our rate impact," Mike Jauhola, Professional Engineer and Project Manager for Lake Stevens Sewer District said. "Our recommendation would be to go to a \$60 per month rate."

The Sewer District has been preparing for the new and improved treatment plant for the past several years by saving funds received by developers when building new subdivisions and also by procuring low interest loans with the help of the City of Lake Stevens.

Through these efforts the Sewer District will not only have a state of the art WWTP but they will be able to keep the costs down from what they previously expected them to be.

"The new Waste Water Treatment Plant is going to fill the requirements of the future," Commissioner George Wood said. "I'm appreciative of the planning."

Wood also explained that because of the low interest loans, rate payers will actually be saving what could have been an additional \$20 per month.

One Lake Stevens resident was unhappy about the increase, even though he understood the necessity to meet mandates.

"This is pretty exorbitant," he said. He also inquired how much other cities in Snohomish County were paying for sewer each month.

Many cities around Lake Stevens will have lower rates, however, none of their WWTP have been upgraded to meet upcoming federal or state mandates which each city will have to meet in the near future.

“When you compare rates, you are comparing apples to oranges,” Wood said. The new treatment plant will no longer be in the flood plain, it will be able to keep up with future growth and it meets future environmental requirements, he said. He also explained that Marysville and Everett both have their waste water pouring into the Sound.

“They are discharging into Puget Sound and they are going to have to do something about it,” he said.

“Society is demanding these things,” Darwin Smith, Sewer District Manager said.

Commissioners understand that this will not be easy with the economy down but they feel that in the long run it will save rate payers money.

“The whole district was started to protect the Lake,” Lake Stevens resident Malcolm McNaughton said. “Ten dollars is a small price to pay.” The Sewer District is holding an Open House for the public to ask questions and find out what is involved in the new WWTP.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, Oct. 16 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Lake Stevens Sewer District located at 1106 Vernon Road, Suite A in Lake Stevens.