



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Belmont Sewer Charges – and Public Meeting Announcement

Belmont, CA – During the week of March 24th, all property owners received a notice in the mail regarding the revision of sewer rates. Belmont, like almost every other public agency in the State, has an aging sewer infrastructure. In most communities throughout the State, user charges for water and wastewater have risen dramatically over the past several years. Increases from 10 to 40 percent are not uncommon in any given year. Generally, there has been a chronic under funding of the assets responsible for the collection and treatment of wastewater. The City’s sewer pipes, pump stations and sewage treatment plant are old and in need of major renovation. User fees are the source of funds for these renovation projects. Consequently, the question is how much rates will increase rather than “if” rates will increase. In Belmont’s case, the fee requirements are broken out into four categories: Belmont Operating fee requirements; Belmont Capital Infrastructure fee requirements (sewer pipes, pump stations, laterals, etc.); South Bayside System Authority (SBSA) Operating fee requirements; and, SBSA Capital Infrastructure fee requirements. SBSA is the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) established in the early 1970’s between four public agencies: Belmont, San Carlos, Redwood City and West Bay Sanitary District (Menlo Park). SBSA is responsible for treatment of Belmont’s sewage. SBSA’s sewage treatment plant is old and in need of major renovation. The individual cities of the JPA assess the fees for both operations and capital improvements on the City side and for the SBSA operating and capital requirements at the Sewer Treatment Plant.



Last year, there was no sewer charge increase; rather, the City Council requested that staff study different rate charging methodologies that would more realistically distribute the costs to the users.

The methodology has now been changed to charge consumers based on a fixed rate plus volumetric rather than on just volumetric (usage). The Council favored the option of a weighted fixed rate plus volumetric flow combination, which would most effectively recover the costs of operation and capital requirements with a realistic match between low and high strength users and fixed cost requirements. The City Council also approved the recommendation to change the flow data period to the previous winter months, in order to have the information necessary in a timely manner to comply with all the steps of the 45-day Notice to property owners.

The City of Belmont provides wastewater utility service to about 8,300 parcels or 10,400 dwelling units. The City's sewer system is intended to be financially self-sufficient. The money for capital and operating expenses comes primarily from these sewer service rates. The City Council authorized a study to make sure that rates and charges produce enough revenue to pay for its daily costs and future improvements. The study also calculates the rates required to make sure that the sewer revenue is enough to pay these costs. This rate study is on file with the City Clerk for your review. Upon City Council approval of the proposed rates, residential ratepayers can calculate their anticipated annual sewer charge very easily at: www.belmont.gov Hot Topics/2009 Sewer Rates/ Calculate Your Proposed Sewer Rate Now! Look at your Mid-Peninsula Water District water usage for the months of December 1, 2006 through March 31, 2007. Enter the monthly fees on the calculator and your approximate annual sewer charge will be calculated. If you do not have this information, you may call Mid Peninsula Water District at 591-8941.

The proposed rates most heavily impact the very low flow (hundred cubic feet) hcf users. The reason for this is that, in the past, the low volumetric residential users, up to 3.5 hcf per month, paid only the minimum rate. The new methodology basically re-sets the rates and includes a fixed charge to all users of \$238.16 plus the hcf volumetric charges. This method more evenly distributes the actual costs of the operation and maintenance to all users and not only the higher hcf ratepayers. In subsequent years, the percentage increase across all ratepayers will be more consistent.

A Public Hearing will be held on May 13, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. at One Twin Pines Lane, Belmont, CA 94002 in the City Council Chambers. The City Council will conduct the public hearing on the proposed rate increase. At the time of the public hearing, the City Council will hear and consider all protests and objections concerning these matters and will consider and may adopt the increased rates and charges.

There will be a Community Meeting on City Sewer Charges held on April 28, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Belmont Library Community Room (1110 Alameda de las Pulgas, Belmont, CA). The Public Hearing will then be held on May 13, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. at One Twin Pines Lane, Belmont, CA 94002 in the City Council Chambers. The City Council will conduct the public hearing on the proposed rate increase. At the time of the public hearing, the City Council will hear and consider all protests and objections concerning these matters and will consider and may adopt the increased rates and charges.

As the community moves toward solving the expensive problem of updating and maintaining our sewer system infrastructure, the City welcomes your participation and discourse as decisions are made toward safeguarding the community health and well-being, and to maintain local property values. It is our intent to address infrastructure improvements proactively and with fiscal responsibility.

For more information, please call Maureen Lennon in the Belmont Finance Department at 650-595-7434.

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