

City News

January 2022

New Water and Sewer Rates

At the November 8, 2021 City Council meeting, the Council unanimously approved a proposed increase of the City's water and sewer rates. These increases were proposed as a result of studies that sought to find rate schedules that would ensure there is sufficient revenue to cover operating costs, capital expenditures, and debt service for the City's water and sewer systems. Those studies recommended an-

nual rate increases for the City's water and sewer services that were in-line with the goal of covering the required costs.

City of Veneta water rates were approved to increase 2% from \$17.06 to \$17.40 an increase of \$0.34 and sewer rates will increase 7% from \$59.50 to \$63.66 an increase of \$4.16. The tiered water rates will increase 2% as well, currently the rate for 3,000

(See "Rates" on page 2)

City Receives Two Awards

The City of Veneta is excited to announce that it has recently won two awards focused on civic engagement and budgeting!

The first award is from the National Night Out organization, which oversees the annual event of the same name focused on public safety awareness and community-building. The City of Veneta's National Night Out event was held on August 3, 2021, at City Park and featured a firetruck from the Lane Fire Authority and a dunk tank for the Veneta Sheriff's deputies. The City won the award alongside other cities

(See "Awards" on page 2)



New Payment Drop Box

City Hall has a new payment drop box! It has been moved closer to the entrance into the City Hall parking lot and is now located next to the Lane County voting box.



You can drop your monthly water account payments into the secure box or you can pay online. To get connected to our online payment system you can scan the QR code to the right.

Simply open your camera on your cell phone to scan the QR code which will take you to Xpress Bill Pay. If you have any questions regarding your bill please call 541-935-2191.



CIVIC CALENDAR JANUARY 2022		
All meetings held at City Hall unless otherwise noted		
1	Happy New Year!	2022
4	Planning Commission Meeting	6:30 p.m.
5	Park Board Meeting	4:30 p.m.
7	Business Assistance Committee Meeting	10:00 a.m.
10	City Council Meeting, Urban Renewal Agency meeting - immediately following	6:30 p.m.
12	Economic Development Committee Meeting	2:00 p.m.
17	Martin Luther King Jr. Day City Hall Closed	 Closed
20	Municipal Court	8:30 a.m.
24	City Council Work Session - Park SDC; State of the City Address by Mayor Keith Weiss,	5:00 p.m.
28	Business Assistance Committee Meeting	10:00 a.m.

State of the City Address - January 24th, 2022

Mayor Keith Weiss will be delivering his State of the City Address during the January 24 Council Meeting held at 5:00 p.m. at Veneta City Hall

Rates

gallons use is \$11.16, the new rate would be \$11.37 for an increase of \$0.21. These rates will take effect January 1, 2022.

This increase is the last in a series of recommended rate changes from the City's water rate study. The City will perform another study this year to determine recommended rate changes for future years. Fees

collected from water and sewer usage go directly toward maintaining and improving the Veneta Municipal Water and Sewer System.

If you have any questions regarding your utility account please contact City Hall at 541-935-2191.

Awards

below 5,000 in population for hosting successful community-focused public safety events.

The second award came from the Government Finance Officer's Association, which provides guidance to cities for creating their budgets. The City of Veneta won their 2021 Disting-



guished Budget Presentation award for its 2021-2022 budget, the 8th such win in a row! The City's budget is always available on our website at www.venetaoregon.gov.

Code Amendments: Short Term Rentals & Cottage Housing

The City is initiating two separate code amendments to keep up with changes in the housing and lodging markets. The first amendment will remove the requirement to obtain a Conditional Use Permit for short-term rentals; the second amendment will allow cottage housing projects, which group smaller homes around a central courtyard. Both amendments will be presented to the Planning Commission at their January 4, 2022 meeting. While these amendments are explained further below, drafts of all amendment materials are available for review by request via email: lgarbett@ci.veneta.or.us or calling 541-935-2191.

The City of Veneta currently allows "Bed & Breakfast" lodging in residential zones with approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Staff would like to find a way for the current short-term operators to continue without the need for a lengthy permit process. The amendment would allow short-term rental operators to use a shorter staff approval process instead. That way, short-term rental operators are aware of both land use code requirements and pay taxes required of lodging businesses.

The second amendment would address cottage housing. Cottage housing is a grouping of dwelling units clustered around a common area with a similar design. Cottage housing has gained popularity in recent years as a type of infill development where a smaller and more affordable housing option is often unavailable. It can "bridge the gap" between rental

housing and single-family detached homes. The lack of any standards for such projects in Veneta's development code makes it unlikely that developers will propose cottage housing. The proposed amendment is intended to regulate the basic parameters. This could encourage developers to invest in cottage housing and diversify Veneta's housing market.

Anyone wishing to provide testimony on one or both applications may submit it in writing to staff prior to the hearing(s), or testify at the hearings orally. General conversations with staff do not go into the record and do not count as testimony. Both amendments are scheduled for public hearings before the Veneta Planning Commission on January 4, 2022. The meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall. If the Commission recommends one or both move forward for adoption, they will be scheduled for consideration by City Council at the February 14, 2022 council meeting.



Public Safety Fee Q&A

Public Safety Fee Timeline

Staff has been communicating about the proposed public safety fee through several communication channels beginning in May of 2021:

- * City Facebook page
- * Utility Bill Inserts
- * "Chats with Matt" at City Hall
- * Website Updates
- * City Council meetings

May 2021

Council explored the need for a Public Safety Fee in a work session

June 2021

1st reading of Ordinance 562, establishing a Public Safety Fee

July 2021

2nd reading of Ordinance 562

August 2021

Council reviewed proposed Public Safety Fee amount and options

2-sided flier accompanied the August Utility Bills electronically and in paper form.

September 2021

Council passed Resolution 1334 establishing a Public Safety Fee amount

Scan the QR code to visit the City of Veneta public safety page.



Q: Why do we need a Public Safety Fee?

A: Of the many services that the City of Veneta provides its citizens through property taxes, public safety services is the one most likely to come to mind. However, city property taxes also pay for parks, city administration, community planning, and some construction debt. Public safety services receive the lion's share of city property taxes—generally fluctuating between 52% and 59% over the last ten years. As public safety services command more property tax revenue, other city services receive less property tax support.

Additionally, property taxes alone haven't been enough to pay for public safety services over the last eleven years. In 2009, the City started directing all of its internet franchise fee revenues into the police services budget, as well as using money from the Law Enforcement Fund's Ending Fund Balance—the emergency reserve.

In 2015, the City started directing Zumwalt Campground fees to the public safety services budget. Additionally, the emergency reserve had declined roughly \$150,000 to a Fiscal Year 2015-16 Ending Fund Balance of \$271,251, an amount \$110,000 below the City's ending fund balance reserve policy of having four months of operating expenses plus \$100,000.

Over the subsequent two years the City directed two more revenue streams to the public safety services budget: City marijuana sales taxes starting in 2016, and State marijuana sales taxes starting in 2017. This helped to stabilize the eroding emergency reserve. Meanwhile, internet franchise fee revenues dropped by half from over \$50,000 to roughly \$25,000. The Law Enforcement Fund's emergency reserve is now \$197,000 below what it should be to meet the City's reserves policy—nearly double the deficit from six years ago.

Q: Why am I being charged a Public Safety Fee?

A: The City's public safety services funding strategy is not sustainable in the face of diminishing fee revenue and the consistent use of emergency reserves. A more stable funding source is needed

to stabilize public safety service funding for the future. A public safety fee as part of the City's monthly utility bill could provide that stability and make the City's public safety services funding sustainable.

Q: How was the rate determined?

A: Staff used two steps to develop a monthly fee amount proposal for the recently created public safety fee: 1) Setting a target revenue amount based on clear policy objectives, and 2) Selecting a time frame to achieve those

policy objectives. The two steps go hand-in-hand because the City Council must decide, on an annual basis pursuant to Ordinance No. 562, what is an acceptable monthly public safety fee that balances policy need and affordability.

Q: How often will the Public Safety Fee be reviewed?

A: Annually in May and June by the Budget Committee and City Council

Q: Will the Public Safety Fee only go up?

A: No, the Public Safety Fee will go up or down according to property tax revenue and programming costs.



Survey Results

Survey results both in 2019 and 2021 put public safety as top items that our citizens are concerned with and want more information about. A Communication Strategic Plan recently adopted by the City Council will focus on additional communication about public safety.

Here is a look at your monthly utility bill with the Public Safety Fee

A line item labeled "Public Safety Fee" will be added to your monthly utility bill as shown below in yellow

BILLING STATEMENT							
ACCOUNT NO.		SERVICE ADDRESS			BILL DATE	DUUE DATE	PAY THIS AMOUNT
2323.00		88184 8th St			1/31/202	2/15/202	\$102.07
METER READING DETAIL						BILLING SUMMARY	
FROM	TO	METER	PREVIOUS READ	PRESENT READ	USAGE	Previous Billing	93.36
12/27/21	1/26/22	61183448	626	629	3	Payment - Thank You!	-93.36
						Adjustments	.00
						Balance Forward	.00
						Water Base	\$17.40
						Water Consumption	\$11.37
						Sewer	\$63.66
						Drainage	\$2.64
						Street Utility	\$3.00
						Public Safety Fee	\$4.00
						Current Charges	\$102.07
USAGE HISTORY						PAY THIS AMOUNT	\$102.07
13 Months Consumption (usage) History (Reading in 1000 gallons)						If bill is not paid by the 15th, a PAST DUE statement will be mailed. Payment must be made within 10 days of the past due statement or service will be disconnected and a \$40 fee will be applied.	

Ways you can pay your utility bill

- In person at City Hall: 88184 8th St. We accept cash, checks, money orders and credit/debit cards
- Online with Xpress Bill Pay. Visit the City of Veneta website or scan the QR code to the right
- Mail a check or money order to PO Box 458, Veneta, OR 97487
- Call 541-935-2191 to make a payment over the phone (please have your account number)

