

Longview faces two major utility projects

The City of Longview provides drinking water, sewer, garbage collection, and stormwater drainage services to residents and businesses in the city to ensure the health and safety of its citizens. The City also provides water and sewer service to many Cowlitz County residents and businesses outside the city limits, but within the urban area. Longview's utility systems are critical parts of the foundation of our community, affecting our quality of life and the ability to grow and provide economic opportunities.

Making tough choices

We are currently facing two significant utility challenges. One concerns our water supply and treatment, and the second concerns our wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal.

For several years, the Longview City Council and City staff have been evaluating various potential long-term solutions for continuing to provide a safe and reliable water supply and for providing wastewater treatment to accommodate the growth that is occurring in West Longview.

Getting to the point where final decisions can be made has taken time because the problems are complex. There are many potential solutions to evaluate, and all of the options are expensive. We want to be the best possible stewards of our community's resources, we have only one chance to "get it right" in making decisions about facilities that will serve you and Longview's future residents for decades and generations to come.

Making such decisions doesn't come often during the life of a community – many city councils can come and go without having to make even one. The City now has the responsibility of making two within a short time span. In searching for the most cost-effective answers, the City will consider both short-term and long-term impacts.

Photo 1: Sewer line replacement project on 30th Avenue.

Photo 2: Water Filter Treatment Plant.



Utility Issues at a glance

Water Treatment Issues:

- Reliability of an aging treatment plant
- Sediment buildup from the Cowlitz River
- Long-term supply and demand

Potential Solutions at a Glance:

- Build a new treatment facility with deep aquifer wells at the Mint Farm Industrial Park
- Expand/rebuild the existing plant; relocate intake on the Cowlitz River

Sewer Treatment Issues:

- Lagoons treatment capacity used up
- Operating permit cannot be renewed

Potential Solutions at a Glance:

- Abandon lagoons and divert sewage to Three Rivers Regional Wastewater Authority treatment plant
- Construct new treatment plant at lagoons and discharge to wetlands
- Construct new treatment plant at lagoons and discharge to the Columbia River

Utilities are self-supporting

By law, city utility rates must be based on the cost of providing the service and cannot be used to pay for other city operations such as police, fire, parks, and library services. The Longview City Council has adopted the policy that general city taxes will not be used to help pay for utility services. For all of our utilities, our mission is to provide our customers with reliable, quality service at the most cost effective price possible.



Comparison of 2007 Combined Residential Solid Waste/Recycling, Water, Sewer & Stormwater Rates (cost per month)

Olympia	\$151.05
Chehalis	\$133.86
Mountlake Terrace	\$131.93
Mercer Island	\$129.71
Centralia	\$123.83
Port Angeles	\$116.40
Kalama	\$112.15
Renton	\$112.08
Vancouver	\$107.12
Aberdeen	\$101.26
Auburn	\$99.42
Bellingham	\$98.11
Everett	\$88.50
Kent	\$88.31
Longview (2008)	\$86.33
Edmonds	\$83.70
Kelso	\$81.70
Lynnwood	\$65.23

Why we have to consider rate increases

As our community grows and the utility systems age, our energy use increases and we must repair and replace more and more of our facilities – pipes break and pumps wear out. Our facilities operate around the clock all year long, and our customers expect to get good water whenever they turn on their faucet and to have their sewage carried away whenever they flush the toilet. This requires us to maintain and operate these facilities to provide a high level of reliability, and to respond immediately when parts of the system break. Additionally, new federal and state public health and environmental regulations often require us to upgrade our facilities and change the way we operate.

Like our citizens, the City is experiencing increasing costs in almost all aspects of the services we provide, from the costs of pipe and fuel to the costs to upgrade and construct new facilities. While rate increases for our garbage and stormwater utilities are expected to be modest, major deficiencies and regulatory changes in the water and sewer utilities will require significant increases over the next few years.

Monthly Residential Utility Rates

<u>Utility</u>	<u>2007 Rate</u>	<u>2008 Rate*</u>	<u>\$ Increase</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
Water	\$20.88	\$23.87	\$2.99	14.5%
Sewer	\$39.89	\$43.60	\$3.71	9.3%
Stormwater	\$3.54	\$3.79	\$.025	7%
Solid Waste	\$14.92	\$15.07	\$.015	1%
Combined:	\$79.23	\$86.33	\$7.10	9%

*As adopted by Longview City Council on January 24, 2008, effective February 1, 2008.

Stay informed

Information in this publication is being provided to help explain the nature of these utility projects and why they are necessary, and to give you a brief overview of the City's utility systems. Beyond this material, be aware that there will be future public meetings about these projects. We encourage you to stay abreast of the process and to participate as much as you can in these discussions as we move toward final decisions.

You may read more about our utility projects online at www.mylongview.com, or you may request a copy of a recent insert in The Daily News that addresses the utility issues in more detail by calling 442-5200.



February/March 2008