

Newsletter

The City of Mill Valley intends to raise its Sewer Service Charges to reflect significant increases in costs that are largely outside of City control. These costs include increasing wastewater treatment fees, inflation, increased costs to improve and replace an aging infrastructure, and increased costs to comply with more stringent environmental regulations.

The current Sewer Service Charge has not increased since 2004. The City has kept rates tremendously low. Such low rates have provided a very limited revenue stream to make the system-wide improvements needed by our aging facilities. Now the City must raise rates to provide funding for a sustained replacement program of old sewer pipes, to cover increasing wastewater treatment and disposal charges, and to fund a substantially increased and regular sewer pipe maintenance effort.

The City is proposing to increase the current Sewer Service Charge, effective July 1, 2011 to \$694. Over the next five years the rates will be adjusted as summarized below. Rates for businesses and multifamily residential will be increased by a proportionate amount.

Single Family Residence Current and Proposed Sewer Charges Increase

Fiscal Year:	Prior 6 Years	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Residential Sewer Service Charge	\$297	\$297	\$694	\$757	\$784	\$792	\$827
Percent Increase		None	134%	9%	4%	1%	4%

The Mill Valley Wastewater Management System

The System

Wastewater collection and treatment are among the most essential of municipal services. These services and associated facilities are fundamental to support public health and sustain our natural surroundings. A wastewater system includes collection through a network of pipes that start at our homes and businesses and carry wastewater to a facility for treatment to remove contaminants harmful to human health and the ecosystems of the surrounding waterways.

It is the City of Mill Valley's role to maintain the collection system. The Department of Public Works manages the local collection system which consists of 59 miles of sewer mains serving roughly 7,000 customers. The Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin (SASM) is made up of six agencies including the City of Mill Valley and five smaller neighboring districts; it is that agency's role to treat our wastewater. The Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin treats wastewater at its treatment plant located in Mill Valley at the end of Sycamore Avenue near the entrance to Bay Front Park.

Challenges

A large portion of the sewer mains in the City are clay pipe installed before the 1960's. These mains are subject to cracking and need to be improved and replaced; a fifty-year service life is typical for pipes of this nature. Replacing these mains will reduce the amount of ground and storm water that leak into the sewer pipes and flow to the treatment plant for processing. Infiltration of groundwater into the sewers increases substantially during winter storms. Efforts to limit stormwater infiltration will reduce the volume of water which requires costly treatment, and the volume of treated water discharged to the environment. It will also greatly diminish the potential for sewage overflows.

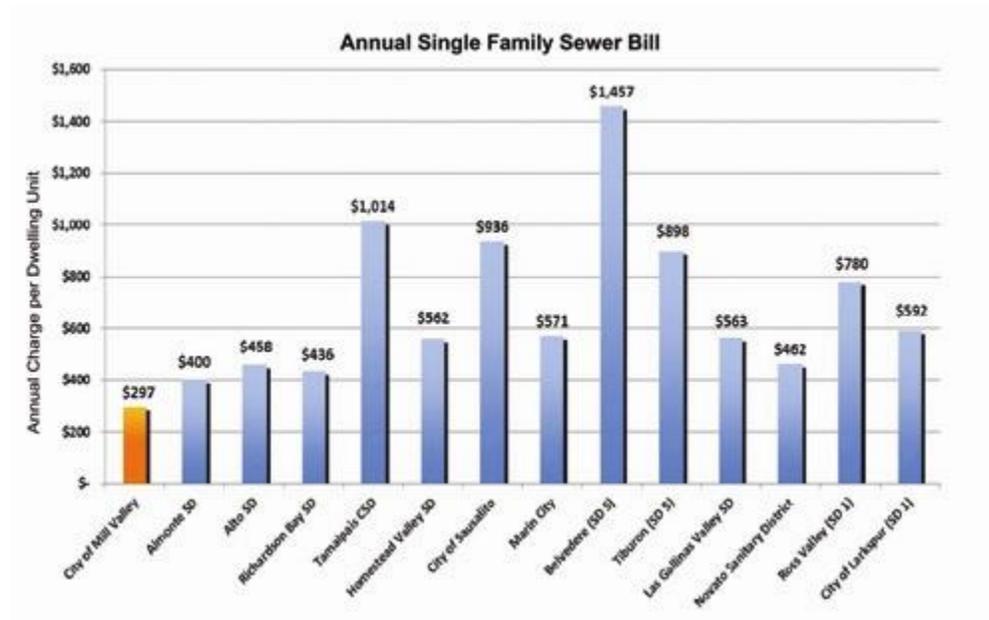
Federal and state laws have increasingly required sewer districts to upgrade their sewer systems to prevent sewer overflows. These same mandates have also increased penalties charged to sewer districts in the event of an overflow. In response to these mandates (and our own commitment to enhance the health of our local waterways), the City must substantially increase the frequency of cleaning, repair and replacement of the sewer collection system components.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the sewer service charge?

The Sewer Service Charge is the amount you pay each year for sewer services to your property, and it appears on your property tax bill. For a single-family residence, the Sewer Service Charge is currently \$297 per year. Other types of housing and businesses are charged based on this amount through a formula that determines their impact on the sewer system compared to a single-family residence.

Currently, Mill Valley's annual sewer rate is the lowest in our region and substantially below the average charge. The chart below compares the City's current rate to other Marin County agencies.



How is the proposed sewer service charge increase calculated?

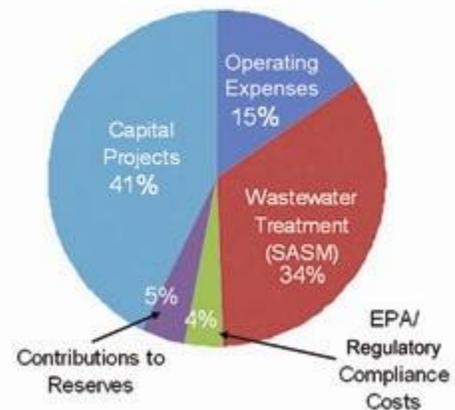
The City's Sewer Service Charges are based on the cost to collect, transport, and treat wastewater from all users within the City's service area. The charge increase is based on a study of those costs performed by Harris and Associates with HFH Consultants, experts in the field of municipal and utility service rate evaluations. The preliminary rate analysis was presented to the City Council at its March 7, 2011 meeting. The City Council directed staff to set the sewer charges to achieve the recommended and necessary level of funding. The City Council will consider the proposed increase at a public hearing on June 6, 2011.

Non-residential Sewer Service Charges are calculated based on the amount of water used by the customer and the strength of the wastewater the customer contributes to the City's wastewater system, relative to that of a single-family residential customer. To determine a non-residential customer rate, the City multiplies the customer's strength and flow factor by the Sewer Service Charge for single-family residential customers. Because the proposed increase will be based on the increase in the single-family residential rate, the proposed rate increases for non-residential customers is proportionate to the increases for residential customers.

How will the proposed sewer service charge be spent?

The City of Mill Valley will continue to provide collection services and pay for wastewater treatment by the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin. The City will also install and maintain the sewer pipes and implement programs to meet water quality programs required by the state, regional regulatory agencies and the City Council. A breakdown of how the proposed sewer service charge will be spent is shown in the chart to the right.

2011-12 Sewer Spending Projections



We Invite Your Comments

If you have any questions or comments on the proposed Sewer Service Charge increase, you can contact the City in several ways:

Attend the Public Workshop before the Public Hearing to learn more about the Proposed Sewer Service Charge Rate Increase:

Tuesday, May 17, 2011 at 6:00 pm
Mill Valley City Hall Council Chambers
26 Corte Madera Avenue, Mill Valley

Attend the Public Hearing for the Proposed Rate Adoption of the Sewer Service Charge:

Regular meeting of the Mill Valley City Council
Monday, June 6, 2011 at 7:30 pm
Mill Valley City Hall Council Chambers
26 Corte Madera Avenue, Mill Valley

*** Protests against the rate increase must be submitted in writing by the time of the Public Hearing. Please see below for*

more information.

Contact the Department of Public Works:

Phone: 415-388-4033

Email: dpw@cityofmillvalley.org

Address 26 Corte Madera Avenue, Mill Valley, CA 94941

To Protest:

The Notice to Property Owners is required by Proposition 218. Protests against the rate increase must be submitted in writing by the time of the hearing, must identify the owner(s) and the property or properties for which the protest is entered, and be signed by the property owner. Please send written protests to the address listed above. If written protests against the proposed increase in the Sewer Service Charge are presented by a majority of owners of the parcels affected, the City will not approve the proposed increase.