



Forsyth County
Department of Communications
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WATER AND SEWER RATE INCREASES APPROVED

Rate increases needed to cover declining revenue

FORSYTH COUNTY, Georgia – Forsyth County government will implement increased water and sewer rates to help offset projected revenue shortfalls. The increases were part of a Resolution adopted by the Board of Commissioners January 8, following a Public Hearing on the topic.

The residential water base rate will change from \$12 for the first 3,000 gallons to \$12 for the first 1,000 gallons. The senior citizen account water base rate will change from \$9 for the first 3,000 gallons to \$9 for the first 1,000 gallons (senior citizen water accounts are available for customers age 62 and up upon request to the Water and Sewer Department).

All residential water customers using 1,001 to 2,000 gallons monthly will pay an additional \$3.40; those using 2,001 to 3,000 gallons monthly will pay an additional \$6.80. The same tiered rates previously in effect remain in place for every additional 1,000 gallons used over 3,000 gallons.

A residential sewer base rate of \$10 will also go into effect, as will a commercial sewer base rate of \$20. In addition, accounts will continue to be charged a usage fee in accordance with existing rates.

“Several factors have necessitated these rate increases, including a decrease in revenues due to the ongoing drought, the outdoor water restrictions that remain in effect and the

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slowdown in development,” Chief Financial Officer Bill Thomas said. “If the rates had not been adjusted, a \$14.3 million loss was projected for the Water and Sewer Department for 2009.”

Customers will begin seeing the new water and sewer rates on their bills sent beginning February 1.

The rate increase is considered interim, while Forsyth County awaits the completion of a rate study that will lead to development of a long-term approach.

“What is important to note is that the Water and Sewer Department is an enterprise fund,” Director of Water and Sewer Tim Perkins said. “That means that our department does not receive or utilize funding from the county’s General Fund. We rely solely on user fees for all of our operations. We must be self-sufficient, which currently we are not.”

“It is also important to note that there are costs associated with providing clean, safe drinking water,” Perkins said. “The county must maintain the same infrastructure and capabilities even in times of reduced consumption. We must still make sure our customers are receiving clean, reliable water.”

Additional changes included in the Resolution adopted January 8:

Security Deposits for Residential Customers

A security deposit of \$75 will be required from a property owner to activate water service. This is an increase from the previous deposit of \$50. Consumers who do not own the property to which service is to be provided will pay a security deposit of \$125, up from \$100.

Initial Water Connection Fees

The initial water connection fees for both residential and commercial customers have increased to be more consistent with those in surrounding counties.

Reconnection Fees

The fee for reconnection of service will be \$50 for each meter being reconnected. Meters reconnected between 3:30 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. Monday through Friday and at anytime during the weekend will be subject to an after-hours reconnect fee of \$100.

Water Meter Tampering and Damage Fees

For water meters needing replacement due to tampering or damages, the account holder will be charged \$150 plus materials and labor costs. If the wire seal on the meter is broken and the backflow is required to be replaced, an additional charge of \$150 plus materials and labor costs will be charged to the account holder.

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Meter Re-Read and Testing Fees

The county will make one special water meter reading at the request of a consumer at no charge. If additional requests are made and it is determined by the county that additional readings are not necessary, a fee of \$20 will be charged to the consumer.

The county will test a water meter on-site at the request of the consumer once at no charge. If additional requests are made and it is determined by the county that further tests are not necessary, a charge of \$20 for an on-site test or \$100 for the removal of the meter and laboratory tests will be assessed and posted to the consumer's account. If the meter is found to over-register beyond 2% of the correct volume, the charge will be credited to the consumer's account.

Increase in Commercial Water Rates

The base rate for commercial water customers based on service meter size remains in place and will include the first 1,000 gallons used. The minimum charge of \$3.54 for the first 3,000 gallons has changed to \$3.72 for every 1,000 gallons used after the first thousand gallons. Customers will begin seeing these new rates on their bills sent beginning February 1.

Reuse Water Rate Increase

The rate for reuse water has increased from \$1.75 per 1,000 gallons to \$2.25 per 1,000 gallons. Reuse water is wastewater that has been highly treated and disinfected and then used primarily for irrigation. Customers will begin seeing these new reuse water rates on their bills sent beginning February 1.

“The county takes pride in being customer-service oriented and we certainly strive to serve our water and sewer consumers in a courteous, professional, and prompt manner,” Director of Commercial Services Jamie Payne said. “We will certainly do our best to make the implementation of these changes as smooth as possible for our customers.”

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