

# **Water and sewer rates to be based on usage 'Tiered' structure rewards those who use less water**

**By Wesley Young, JOURNAL REPORTER**

**The City-County Utility Commission yesterday approved a new rate structure yesterday that will go into effect July 1 and is designed to encourage water conservation. It also approved higher water and sewer rates that will go into effect Oct. 1.**

**But the commission postponed action on the difficult question of how to move forward with the solid-waste budget. The commission is looking at a \$4.2 million shortfall in the solid-waste operating budget for 2009-10, including 100 percent of the cost of paying for Winston-Salem's curbside recycling program at a cost of \$2.6 million.**

**The new "tiered" rate structure for water and sewer bills gives consumers a break for conserving water, said David Saunders, the director of the City-County Utilities Division.**

**"The less water they use, the cheaper they will get it," Saunders said. "Because of the conservation message, we have some folks who are going to pay a little more and smaller users will pay a little less."**

**The current inside city water rate for Winston-Salem households starts at \$1.841 for every 100 cubic feet of water (748 gallons). Under the tiered rates, the inside city rate as of July 1 will be \$1.30 for the first 600 cubic feet of water (4,488 gallons), then jump to \$1.90 per cubic foot for the next 600 cubic feet of water used. The rates increase at 600-cubic-foot intervals up to \$2.15 per 100 cubic feet for customers using as much as 40,000 cubic feet of water every two months.**

**Industrial users -- those who use more than 40,000 cubic feet of water -- would pay \$1.20 per 100 cubic feet.**

**The average household customer uses 1,600 cubic feet of water every two months -- about 12,000 gallons -- and would pay a higher bill under the tiered rates that will go into effect July 1, Saunders said.**

**Currently the average household pays a water-sewer bill of \$57.43 every two months, Saunders said. After July 1, the average bill will go up by \$4.70, and with the new rates in October the average household will pay \$66.01 every two months -- about 15 percent more than the current charge.**

**Saunders said that the rate for the average customer would be higher by eight cents a day on July 1 and by another six cents a day for the Oct. 1 rate increase.**

**The Oct. 1 increase includes a 5 percent increase in the water rate and a 9 percent increase in the sewer rate.**

**Saunders said the city's water and sewer rates would still be among the lowest in the Southeast and the lowest among North Carolina's largest cities.**

**Currently, the estimated average bimonthly water and sewer bill is \$90.83 in Greensboro, \$86.78 in Raleigh, \$91.92 in Charlotte and \$95.61 in Durham, utilities division officials said.**

**Saunders said that the rate increase will help pay for necessary updates and maintenance of the systems' plants.**

**The utilities commission also passed a \$67.9 million operating budget for water and sewer operations and forwarded it to the city council for adoption.**

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