



## **Utilities Commission Recommends Adjustment to Wastewater Rate Increase**

*The Utilities commission discussed and decided to recommend that the legislation to increase the wastewater utility rate be adjusted in order to remove the ongoing increase after three years*

MOUNT VERNON - City government officials on the Utilities Commission consisting of Councilwoman Tammy Woods, community members Elizabeth Doolittle and Keith Burley, City Engineer Brian Ball, Director of Public Utilities Mathias Orndorf, and Safety Service Director Rick Dzik met on January 5th for their regularly scheduled commission meeting. One of the main topics on the agenda was to discuss next steps on the proposed increase in Wastewater rates. After receiving feedback from the public and council members, the Commission utilized this meeting to identify what actions should be taken on the legislation prior to the January 25th Council meeting.

After much discussion, the Utilities Commission recommended that legislation be amended in order to remove the section stating there will be an ongoing 10% increase in the wastewater rates after the three years of 15% increases. Removing the annual 10% increase will ensure that the rates can be reviewed by Council and set as necessary for the department's sustainability after the three years of 15% increases.

They also recommend an amendment to adjust the initiation date to be adjusted to March 1, 2021. Adjusting the initiation date to March 1, 2021 will ensure that the public can be informed by the City of Mount Vernon about the rate increase over the month of February and March if the legislation is passed by Council. The proposed changes would result in a \$0.74 per 100 cubic foot increase per month for the remainder of 2021, \$0.84 in 2022 (15%), and \$0.97 in 2023 (15%). The typical Mount Vernon household uses between 300 to 600 cubic feet per month.

### **Background**

The proposed increase was initially brought to Council on November 30, 2020. Based on financial projections that under current rates, the city will not be able to meet the expected costs unless wastewater fees are adjusted. These costs include capital projects at the wastewater treatment plant for the refurbishment of the two digesters and upgrades for the removal of phosphorus as mandated by the Ohio EPA. In addition, this mandate will increase operating costs of the plant for additional chemicals and the disposal of additional waste sludge generated by the process.

Council decided at its December 28, 2020 legislative session to hold a public meeting January 19th to provide information directly to the community and gather additional feedback. In addition, they postponed voting on the proposed increase in wastewater rates until the January 25, 2021 Council meeting.

Interested parties may join the public meeting at 6:30 PM on January 19th via Zoom in a virtual meeting at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85708495920> (Meeting ID: 857 0849 5920 Passcode: 299578). More information about the wastewater utility is also found at [MountVernonOhio.org](http://MountVernonOhio.org).

### END ###

**ABOUT THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON:**

The City of Mount Vernon is an innovative community with an authentic hometown feel. Home to 17,000 people, Mount Vernon is the county seat for Knox County and boasts historic buildings and districts as well as business and professional, educational, and recreational opportunities through many adaptive reuses of the community's infrastructure and spaces. Specific attractions are the historic Woodward Opera House, the Knox County Memorial Building and Theater, and the 250-acre Ariel~Foundation Park adjacent to the state scenic Kokosing River. With strong ties to higher education, Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Kenyon College, and Central Ohio Technical College have satellite locations in the historic downtown. Located 40 miles northeast of Columbus, Mount Vernon is near the geographic center of Ohio and has connections all over the globe.

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