

Utility controversy rolls on

Hearings set on water rate hikes

Two public hearings will be held in July on controversial water rate increases proposed by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD).

The seven-member Detroit Board of Water Commissioners will hold a 5 p.m. hearing Monday, July 14, in the Wayne State University Community Arts Auditorium.

The Detroit City Council, which must approve the increases proposed for Dec. 1, will hold a 10:30 a.m. hearing on Tuesday, July 29, in the City-County Building 13th floor auditorium.

DWSD has nearly 100 suburban community water customers. The water utility serves four million residents in six counties.

A meeting for DWSD wholesale customers will be held at 10 a.m. Tuesday in the Detroit Public Library's Main Branch, 5201 Woodward.

THE INCREASES, which in Oakland County range from a 7 percent jump in Pontiac's wholesale rate to 119 percent in Avon Township's, are expected to be controversial and could lead to another suburban lawsuit against DWSD.

More than 70 suburban communities took DWSD to court over a 39 percent wholesale water rate hike in 1976. The case is still pending.

DWSD is not proposing an across-the-board, fixed percentage increase, as it has in the past. Rather, the rates vary according to distance from Detroit, elevation and maintaining capacity for peak water usage, particularly in bedroom communities.

The proposed increases are also affected by a 1917 state law which permits DWSD to charge suburban wholesale customers within 10 miles of Detroit's borders at least the same wholesale rate the city pays but no more than double that rate.

The vast majority of the water department's existing contracts with suburban cities don't take the state law into account.

DWSD Director Charles Beckham said last week only four of the department's 72 contracts cite the law.

THE RATE HIKES were the result of a year-long study conducted by DWSD's rate consultant, Camp Dresser & McKee, of Detroit.

The rates were determined on an actual cost of service basis, according to Camp Dresser's Paul Brown, and were adjusted upward or downward to comply with the state law.

He said the law had "never been a problem" in past water rates because "there had never been rates that had gone above twice Detroit's."

One effect of the law is to place a cap on some suburban communities' wholesale water rates at \$5.50 per 1,000 cubic feet of water, even if the actual cost of service is more. The \$5.50 rate is double Detroit's proposed \$2.75 wholesale rate. Detroit's current wholesale rate is \$2.39.

Bloomfield and West Bloomfield townships and the city of Farmington Hills all have proposed \$5.50 wholesale rates, lower than actual cost, according to Camp Dresser & McKee, because they are all within 10 miles of Detroit.

But Avon Township, which is more than 10 miles from Detroit, gets no break from the law. The township's proposed \$6.83 rate is "actual cost of service," according to the rate consultants.

LISTED BELOW are the proposed wholesale water rates, actual cost of service rate and the existing rate for a number of south Oakland County communities from Camp Dresser & McKee's rate report.

The rates are per 1,000 cubic feet of water.

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Community	Proposed	Actual	Existing	SOCWA*	2.75	2.54	1.63
Avon Township	\$6.83	\$6.83	\$3.11	Troy	3.93	3.93	2.64
Bloomfield Hills	5.00	5.00	2.95	W. Bloomfield Twp.	5.50	11.55	2.93
Bloomfield Township	5.50	6.84	2.95				
Farmington	3.38	3.38	2.28				
Farmington Hills	5.50	8.02	2.53				

*Southeastern Oakland Water Authority - Birmingham, Lathrup Village and Southfield buy their water from the water authority.

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Recycling saves \$\$\$, remains unpopular

Paper recycling has come a long way from the era of Boy Scouts collecting old newspapers.

Today, more than 200 cities have separate trash pickup systems for newspapers, and more than 300 paper mills use some wastepaper in making new paper.

But recycling has not quite become a household word, and its impact on conservation has not changed significantly in the last 10 years. In 1970, just more than 18 percent of the paper consumed by paper mills and manufacturers was wastepaper. Today it is about 20 percent.

The U.S. Census Bureau said about 13.1 million tons of wastepaper - most of it corrugated, miscellaneous paper, and old newspapers - were recycled last year. The American Paper Institute, which represents the mills and manufacturers, estimated that 15.6 million tons of wastepaper were recycled. "The economics is stacked in favor of the use of virgin fiber," said John R. McBride of the National Association of Recycling Industries, which represents middlemen in the recycling process.

"As long as that is true," he said, "there will be no sustained demand for recycled fiber, and recycling will continue to operate on a yo-yo - up when the economy is strong and down in times of recession."

RECYCLING DEPENDS on the market demand for re-usable paper. In prosperous times, all forms of raw material are needed, and paper mills, which often grow their own timber, supplement with wastepaper.

In a sagging economy, the mills cut back on purchase, and wastepaper is left out.

The one market that has increased drastically in the last 10 years is wastepaper sold for export. In 1970, about 400,000 tons was shipped to foreign manufacturers; last year about 2.2 million tons was exported, primarily to Japan, Korea, Canada, and Mexico.



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