

December 2004



Ratepayer News

LONG TERM PLANS INSURE FUTURE SERVICE



Inside this issue:

Long Term Line Rehab Plans	1
Website Up and Running	1
Your Board of Commissioners	1
2005 Sewer Rates Tied to Aggressive Rehab	2
Comparison of Current Rates	3
Normandy Park Annexation Passes	3
Citizen's Advisory Committee Reinstated	4

During the 1980's through the early 1990's, your sewer district spent 32 million dollars to complete necessary upgrades to the two wastewater treatment plants. With much of the District's sewer mains approaching the 50-60 year old range, the focus then shifted to major line rehabilitation projects. In 1996, the District embarked on a 3 million dollar pipe rehab project in the White Center area.

Unfortunately, further line rehabilitation plans were sidelined in the ensuing eight years due to political controversy and numerous costly lawsuits involving the Board of Commissioners. Against the advise of financial advisors, some connection charges were actually reduced during this period, and staff was cut by 30%. The continuing deterioration of lines and reduced maintenance re-

sulted in more plugged sewer lines in the last two years than at any time in the history of the District.

The new Board of Commissioners is committed to restoring the reliable sewer service that you have received in the past. This will need to be accomplished through a combination of low interest loans, bonds, and sewer rates.

YOUR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ratepayers of Southwest Suburban Sewer District elected Tony Genzale as their new commissioner in the fall of 2003. Mr. Genzale took office in January of this year, and was chosen by his fellow commissioners to act as President of the Board of Commissioners. A long time resident of Burien, Tony is a third generation produce grocer, experience that he applies to his responsibilities as commissioner. "I plan to continue bringing to the table the sound business logic that has enabled me to operate my own business all these years"

An opening on the Board of Commissioners was created in March of this year when ratepayers voted overwhelmingly to approve the recall of a commis-

sioner. Applications were accepted to fill the position and interviews were conducted. At the completion of the selection process the Board chose Normandy Park resident Scott Hilsen to fill the vacancy, and he took office in June. Mr. Hilsen has an MBA from Seattle University and is the Information Services Manager for a Seattle company. Scott has been active in the community, including

serving on the Civil Service Committee for the City of Normandy Park.

The new board members join Commissioner Bill Tracy, who has served on the Board since 1991. He is a retired school teacher, having taught in the Highline School District for 31 years. Welcoming the new board members, Mr. Tracy said "I really appreciate their focus on planning for the future."

DISTRICT WEBSITE UP AND RUNNING!

The District's new website at www.swssd.com offers a lot of information for ratepayers. You may visit the site to read minutes of recent meetings, review contractor lists, or just to find out what's going on at the Sewer District.

The site includes maps and photos of both treatment plants, as well as the compost facility.

Forms can be downloaded from the site to apply for the Reduced Rate or for Electronic Payment of your bill.

Visit the site at your convenience to learn more about your sewer district.



Board of Commissioners shown above—I to r: Scott Hilsen, Tony Genzale, and Bill Tracy.

BOARD DETERMINES NEW SEWER RATE

“When two thirds of your sewer lines have reached their life expectancy, the prudent course of action is to set reasonable rates that are adequate to establish an ongoing line rehabilitation program, and to maintain adequate staff to insure that we can identify and maintain those lines that can be utilized long past the fifty year life expectancy without replacement.”

Over 60% of the lines in White Center, Burien and Normandy Park were constructed between 1935 and 1965. Sewer lines constructed during that period are concrete pipe, which has an estimated useful life of 50 years. The oldest sewer lines in our district are now 70 years old, and need to be rehabilitated to extend their useful life and prevent sewer backups and sewer line collapse. According to Manager Steve Sandelius, “When two thirds of your sewer lines have reached their life expectancy, the prudent course of action is to set reasonable rates that are adequate to establish an ongoing line rehabilitation program, and to obtain adequate staff to insure that we can identify and

maintain those lines that can be utilized long past the 50 year life expectancy without replacement”. The District has hired necessary staff and identified equipment requirements that will enable the District to extend the life of the aging collection system.

It has been estimated that the District faces \$110,000,000 to \$150,000,000 in pipe rehabilitation over the next 20 to 30 years. While the District will attempt to keep rates as low as possible through the use of other sources of funding, ultimately most of the required funds will have to come from rates.

The Board of Commissioners received input from the Dis-

trict's engineering firm, financial advisors, and Citizen's Advisory Committee. The Board, faced with the realities of the condition of the system and the financial requirements involved in rehabilitating it, voted to increase residential rates to \$17.50 per month effective January 1st, 2005. They also voted to change from the current three month billing cycle to the two month cycle used by most utilities. In addition, the street light charge will increase by 10 cents per month for those customers who currently pay for streetlight service on their sewer bill. Additional increases will be needed in future years to provide the funds necessary to properly maintain your sewer system.

Rate Increase Tied to Aggressive Line Rehabilitation Plan

The District is in the process of inspecting all of its ageing concrete sewer lines to determine their condition. Some of the old pipe is in good condition, some needs extra maintenance to extend its life, and some is totally disintegrating and needs to be rehabilitated.

The three most common rehabilitation methods are replacement, slip lining, and pipe bursting. The District will be deter-

mining the most appropriate and cost effective methods in every instance.

In addition to repairing the collection system, we will be eliminating Inflow and Infiltration. The flow into the two treatment plants increases from 3.5 million gallons per day to 22 million gallons during rainstorms. Inflow is storm water entering your sewer system from down-

spouts, catch basins and footing drains that are illegally connected to your sewer system. Infiltration is ground water entering through leaky sewer lines and manholes. We will be smoke testing to identify illegal connections to the sewer system. Property owners will be responsible for the removal of any illegal connections which allow storm water into the sewer system.

Rates Will Remain Lowest in King County

On Page 3 a comparison chart shows rates for sewer service throughout King County. Southwest Suburban Sewer District has had the lowest rates by a large margin for many years.

The low rates have been possible because the District has its own treatment plants, and re-

ceived a 50% grant for secondary treatment upgrades in the late 1980's. Those sewer districts that utilize Metro treatment facilities have been subjected to numerous increases over the years. Political controversy and the resulting reduced rehabilitation efforts stalled necessary rate adjust-

ments in our District.

The new \$17.50 monthly rate going into effect January 1st will *still* be the lowest in King County after factoring in scheduled rate increases at other districts. SWSSD ratepayer's sewer bills will be 50% of the average monthly sewer bill in King County.



	2002		2003		2004	
COMPARISON OF CURRENT RATES: (Complete list of sewer utilities in King County)	RATE		RATE		RATE	
CROSS VALLEY W & S	\$	57.75	\$	57.75	\$	57.75
SHORELINE W/W MGMT. (Ronald)	\$	30.30	\$	31.60	\$	44.93
SEATTLE	\$	51.90	\$	51.90	\$	44.25
SKYWAY	\$	38.26	\$	41.41	\$	43.53
BLACK DIAMOND	\$	41.44	\$	41.44	\$	41.44
NE SAMMAMISH	\$	40.80	\$	41.43	\$	41.41
BOTHELL	\$	38.44	\$	40.36	\$	41.17
WOODINVILLE	\$	36.80	\$	38.30	\$	40.85
MERCER ISLAND	\$	43.62	\$	37.73	\$	40.31
VASHON SEWER	\$	26.25	\$	34.25	\$	40.00
KIRKLAND	\$	37.24	\$	38.38	\$	38.25
SAMMAMISH PLATEAU	\$	42.03	\$	38.25	\$	38.25
SOOS CREEK	\$	38.20	\$	38.20	\$	38.20
ISSAQUAH	\$	35.12	\$	35.12	\$	37.40
CEDAR RIVER W & S	\$	36.50	\$	37.15	\$	37.15
RENTON	\$	35.69	\$	36.06	\$	36.44
BELLEVUE	\$	38.85	\$	38.70	\$	36.33
COAL CREEK	\$	33.20	\$	34.40	\$	34.30
NORTHSHORE	\$	32.75	\$	32.75	\$	33.25
AUBURN	\$	32.40	\$	32.65	\$	32.65
REDMOND	\$	32.20	\$	32.59	\$	32.59
ALGONA	\$	28.22	\$	32.52	\$	32.52
LAKE FOREST PARK	\$	32.06	\$	32.07	\$	32.07
KENT	\$	31.27	\$	31.27	\$	31.27
TUKWILA	\$	28.40	\$	28.40	\$	30.40
VAL-VUE SEWER DISTRICT	\$	29.40	\$	29.40	\$	29.40
ALDERWOOD			\$	26.73	\$	26.78
LAKEHAVEN	\$	23.26	\$	22.46	\$	22.46
MIDWAY	\$	17.00	\$	17.00	\$	17.00
SW SUBURBAN	\$	13.50	\$	13.50	\$	13.50
AVERAGE SEWER RATE	\$	34.58	\$	34.79	\$	35.53

NORMANDY PARK ANNEXATION PASSES

On November 2nd the citizens of Normandy Park passed the ballot measure proposing the annexation of Normandy Park into Southwest Suburban Sewer District. The final count showed that 78.3% of voters approved the annexation, which will give Normandy Park residents the right to vote in future sewer district elections. Residents had lost the right to participate in the selection of the elected officials who set sewer

rates when the City of Normandy Park sold their sewer lines to Southwest Suburban Sewer District in 2003. Southwest Suburban Sewer's Miller Creek Treatment Plant, located in Normandy Park on SW 174th Street, has always provided sewage treatment to most of Normandy Park.

The measure was put on the ballot through the petition method, with sufficient signatures procured and

submitted as required by King County. Residents of Bonniewood and Manhattan (who were previously annexed to Southwest Suburban Sewer District) and the portion of Normandy Park served by Midway Sewer District were excluded from voting.

Over 85% of registered voters in Normandy Park voted on the measure, which took effect upon certification by the Secretary or State.

CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE REINSTATED

The Board of Commissioners recently invited ratepayers via an ad in the local paper to apply to serve on a Citizen's Advisory Committee. A long tradition in the District, the Committee reviews budgets, rate studies and planning decisions before the District and provides input and suggestions to management and the Board of Commissioners.

"The Committee is a valuable tool in running the District, as it is able to view decisions strictly through the prospective of ratepayers", according to Manager Steve Sandelius. "The Board has to make some tough decisions at times, and it's important to have a group of citizens representing the ratepayers, reviewing all the information

and giving feedback. They all take the role very seriously and have really reviewed everything they have received. These folks have a range of experiences and backgrounds that help us analyze the information in front of us. Their input is a real asset to the District and community."

The prior Board of Commissioners eliminated the Advisory Board in 2000. "The current Board sees this as an opportunity to demonstrate that the District is back on track and looking to the future. These plans must be made now rather than later, and the Advisory Board is an integral part of the decision making process", said Sandelius.



Southwest Suburban Sewer District Citizen's Advisory Committee shown above. Top row, l to r: Lee Moyer, Ron Clark, Steve Fletcher, Steven Schmidt. Bottom row, l to r: Gary Coy, Margaret McLaughlin, and George Wherley. Not Pictured: Jerry Seidl.



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You are invited to attend the monthly Board of Commissioners meetings at the District Office on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 6:00 p.m.

The Next Board Meeting will be Tuesday, December 28, 2004 @ 6:00 p.m.