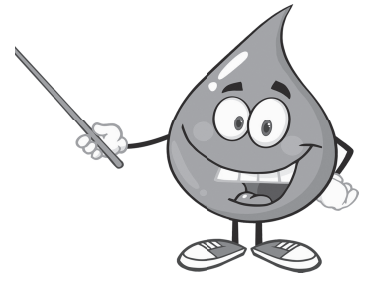




PUBLIC NOTICE: City of Hoyt Lakes

The monthly residential water/sewer/refuse charge will increase effective for services beginning January 1, 2024. The bill reflecting this change will be mailed out approximately February 3, 2024. If you are not currently delinquent on payments, and you are unsure as to which month you should be paying for, please wait until you receive the February billing statement. Commercial customers will increase proportionately. There will be a 10% late penalty charge for accounts that are not paid by the last day of the month.



Frequently Asked Questions regarding City Utility Bills

How does the refuse process work?

The City contracts with a private company, East Mesabi Sanitation, for refuse services. The City requires use of the yellow bags to help manage costs for our residents. Residents who have less trash, pay less per month due to the yellow bags.

How does the waste water process work?

The Waste Water Treatment Facility (WWTF) is currently undergoing construction to improve the filtration of mercury as required by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). This is a project totaling over \$11 million dollars, for which the City received a grant and loan package from the Public Finance Authority which helps keep bills affordable for residents. Accepting this funding required the City to commit to regular waste water bill increase of about 8% per year. Without the funding, the waste water portion of the bill would have increased \$48 per month, rather than \$5.

The initial process all waste water goes through at the plant is mechanical screening. This screening removes all products which cannot go through the WWTF, including wipes (despite them being advertised as "flushable wipes" they are not, and should never be flushed down the toilet), clothing, feminine products, toys, and many other objects. After mechanical screening, the waste water flows to the primary clarifiers, where 85% of the solids settle out. The liquid portion from the primary clarifiers go to trickling filters, alum and polymer are added to help additional solids settle out in the secondary clarifies, and then are treated through the new filtration system. The solid portion from the primary clarifiers are pumped to the digester. Sludge settles to the bottom of the digester, liquid in the middle, and gas on top. The gas is burned off, the sludge is removed and hauled for land application, and the liquid flows back to the beginning of the process. The new sand filtering building removes all impurities, including mercury. Chlorine is added to the effluent for additional purification; sulfur dioxide is added to the effluent to remove the chlorine; the clean water is then discharged into Whitewater Lake.



The water discharged meets the same standards set by the MDH for drinking water, along with additional requirements set by MPCA for mercury limits.

Why doesn't the City use water meters and charge based on usage?

Water meters are very expensive to purchase and install. The Public Utilities Department believes the MDH will require us to install water meters for residential properties in the future. How the cost of the meter and installation will be paid will be determined by the City Council at that time; residents can expect to pay a portion, if not all, of the cost of the meter and installation.

How does the water process work?

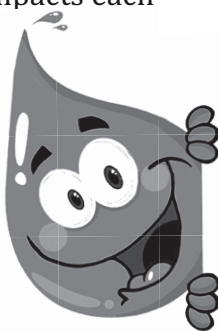
The City pumps water from Colby Lake in to the Water Treatment Facility (WTF). The WTF was built in 1957. Public Utilities employees complete the process to turn the water from Colby Lake water in to water that is safe to drink. This includes filtering using sand and charcoal mixed media, disinfection with chlorine and ammonia, adding fluoride to help prevent tooth decay, as well as utilizing other chemicals to clarify and disinfect the water. Public Utilities staff monitors disinfection and clarity multiple times per day. Additionally, monthly reports are submitted to comply with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) requirements. The City then pumps the water in to one of the two water towers located at Laskin Energy Center or on Kennedy Memorial Drive. The water towers create the water pressure using gravity.

Why does my utility bill increase?

The Public Utilities Department cost increase every year, much like every other service cost. The City pays more for chemicals to treat the water and waste water, labor costs, maintenance costs, and so on. Additionally, the City is required to raise the bill by a certain amount to receive grant monies from the State and Federal Governments. Without the grant monies, your monthly utility bill would be significantly higher.

For 2023, the City Council approved a smaller increase than initially planned to help residents temporarily. However, that means the water, sewer, and refuse departments are operating with a negative balance for the year. This negative balance cannot be sustained for any length of time without depleting the Public Utilities Department's savings. Much like your home budget, the City needs to maintain six months of expenses in savings in case of emergency or significant damage to one of the plants.

For 2024, the City Council is considering an increase which would balance the budget. They understand this impacts each utility user within the City of Hoyt Lakes, but without a balanced budget, significant changes to the daily lives of the residents would need to take place. That may include no longer providing the services, forcing each resident to install private wells and septic; increasing insurance rates as fire hydrants would no longer be available; and no longer providing trash or recycling services.



What revenue contributes to the utility departments? How does the City determine charges for services?

The water, sewer, and refuse departments are supposed to be self-sustaining, much like a private business. This means the City must charge residents what it costs to operate the departments. The City cannot use property tax dollars to support the water, sewer, and refuse departments; all revenue for these utilities comes directly from the monthly billing.

Can I pay my bill online or set up auto-payment of my bill?

The City's secure online payment portal is available to pay your monthly utility bill. Please visit our website at www.hoytlakes.com and click on Pay Your Bill Online. It is strongly recommended you set your auto-pay date for the 15th of the month.