

Port Washington Water District Announces Rate Modifications to Fund Infrastructure Improvements for Emerging Contaminants

Port Washington, N.Y. (May 11, 2020)—The Port Washington Water District (PWWD) has announced a rate increase—after a public notice and hearing—went into effect on May 1, 2020 that amounts to approximately \$0.08 per day for the typical residential customer. The increased need for revenue is the result of the District’s five-year, \$43 million capital plan to construct the required infrastructure to treat for emerging contaminants 1,4-dioxane PFOA and PFOA at three District well sites, as well as complete other needed infrastructure improvements. While the District was recently awarded a more than \$18 million grant, the rate adjustment serves to make up the \$25 million funding gap without having to sacrifice water quality or service.

“Raising existing rates was not a decision that this Board of Commissioners took lightly, especially at this time,” said PWWD Chairman David Brackett. “This decision was derived from facts and data that made it very apparent that additional revenue is needed to install these required treatment upgrades and protect the long-term health of our residents.”

Understanding the need and expense of the required state-of-the-art treatment systems, the District was steadfast in their objective to minimize the impact to residents as much as possible. In addition to successfully securing grant funding from the state, as well as filing a lawsuit against the chemical manufacturers ultimately responsible for the presence of the contaminants in the community’s water source, the District hired a consulting firm that specializes in rate making for water providers. The water rates consultant was charged with finding ways to make the two ends meet, while also limiting the increase residents would experience.

“While we set aside funds in each budget for capital improvements, the investments needed to comply with the regulations still being considered by the state’s health officials are significantly higher than what can be put away under the existing rate structure,” said PWWD Commissioner Mindy Germain. “Couple that with a pretty significant increase in operations and maintenance costs to operate these new treatment systems, we were left with no other choice but to take this course of action.”

The District’s five-year capital improvement plan will allow it to not only make routine upgrades to existing treatment facilities, but install the sophisticated treatment systems needed to treat emerging contaminants down to levels of non-detect. The new treatment upgrades will include the installation of a new treatment technology called the Advanced Oxidation Process (AOP). Additionally, the new treatment systems will include a Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) filtration system at District sites that don’t yet have them. A GAC filtration system is basically an industrial-sized carbon filter that, when used in tandem with AOP treatment, is the only approved method to remove 1,4-dioxane from drinking water.

“Every additional dollar of revenue coming to the District is being reinvested into our community’s water system so we have the infrastructure in place to serve our residents with the highest quality water for generations to come,” said PWWD Commissioner Peter Meyer. “While we are sensitive to the impact any rate increase could have to our residents, we still take an enormous amount of pride in keeping the cost of water low so it remains our residents’ cheapest, yet most important, utility bills.

For further information, or if you have any questions, please call the District at 516-767-0171, email info@pwwd.org or visit www.pwwd.org. To receive regular updates from the Port Washington Water District, please sign up for email updates on the District’s homepage. Don’t forget to stay connected to the Port Washington Water District’s on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pwwaterdistrict.