

## Tualatin City Council to address raising water rates, system improvements



By [Findley Merritt, The Oregonian](#)

on January 29, 2013 at 7:00 AM, updated January 29, 2013 at 2:54 PM

[TUALATIN](#)— Tualatin residents could see increased water rates starting next year.

City Council plans to propose a 4.25 percent increase for next year to fund improvements to the city's water supply that is slowly becoming outpaced by projected growth.

If improvements to Tualatin's system aren't made, the maximum daily demand of water could exceed the supply by 1.2 millions of gallons per day in 2030.

"If we never annex another square foot of land, we'll be fine forever," said Councilor Ed Truax.

"Although we might go broke doing that."

The problem arises with projected population growths, including the [Basalt Creek expansion area](#) and within the city. The city's water supply, purchased from the City of Portland Water Bureau, can supply a maximum of 11.8 million gallons of water per day.

The city averages around 4.3 million gallons per day, according to its water master plan. But population studies suggest the city will add 5,912 residents in the next 20 years, which means daily water demand could increase to 6.8 mgd. The maximum supply would be at 15.

Those numbers exceed the amount of water the city's supply line, the Washington County Supply Line, can hold. To fix the problem, the city would need new piping, larger storage facilities and a new pump station.

Those don't come cheap.

All those improvements could cost \$24.4 million over the next 20 years, and \$11.8 million of those would be required in the next 10 years.

During a work session Monday night, city engineers told the council that raising the water rates could coincide with poised construction on 124th Avenue. The city could install a larger pipe during construction but would have to use rate increases because there's little money in the system development charge funds.

If water rates are used to cover those costs, the city could use a 4.25 percent increase next year with similar increases in the future or increase rates at 3.20 percent next year without including the growth improvements.

According to city engineers, an average Tualatin household uses 800 cubic feet of water per month. At current rates, that user pays about \$18.32 monthly; after a 4.25 percent increase, that household would pay around \$19.12.

Tualatin hasn't raised its water rates in four years, said City Manager Sherilyn Lombos. And the city has also been conservative with water use. In 2010, water engineers projected the city would use 7.63 gallons per day, but residents actually used 4.3.

The city charges \$2.29 per unit, which is 100 cubic feet. [Tualatin Valley Water District charges \\$2.65](#) at minimum, [Tigard residents pay a minimum of \\$2.65](#) per 100 cubic feet, and [Beaverton residents pay \\$2.67](#).

The city will also revisit its system development charges policy.

The public can submit comments about proposed changes to the city's water master plan during February before the planning commission meeting Feb. 21. Council could accept the changes at a March 11 meeting.