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City to vote on sewer impact, hook-up fees



Max Oden / moden@dothaneagle.com

A road crew repairs a section of Burbank Street in Dothan after completing a water works project Wednesday morning.

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By [DEBBIE INGRAM](#)

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Two city department heads recommended several changes to regulations affecting Dothan Utilities customers earlier this week, most of which would realign various wastewater fees so customers are paying the actual cost of services.

Another proposal would allow “budget billing” to those customers who have traditionally had a difficult time paying their utility bills each month, in part due to fluctuations in the amount of power and water used.

The proposals were discussed in length by some Dothan city commissioners, who favored tying any rate increases to the service cost, which would go up or down accordingly. Dothan Utilities Director Billy Mayes recommended the rates include a built-in annual 2.85 increase, an average consumer price index figure.

The proposed changes to the code include:

- n Budget Billing, whereby those having difficulty making large payments during peak billing months would be allowed to pay a flat rate per month to reduce cut-offs and payment extensions. It would be up to the individual to see if they are ahead or behind actual usage.
- n Allowing the city to revoke a wastewater discharge permit when the owner/operator of an industrial facility modifies the facility that discharges to the city sewer system, without obtaining prior written approval from the city.
- n Increasing the charge for domestic sewage and sludge or grease trap waste for commercial customers by 2.85 percent as of Oct. 1, and another 2.85 percent each October thereafter. The cost is currently \$50 per 1,000 gallons.
- n Increasing the cost of sewer connection taps from \$750 to \$850 for a standard four-inch line.
- n Increasing the impact fee from \$5.59 to \$5.88 per gallon per day for those receiving sewer service who are outside the city limits. It would include a 2.85 percent increase each October.
- n Renaming the city water and electric office to the Dothan Utilities billing office.

After commissioners talked about how the increases should be figured, Palmer asked that her proposal, the budget billing, be “divorced” from the other considerations made by Mayes, so that the issues could be considered separately.

During the discussion, which did not pertain to wastewater treatment rates, per se, Commissioner Amos Newsome continued putting forth arguments on why wastewater fees should be increased over 10 years and not five.

City Manager Mike West said the recommendations would allow the city to have a process in place to keep up with costs.

Newsome did not favor moving the matter forward for a vote in two weeks after another commissioner suggested a working session to discuss it. Newsome said the wastewater rates should be decided first.

“We are here to serve and not direct, if I may We are servants. Whatever it takes for us to serve, Mister, we should do that or be willing to do that Sometimes we get a little bigger than our position of serving and that takes away”

The code changes are expected to be on the Sept. 8 agenda for a vote.