

Emmitsburg adjusts water, sewer fees

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EMMITSBURG — About 20 percent of the town's water and sewer system customers will see an increase in their quarterly bills beginning in January.

Commissioners voted Monday to increase rates for those who use more than 20,000 gallons per quarter. Customers above that threshold will pay between 8 percent and 16 percent more per 1,000 gallons.

The hikes will affect about 200 customers, said board president Chris Staiger, and very few, if any, will be residential. The affected customers consume about 65 percent of the total water used in town, he said.

The rate hikes will cover \$100,000 in unfunded water and sewer system depreciation costs in the current budget year. The system depreciates at a rate of \$300,000 per year, said town manager Dave Haller, but this year's budget only projected \$200,000 in funding for these costs.

The town was aware of the deficit during the budgeting process but chose not to raise rates at that time, Staiger said.

Commissioners also adjusted fees for new home builders Monday. Under the new ordinance, builders will pay twice as much, \$8,000, for an initial sewer tap, but water and sewer surcharges were cut in half to \$3,500 each.

The new home impact fee, which funds sidewalk repairs and similar projects, was slashed by \$2,000 to \$1,200.

The water and sewer surcharges were imposed on new homes four years ago to help cover the cost of state-mandated improvements to the systems. Staiger said Monday that the new fees more accurately reflect a new home's effect on town infrastructure.

Builders and residents have approached the town several times to ask for the fee reductions. The cuts will allow builders to lower new home prices, sell more homes and finish existing neighborhoods, they said.

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