

## Report: Raise water, sewer rates in city

By [Mike Wright](#)

Water and sewer users in Crystal River — plus future customers — may be paying more for service so that the city may expand its utilities to accommodate future growth.

The biggest increases

are the water and sewer equivalent of an impact fee. These “expansion fees,” which are one-time charges when a customer first gets service, would increase from \$860 to \$1,900 for water service; \$1,700 to \$3,000 for sewer service.

Monthly rates also would increase 11 to 13 percent for sewer per year for three or four years. Water rates in that same time would increase about 3 percent annually, according to a memo City Manager Andy Houston wrote to city council members.

Base water rates for city customers are now \$6.36 per month; base sewer rates are \$11.46 per month. Rates are higher for customers outside the city limits.

Houston has said the city must have a rate increase to raise about \$11.6 million to increase the capacity of the city’s wastewater treatment plant.

New residential and commercial developments need that sewer capacity. If the city does not expand its sewer plant, it effectively would create a building moratorium in the city, Houston said.

The city is planning a May 5 workshop to consider the consultant’s report on proposed rates.

Council members may discuss the proposed rates during Monday’s city council meeting. Two weeks ago they delayed a decision on an agreement to extend sewer lines to the RealtiCorp property just south of the city because they wanted to see the rate study first.

Council members said they didn’t want to promise sewer service to a development outside the city without first making sure it would have sewer capacity to do that and the finances to expand the wastewater plant.