

**TOWN OF WILLISTON**  
**Water Bill Fact Sheet**

**QUESTION:** Why didn't the town let us know the "water bill" was increasing by so much?

**ANSWER:** The simple answer is not very satisfying. We've never done it in the past, even years when the rates increased far more than they did for the current year. A better response is we will do a better job of communicating rate changes in the future.

**QUESTION:** What was the actual increase in rates?

**ANSWER:** Water use rates went up 12.5% for fiscal year 2015 and sewer use rates went up 4%. The combined use rate increase is 7%. The base rates for both water and sewer increased about 1.5%. These rates were adopted by the Selectboard in June 2014 and were based on a budget approved in January 2014.

**QUESTION:** How will these rate increases affect how much I pay?

**ANSWER:** The most important factor in determining impact is how much water you use. Assuming the same use from one quarter to the next and assuming your house is connected to both the water and sewer systems, if your household used 18,000 gallons, which is typical for a household of three, your bill increased by \$13.25 for the quarter. For a user of more water, say a household with 4 or 5, your use might be in the range of 24,000 gallons. In this case, your bill went up \$17.57. Most households use far less than 24,000 gallons.

**QUESTION:** My water bill increased by 50% over last quarter. Why?

**ANSWER:** A small portion of that increase is due to a rate increase of 7% but the majority of the increase is due to increased water use in your household. For information on how to reduce your water use, keep reading or you can visit our web page. We offer a "Water Use" Calculator that includes information on Williston water and sewer rates and lets you know if you use more water than average. (<http://town.williston.vt.us/calculator> )

**QUESTION:** What does the money generated from user fees pay for?

**ANSWER:** There are actually two separate systems – a water system and a wastewater or sewer system. Below is an explanation of both:

- **Water System:** The Town's water system serves about 2,900 customers. To serve these customers are about 72 miles of water distribution lines and one pump station. The costs of maintaining this aging system are actually a small part of your bill for water use. The largest part of the bill covers the cost paid by the water department for purchase of the water from the Champlain Water District. They draw water from Lake Champlain, treat it to make it safe for drinking, transmit the water to the Williston Town line. The Champlain Water District also owns and maintains three water tanks in Williston that serve to provide storage capacity and water pressure for the benefit of Williston water users.
- **Sewer System:** There are about 2,500 customers of this system. To serve these customers, the Town maintains a collection system that has about 51 miles of gravity sewer line, 13 miles of force main and 9 publicly maintained pump stations. The current collection system was constructed in the early 1980's. The Town's collection system transports the wastewater to a treatment plant located in Essex Junction. Once treated, the wastewater is discharged into the Winooski River which runs back to Lake Champlain. The largest part of each sewer bill is the cost of paying Essex Junction to treat or clean the waste water before it is discharged.

**QUESTION:** Why are the rates going up?

**ANSWER:** As explained in the response to the question above, most of the rate increases are driven by costs incurred by the Champlain Water District and at the Essex Junction Sewer Treatment Plant. In particular, recent increases have occurred on the sewer side of the bill in response to the need to refurbish the treatment plan which was about 30 years in age. In addition, the distribution/collection systems in Williston are starting to age which means just like an older car, periodic repairs are needed.

**QUESTION:** How do Williston's water and sewer rates compare to surrounding communities?

**ANSWER:** Williston's rates are about in the middle of the pack. Some are higher and some are lower.

**QUESTION:** How is my bill calculated?

**ANSWER:** The calculation can be explained as follows: Multiply the use rate times the number of gallons used by your household for the quarter and then add in the base rate. For most customers, your water bill actually has 4 separate components: Water use rate, base water rate, Sewer use rate and base sewer rate. A few customers have just sewer service and a few have just water service. For those customers, your bill is calculated just using the base and use rates for the services you receive. Both water and sewer use is based on the number of gallons passing through your water meter.

**QUESTION:** What is the difference between the "base" rate and the "use" rate?

**ANSWER:** The base rate covers a portion of the fixed costs involved with providing the sewer and water services to customers. In other words, even if your household uses no water but are connected to the system, there are still costs incurred by the very fact that you are connected to the system. For example, the cost of sending out bills, meter readings etc. The use rate is based solely on water consumption for both water and sewer and is measured by the water meter located in your house.

**QUESTION:** Does my bill include the new "stormwater" fee?

**ANSWER:** No. This new fee will appear in your next bill. It should equal about \$50 per year or about \$12 per quarter. If you live in a condominium complex, your bill might vary somewhat from this estimated bill. More information on this new fee will be forthcoming with the next bill. Commercial and Non-single family residential properties will see a higher monthly rate.

**QUESTION:** How can I find out how my use compares to the average?

**ANSWER:** To save money, we recommend each customer look at ways to conserve water. We have prepared a new interactive tool that can help you better understand your bill and the relationship between the amount of water you use and your bill. We encourage you to try out this tool and if you find you use more water than average, we recommend you explore ways to reduce the amount of water you consume. A link to this on-line tool can be found on the Town's web site by clicking on the "On-line Resources" tab at the top right hand side of the home page and on the drop down menu, select "Water Use Calculator". <http://town.williston.vt.us/calculator>

**QUESTION:** The amount of water I use has recently increased significantly. Why?

**ANSWER:** Did you know that a dripping faucet can waste more than 2000 gallons of water per year? The average household uses in the range of 70 to 80 gallons per day per person. If you are using more than this, we suggest you conduct a water use survey of your home. Toilets are typically the largest user of water followed by showers, washing machines and dishwashers. If you find that your water use has increased, the first place to look is at your habits and/or number of people in your household. If either has changed over the past six months, it could be having an impact on the amount of water you use.

The second place to look is either leaky toilets or running faucets. Leaky toilets in particular can be using water and you may not even be aware that it is leaking. Not all leaks are noticeable without testing. If you want to test your toilets, contact the Town's water department for a free test kit and instructions. Finally, to learn more about conservation measures you can take check out our Water Saving Tips page.

**QUESTION:** How can I learn more now and/or in the future?

**ANSWER:** We suggest that if you want accurate and more complete information, please use one of the following methods to answer any question you may have concerning town services or events:

- Visit the Town's web page at <http://town.williston.vt.us>. It contains a wealth of information and is kept up to date.
- Send us an email. Email address for all town officials can be found on the Town's web page. Click on the "Contact Us" bar on the left hand side of the Town's home web page. <http://www.town.williston.vt.us/index.asp?Type=DYNAFORM&SEC={9E329DD3-379F-4ACD-8897-DEFD0B0C27B8}>
- Subscribe to one of our Email newsletters. They cover a variety of interesting topics and you can subscribe or unsubscribe at any time. There are seven different topics to choose from. To subscribe visit the newsletter sign-up page. (<http://town.williston.vt.us/newsletter> )
- "Like us" on Facebook – The Town maintains a Facebook page. Important information on town events and services are regularly posted on this page. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Town-of-Williston-VT/416897161689938>
- Give us a call. During regular business hours, our staff welcomes questions and will do our best to provide you with the information you need. For a complete telephone directory, check out our web page using the "Contact Us" bar located on the left hand side of the Town's home web page. <http://www.town.williston.vt.us/index.asp?Type=DYNAFORM&SEC={9E329DD3-379F-4ACD-8897-DEFD0B0C27B8}>
- Stop by. The Town Hall is located at 7900 Williston Road. If you have a question and are in the neighborhood, feel free to stop by during regular business hours and we will do our best to get your questioned answered.
- Read the Williston Observer – Our local newspaper does a good job of reporting on various issues involving town services. Much of the content is also available on-line through their web site.

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