

## **Water & Sewer Utility Rate Frequently Asked Question & Answers**

### **Where does my drinking water come from?**

The Town of Williston purchases its water from the Champlain Water District (CWD). They get the raw water from Lake Champlain and treat it at their plant located in South Burlington VT. Please visit their web site at <http://www.cwd-h2o.org>.

### **Where does the water go that has been used by my household or business?**

All of the wastewater from the Town gets treated at the Essex Junction Treatment Plant. Besides Williston's and their own wastewater the Town of Essex also utilizes the plant. These three communities form a group known as the Tri-Town. Once the waste has been treated it is discharged into the Winooski River and then back to Lake Champlain to complete the cycle. Please visit the Essex Junction web site for more information on the treatment plant at <http://essexjunction.org/waste-water-treatment>.

### **If we purchase water from CWD and send waste to Essex Junction what responsibilities does the Town have?**

Williston has to maintain the infrastructure that is needed to distribute the potable water in town and also maintain the sewer collection system. This means inspections of our system and the need to keep employees trained and certified as per State regulations. We also have State Permits to operate that need to be paid. The water infrastructure includes valves and over 71 miles of pipe and 1 pump station. The sewer collection system includes 9 major pump stations, all the manholes and over 51 miles of sewer lines. This also includes the meters and meter reading equipment and software for the billing system.

### **Why can't I get municipal water or sewer at my property?**

Sewer and Water service areas are roughly outlined by Interstate 89 to the south, Muddy Brook to the west, the west side of Mountain View Road and down Rout2A to the Essex Junction line and North Williston Road to the intersection of Mountain View Road. The water service area roughly follows these same lines. The map is available on line at

[http://www.town.williston.vt.us/vertical/sites/%7BF506B13C-605B-4878-8062-87E5927E49F0%7D/uploads/2011\\_Map\\_7\\_Sewer\\_Service\\_Area\(1\).pdf](http://www.town.williston.vt.us/vertical/sites/%7BF506B13C-605B-4878-8062-87E5927E49F0%7D/uploads/2011_Map_7_Sewer_Service_Area(1).pdf)

### **Along with purchasing water and paying for our wastewater treatment what else goes into making up our rates?**

Along with the purchasing the water and paying for wastewater the rates also consist of the following. Paying for the electricity for the operation of the pump stations, pump station maintenance, building maintenance, employee pay and benefits, maintenance of lines (both water & sewer), vehicle maintenance, fleet replacement and long term capital program. All of the above are taken into consideration when determining rates.

## **What can I expect water and sewer rates to do in the future?**

Water and Sewer rates will continue to rise in the near future. There are a few reasons for this. One is the age of our infrastructure for both water and sewer. This infrastructure is just like the family car or even home. Over the life time of the family car or home we have expenses some of which are planned and some that are not. Certainly as these things age we need to replace and repair certain items to keep them working for us and from time to time have expenses that we do not expect. The water and sewer infrastructure is much the same. We have long term capital plans for replacing parts of the infrastructure that includes water tank replacement, pump station upgrades as well as new meters and meter reading programs. Also there are unexpected cost such as breaks and failures to the system, especially as the system ages.

CWD sets the wholesale rate by looking at much the same items as we do in determining rates. Once they have the rates set and they are approved by their board, Williston does have a representative on the board, the increase is passed on to the member communities. In a memo distributed by CWD we will see a 3.5 to 4% increase in the wholesale rate for the next 4-5 years as they work to pay off 2 bonds. This increase along with material increases and the cost of inflation all go into what the retail rate will be to Williston Water customers.

Essex Junction Treatment Plants budget takes into consideration much of the same items in coming up with their budget. We can expect increases over time caused by the same type of issues. One increase that will affect the rates is the portion of the bond that we are responsible for that was needed for the rehabilitation of the existing plant. Even though Essex Junction sets its on budget for regular operating expenses major upgrades and expenses are dealt with through the Tri-Town group.

## **How do our rates compare to surrounding communities?**

Williston's rates on average are in the middle of the pack when compared to surrounding communities. The budget is set in such a way as to try to anticipate long term goals and needs so that the budget can be built around spreading out expenses over a longer time period.

## **What can I do to keep my W/S bills down?**

One of the best ways to keep both water and sewer bills lower is to conserve water. This can most easily be done by installing low use and water saving appliances and fixtures. Since the billing for sewer is based on water in/water out by conserving on the water in you save on the water out. Also make sure your interior plumbing is in good working order and check your toilets from time to time to make sure you do not have a leaking one. One easy way to do this is to add a couple of drops of food coloring to the tank of your toilet and wait a little while to see if you have any color in the bowl. If color appears there is a leak that could cost you money over an extended time. Also you can take a look at your meter and then make sure no one use's any water in the house, this is best done overnight or when you are going to be out of the house for a time. If after that time period you go back and read the meter again and there is a difference in numbers then you have something leaking interior to the property.

One other way to keep rates lower is to disconnect any sump pumps that you may have attached to the sewer system. This will help reduce the amount of flow that goes to the sewer treatment plant that we get billed for. Also this type of connection is not allowed by town ordinance.