MARBLEHEAD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

THE FLOW N' GO

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SELLING YOUR HOUSE? WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

If you are planning to sell your home and are working with a local realtor, your agent will likely handle most of the details of transferring the water and sewer account assigned to your home into the names of the new owners. The brokers are well versed on the process.

If you are not working with a broker and are selling the property yourself, there are a few steps that you will need to take to assure that everything is done properly.

The one thing that every person selling or buying a property in Marblehead must be aware of, whether using the services of a broker or not, is that every address in Marblehead with water and/or sewer service has a unique account number assigned to it. This number identifies the specific property, not the owner of the property.

When you move from one address to another within Marblehead, the water and sewer account stays with the previous residence and does not move with the customer to their new address.

If you pay your bills on-line, either through your bank's bill paying system or by using the Town's website on-line payment system, **it is important that you update the account number** for your payment. The account number for your new address will not be the same as for the address you moved from.

What does that mean for you if you remit a payment without updating your account information? It means that you have just paid the water and sewer bill for the new owner of your former residence. To protect the accounts, we are not able to transfer a payment from one account to another so you would need to arrange a settlement with the other party — or consider the payment as a house-warming gift to the new owners.

If you are selling the home yourself, you will need to call the water and sewer office well in advance of the sale date to schedule an inspection of the premises. The sooner, the better—just in case there is a non-compliant issue that must be taken care of before the property will pass inspection.

You will also need to submit a Meter Reading Request form no later than seven days prior to the closing. A water department meter reader will then take a reading of the water meter 48 hours before the closing and a final water and sewer bill will be prepared and emailed to the individual identified on the form.

No final reading will be taken and no final bill will be produced until the property passes the inspection.

This final bill should be taken to the closing so that the amount owed by the seller up to the date of the reading can be included in the closing settlement.

Included in the email with the final water and sewer bill will be a Real Estate Transfer Confirmation form. This form should also be taken to the closing and signed by both the sellers and buyers. It is very important that this form be returned to the water and sewer office immediately after the closing because the Commission will not change the names on the account until this form is received.

The Meter Reading request form is available on our website at www.marblehead.org/water along with further details on the process to be followed to change ownership on water and sewer accounts.

TIP OF THE QUARTER

As grass in yards around town begins to "green-up," now is the time to check your lawn's irrigation system for any leaks or broken sprinkler heads and make necessary repairs before it is turned on.

The sprinkler heads are easily broken by lawn mowers and snow plows and can waste a lot of water (and money) if they are leaking.

When you turn the system on, make sure that the timer is set correctly so that you don't over-water.

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CONSIDER WATER CONSERVATION WHEN PLANNING YOUR SUMMER GARDENS

Last summer was on the dry side around these parts and this claim was easily supported by the high water usage that many customers experienced. There were a lot of people who went into "sticker-shock" when they received their bills that covered the watering season.

But that's the cost of a lush green lawn, colorful flower gardens and a bountiful fruit and vegetable harvest.

Did you know that there are certain measures that you can take to conserve water use in the garden—and save money? A water-efficient landscape can reduce outdoor water use by 20% to 50%, or more.

Before you plant your flower or vegetable garden you should improve your soil by digging in lots of well-rotted manure and compost. Adding organic matter to your gardens improves the soil structure, which helps it to retain moisture.

Now that your soil is ready, you should choose the right plants, especially when it comes to your flower beds.

Select drought-resistant plants that will survive with less watering but are just as beautiful. Some annuals that can better handle drought conditions include Ageratum, Coleus, Pansy, Salvia, Verbena, and Zinnia.

Once the plants are established, the key to retaining moisture is mulching. Mulches, such as gravel, bark chips or a layer of compost, reduce water evaporation by covering the surface of the soil and have the added advantage of keeping the weeds down. Mulching works well in both flower and vegetable gardens.

Water wisely. Use the right amount of water and apply it at the right time.

The amount of water that your garden and lawn will need depends on the soil type. Sandy soils need watering more often while clay-based soils can be watered less frequently but require more water. This is where improving the soil with organic materials is really helpful in reducing water use.

A rule of thumb for watering a flower garden is 5-6 gallons of water per ten square feet every seven days and for established lawns, about one inch of water every week—including any rain water.

Watering at the right time of day is just as important as using the right amount of water. Watering in the early morning will reduce water lost through evaporation—especially on hot days.

How to tell if your gardens need watering? Dig down into the soil about a spade-length deep. If the soil is damp, it's fine. If it is dry, it's time to water.

Now that you have a good idea as to how much water to give your gardens and lawn and the best time to apply it, you need to consider what is the best way to get the water to your plants.

A regular garden hose and nozzle is the least efficient way to water because so much of the water is lost as a mist, evaporation, and run-off.

Soaker hoses (also know as seep hoses) conserve water by applying it at the base of the plants where the water can be directly absorbed by the soil and roots. This method of watering greatly reduces evaporation and water loss.

Even though soaker hoses are a more efficient way to water, it doesn't mean that they should be left on for long periods of time. They still use water and the cost of that water can add up.

Want to keep your garden growing without spending any money for water? Buy or build a rain barrel or other rainwater collection system. Simply divert the water from your home's drainpipe into a collection vessel or directly into the garden.

Or, pray for a rainy summer.

Kids' Corner

TURNING KITCHEN SCRAPS INTO COMPOST FOR THE GARDEN

Ask your parents what they learned from reading the article above and one of the things they will tell you is that adding organic matter, such as compost, to the garden will save water.

Did you know that you can make compost and use it to grow your own plants?

Rinse out a soda bottle and have an adult remove the label and cut the bottle most of the way around and about a third of the way down the bottle, creating a flap from the top portion.

Place a layer of soil in the bottom of the bottle and add a little water if it is dry. Then put in a thin layer of vegetable scraps and peelings from tonight's dinner then top that with another thin layer of soil. Continue adding layers of fruit and vegetable scraps, soil, dry leaves, grass, and even shredded newspaper until the bottle is full.

Tape the top of the bottle in place and put it in a sunny location. Roll the bottle around every day, keeping the mixture moist but not wet.

In about a month the contents will turn brown and crumbly. It is now compost.

Put the compost in a flower pot and sow a couple of flower or vegetable seeds and watch your plants grow.

Now, teach your parents how they can make compost for their garden and reduce water use.