

# MARBLEHEAD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION



## THE FLOW N' GO

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2025

### ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER RATE HEARING

On June 24th, the Commission held a public hearing for the annual rate study.

There is a common misconception that the water and sewer departments receive funds through the Town's tax rate. They do not; both the water and sewer departments act as enterprise funds and therefore are fully funded by revenues generated by water and sewer rates.

Careful consideration is given by the Commission for the fair and equitable setting of water and sewer rates and fees. Rates and fees are set each year to offset the costs of operations, maintenance, debt service, and construction as well as wholesale charges for water from the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) and sewer treatment charges from the South Essex Sewerage District (SESD). Several rate scenarios are presented, analyzed, and discussed by the Commission prior to the setting of water and sewer rates.

#### Water and Sewer Rates for FY26 :

##### Water

Administrative Charge (\$170.00 Annual Total)	\$42.50 Quarter
Usage 1 – 3000 Cubic Feet	\$7.16 per 100 Cubic Feet
Usage Over 3000 Cubic Feet	\$11.65 per 100 Cubic Feet

##### Sewer

Administrative Charge (\$180.00 Annual Total)	\$45.00 Quarter
Usage 1 – 3000 Cubic Feet	\$12.10 per 100 Cubic Feet
Usage Over 3000 Cubic Feet	\$13.50 per 100 Cubic Feet

The administrative service charge is a flat fee that is charged to every water and sewer account. This fee provides funding for customer service, the billing division, a portion of debt services, and other costs not associated with distribution or collection.

The usage commodity charge covers the

cost of the operation of the distribution and collection system, as well as the purchase of water and sewer treatment cost. This is calculated based of actual usage from water/ sewer meter readings. This is split into two rates which are informally called the low and the high rate. The low rate representing all usage below 3,000 cubic feet, which is typical quarterly usage for a family of four. Should you use any more than 3,000 cubic feet, additional usage is charged at the higher rate.

A spirited discussion between board members regarding the needs of the water and sewer systems took place. Specifically for the sewer department, the topic of our 28 aging sewer pump stations, the required infiltration and inflow work mandated by a State issued Administrative Order, and SESD's Centennial Plan was discussed. For water, maintaining our high water quality and good fire flow was discussed.

It was decided that to stabilize rates and meet the commissions obligation for debt services, the administrative charges now carry a portion of the loan repayment for the SESD transmission line replacement and the MWRA local assistance loan program. Again, this year, the Commission took into account all upcoming budgetary challenges and put forward a rate that benefits all conservative water users.

The rate study is a complex document which requires extensive review and is difficult to explain fully within this limited space. If you are interested in learning more about this process, copies of the rate study are available at our office.

The rate study is conducted yearly in a public hearing held at the end of June. We invite all rate payers to attend the exciting meeting and be a part of the process of setting the upcoming rates. *Come see your elected boards in action!*

### DOMAIN CHANGE

We're excited to announce that the Town website has a new domain and is now:

[www.marbleheadma.gov](http://www.marbleheadma.gov)

Please update your bookmarks and contacts (our email will now end in

[@MarbleheadMa.Gov](mailto:@MarbleheadMa.Gov))

[water@marbleheadma.gov](mailto:water@marbleheadma.gov)

[sewer@marbleheadma.gov](mailto:sewer@marbleheadma.gov)

Share the news

Enjoy improved Security and Authenticity

### Contact Information

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Sump Redirection Program

[www.resump.org](http://www.resump.org)



## BEACH AND WATER QUALITY NOTIFICATIONS

You may have noticed green sign boards at various beaches and docks throughout town containing information about beach and water quality. The Board of Health and Sewer Department were awarded a grant for this educational resource. The locations of these sign boards coincide with swimming areas, stormwater outfall locations, and sewer pump station locations.

The main reason for the installation of these sign boards is to provide the public with notification of beach closures and Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSO's). An SSO is the accidental discharge of sewerage from the municipal sanitary sewer system. When an SSO occurs and it reaches the waterways, these sign boards provide a location for the Commission to notify the public. Simultaneously, these sign board provide a location for public education and resources about the sanitary sewer system, the stormwater system, and beach information.

SSO's are most commonly caused by blockages in the sanitary sewer system or the surcharging of the system during wet weather events. Let's go through these scenarios and learn what we can all do to help stop SSO's.

Blockages in the sanitary system are frequently caused by non-dispersible items entering the system. When items like "flushable" wipes are flushed into the system, it may get caught and cause a blockage which could result in a backup to your neighborhood. Even if it doesn't cause a blockage within the pipes, it can then get caught in our pump station pumps. These pumps then need to be taken apart and cleaned. Now imagine having to do that at all 28 pumping stations which all have at least 2 pumps! Stick to flushing only the three P's (Poop, Pee, and toilet Paper) and practice responsible sewer use.



Like many other components that make up Marblehead, the sewer system dates back to the 1800's. When this system was installed, it was designed to

hold only the sanitary sewer needs of the town. Over time, infiltration and inflow have found their way into the system. Infiltration being imperfections in the system which allow groundwater to enter. The Commission is addressing infiltration through capital projects (see past Flow N' Go issues regarding smoke testing and sewer lining). Inflow is when stormwater is redirected into the sanitary sewer system, most often through illicit connections of sump pumps. The additional 5 million gallons per day of groundwater during wet weather events can overwhelm the sanitary sewer system, causing the potential for SSO's.

How can you help stop SSO's? By being conscious of what you flush and remove any illicit sump pump connections from your home. If you do not know if you have an illicit sump pump connection, please call the Commission for an inspection or go to Resump.org to request an inspection.

If you find yourself at the location of one of these sign boards, enjoy learning more about the Town's sewer and drainage systems and how you can help to stop SSO's and protect the local waterways.

Enjoy your beach days worry free.

## A NEW APPROACH TO PAVING USING A HOLISTIC METHOD

As we are sure many of you have seen, the Commission has had very busy construction seasons. This season began with wrapping up year one of our sewer lining contract where we lined approximately 7,164 feet of sewer main, rehabbed 71 manholes, and installed top-hats for 117 sewer services. The result of this project will be decreased infiltration and inflow in the sanitary sewer system which decreases the risk of SSO's.

Simultaneously, N. Granese & Sons began year two of our water main improvement contract in March. The

scope of work includes; pipe replacement on Curtis Street, Roosevelt Ave and Bubier Road, and cleaning and lining on Rowland Street, Pleasant Street (Spring Street to Washington Street), and Pleasant Street (Vine Street to Lafayette Street).

You may be wondering how we choose where to do our utility projects. This is a process that includes analyzing our records, historical data, other utility information, and the DPW holistic plan. This DPW plan requires all utility work to be completed on a street prior to paving.

Utility work required typically follows this order of upgrades,

- 1st. Gas
- 2nd. Water
- 3rd. Electric
- 4th. Sewer
- 5th. Stormwater
- 6th. Sidewalks/Paving

Although it can be frustrating seeing continuous construction on your street, it is likely that paving isn't far behind the completion of this utility work.