

Customer Input Results In CHANGE

Mount Pleasant Waterworks (MPW) values the comments and suggestions received from customers. Over the past year MPW received comments about the \$20 late charge. Comments ranged in topic from equity among larger consumers, affordability and fairness.

Seeking more, MPW invited customers to attend a Customer Focus Group. The purpose of the focus group was to educate customers about MPW services, policies, and charges and to learn customers' opinions and suggestions about the current \$20 late charge and policy.

Customers were selected at random from the pool of responses to an invitation to participate in the group. The announcement of the Customer Focus Group was posted in the Waterlines Newsletter, emailed to all HOA Managers to be distributed to their residents and sent to all customers who had received a late charge in the past six months. More than 400 customers responded to the announcement and 50 were registered for the group randomly from two populations: customers who had paid late fees and customers who had not, approximately evenly. Thirty-six customers participated in the Focus Group on April 27, 2016.



After viewing a presentation that included information about MPW's funding, financial policies, billing and collections, and customer assistance programs the group was broken into smaller groups. They discussed the main topic, the \$20 late charge and made suggestions. The groups each made suggestions but in the end the overwhelming consensus was that MPW should consider changing the late charge to a percentage based charge.

All recommendations were presented to the Board of Commissioners and discussed during the Finance Committee Meeting in May.

As elected officials, the Commissioners felt it necessary to address the concerns presented by their constituents. During the Annual Commission Meeting, the Commissioners voted to change the late charge to \$5.00 plus 2.5% of the total bill.

"As a utility we strive to set charges, fees, and policies that

are fair and equitable. It is not our intention to penalize customers who may be struggling to pay their monthly bill. However, it is unfair for customers who pay in a timely manner to subsidize those who consistently pay late," said Commission Chair Rick Crosby. "Our intention is to be completely transparent and to work with our customers. This focus group provided a tremendous amount of information and feedback from our customers and as a group we felt it necessary to make a change to our late charge amount," he added.



"As a member of the Focus Group, I gained a greater understanding of the services and responsibilities of MPW and their governing Commission. We, in Mount Pleasant, are extremely fortunate to live in a community supplied with such a pristine water supply. I also was very impressed with how important transparency was to the Waterworks Commission as we met as a group to voice our concerns. It was very important to the Commission that the Focus Group left the meeting informed and satisfied that our concerns were both heard and addressed. We, as a Focus Group, were ultimately heard and our voiced concerns resulted in the new lower rates regarding the reduction of the late fees in the forthcoming Mount Pleasant Waterworks yearly budget," said Cathy Riddle.

As of July 1, 2016, the late charge will be \$5.00 plus 2.5% of the monthly bill. Customers who are unable to pay their bill by the due date should contact MPW at 843.884.9626 or customerservice@mpwonline.com. There are various options including assistance through the Customer Care Program for qualifying customers. Communicating with MPW prior to the bill due date will help customers avoid a late charge.

"I would like to thank the customers who participated in the Customer Focus Group. Your time and input is greatly appreciated and valued. Our Commissioners took action based on your input, so I encourage you all to stay informed and involved," said General Manager Clay Duffie.

GO PAPERLESS, Sign Up For Electronic Billing This Month

Want to reduce your incoming mail and help keep your water bill at an affordable rate? Electronic billing through Mount Pleasant Waterworks' Online Account Management is easy to use. After you sign up, you will receive a monthly email when your bill is available to be viewed. Electronic billing saves MPW money and that keeps your water and wastewater bill the second lowest in the tri-county area.

To go paperless today, visit our website and sign up for Online Account Management.

Update Your Contact Information

Help us help you...contact a Customer Service Specialist at 843.884.9626 or customerservice@mpwonline.com to make sure we have the most up to date contact information. This information will help us keep you informed.



The MPW bi-monthly Commission Newsletter, Water Lines, is produced in-house and mailed to customers with bills and statements. Current and past issues can also be viewed and downloaded from our website: www.mountpleasantwaterworks.com

Annual Meeting & Budget Approval

On Monday, June 27th, Mount Pleasant Waterworks (MPW) Commissioners cast their final vote to approve the Fiscal Year 2017 Operating Budget (FY2017), the FY2017-2018 Capital Budget, and made changes to fees and charges. The budget along with rates, fees, and charges provides for financial stability and allows the employees to continue to provide excellent service to each customer.

The Commissioners approved an Operating Expenditures Budget of \$36,630,773 and a two year Capital Budget of \$72,146,378. The approved budget covers the cost of operating and maintaining a system that consists of over \$1.5 Billion in assets, and to adhere to stringent regulations.

In addition to approving the Operating and Capital Budgets for FY2017, the Commissioners approved:

- No change in Basic Facility Charges Per Residential Equivalent Unit (REU)
- Volumetric Rate Increase which results in a total average bill increase of \$3.15 (based on 5,000 gallons)
- Change in Impact Fees:
 - Water Impact Fee from \$2,070.00 to \$2,142.00 per REU
 - Wastewater Impact Fee from \$4,658.00 to \$4,821.00 per REU
- Adjustments to Ancillary Fees (full list available on MPW website)

The Commissioners and management are tasked with keeping the cost of providing water and wastewater services affordable. The services provided by MPW are life sustaining services that the residents could not live without. The value of clean safe water for the community is invaluable.

MPW does not receive funding from tax collections or the Town of Mount Pleasant. The operating revenues received are solely from customers through water and wastewater sales. These funds are utilized solely to operate and maintain the water and wastewater system. At MPW, the concept that growth should pay for growth is implemented through impact fees. Most costs related to expansion and extension are paid through impact fees.

Even with the change in volumetric rates, MPW maintains the lowest rates in Charleston County and the second lowest in the Tri-County area.

Show Us Your Best Shot!

Mount Pleasant Waterworks is looking for beautiful water and environmentally themed photos of the East Cooper area for our 2017 Calendar Annual Report. It's your chance to be published and receive a cash award for usage. First Place will be used for the cover and pays \$300. Inside monthly photos will be awarded \$100.

All photo entries should be no less than 300 dpi 11x8.5. Photos must be landscape orientation. No more than twenty entries per person. Entries can be emailed to: debeling@mpwonline.com. CDs (no printed pages) can be dropped off at Mount Pleasant Waterworks Operations Center at 1619 Rifle Range Road, attn.: Dionna Ebeling, no later than September 30, 2016.

For further information please email Dionna Ebeling at debeling@mpwonline.com.



MPW Operations Center
1619 Rifle Range Road
Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
843-884-9626 (phone)
customerservice@mpwonline.com

Email requests will be processed the following business day.