

Village of Sparta February 2022 Newsletter Update



2022 Utility Increase Information

Effective January 1, 2022 the Village of Sparta will be making changes to its utility rates. The rate increase will be reflected in your February bill (which bills for January usage).



What is happening?

Utility bills for residents connected to the Village water and sanitary sewer systems have three different charges on them: ready to serve fees, commodity charges, and a debt charge. Both the water and sanitary sewer systems charge a ready to serve fee. The ready to serve (RTS) fee pay for capital upgrades to the respective systems – water and sanitary sewer. Capital upgrades are the big-ticket items like new water or sanitary sewer mains, water towers or machines to treat waste at the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), and overall system maintenance. Ready to Serve fees are like the utility systems saving account. The Village Council has worked very hard at paying for capital upgrades out of pocket, rather than incurring debt.

Commodity fees for water and sanitary sewer are fees charged for the amount of water used and this is measured in cubic feet. This revenue generated from commodity sales, for both water and sanitary sewer, are used for regular operations of the Water Treatment Facility, Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the cost to staff both plants. Commodity fees are like the Village's checking account – used for regular reoccurring bills.

The debt charge on utility bills generates revenues to pay for existing debt related to upgrades done to the Wastewater Treatment Plant in the 2000s. Once the debt has been paid off, the debt charge will be removed from utility bills.

Fees and charges for the utility systems are completely separate from all other revenues generated by the Village. Monies collected from utility bills are kept, and accounted for, separately from other Village monies.

Utility revenues are not, in anyway, associated with property taxes. Property taxes fund items like the Sparta Police Department, leaf and brush collection, Village Hall administration and other non-utility related expenses. Property taxes, per the State of Michigan, can not be used for costs associated with utility systems.

Why are rates increasing?

Similar to many consumer goods and services, the cost to maintain and deliver utility services has increased for the Village of Sparta. The cost of materials and labor have all increased for the Village over the past two years. Rates for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 remained flat, with no increases.

The Village recently completed the SAW Program with funding from the State of Michigan. The SAW – Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater Program – was an in-depth review of the Village utility systems. As part of the SAW Program, the Village was able to create a long-term planning document called the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This plan outlined all the utility system needs over the next 10-20 years. Following this, a utility rate study was completed. The utility rate study reviewed all of the revenues and expenditures related to the water and wastewater systems, it also reviewed all of the capital needs, big ticket items, over the next 10 years. From this, our updated rates were generated.

The additional revenue generated from the 2022 utility rate increases will help to fund operations and capital investment into the water and wastewater systems. This is necessary to ensure the two utility systems continue to operate in peak-condition and provide a valuable service to the residents of Sparta. The CIP can be viewed, along the 2022 annual budget, and the Village’s website at Spartami.org.

Winter Parking Reminders

Odd-even parking regulations begin November 15 and will be enforced on streets where odd even parking signs are present. Please be sure you know the rules of the ordinance to avoid a ticket. The Village of Sparta appreciates your cooperation.

If the calendar date is odd you need to be parked on the odd addressed side of the road. The restriction is in effect from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Example: If it is 2:00 a.m. on November 21st your vehicle needs to be parked on the odd side of the road.

When in Doubt, Throw It Out

There has been a recent uptick in non-flushable items showing up in the Village sanitary sewer system. These issues have mainly centered on “flushable” wipes. While advertised as “flushable”, products like this can wreak havoc on the Village’s sanitary sewer system, mainly the pumps. Items like “flushable” wipes, sanitary napkins, feminine hygiene products, and other non-flushable items get bound up in the pumps used to move waste to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. This can cause major disruptions to the sanitary sewer system. **When in Doubt, Throw It Out!**

Sidewalk Snow Removal



A friendly reminder that snow/ice removal from sidewalks is required within the Village of Sparta when accumulation is 2 inches or greater. Residents have 24 hours following the end of a snow event to clear sidewalks. Failure to clear sidewalks can result in a citation. To read the entire snow removal ordinance, please visit the Village’s website at: Spartami.org.