LAKE OSWEGO

Sewer rates could increase 28% to fund plant

The city of Lake Oswego considers ways to pay for needed wastewater treatment plant

By Corey Buchanan
The Review

To help pay for the future wastewater treatment plant in the Foothills area, the Lake Oswego City Council is leaning toward increasing sewer rates by about $27 for the average ratepayer in 2027 rather than a more gradual $8 annual rate increase.

While doing so would mean higher rates in the short term, city staff and consultants determined that the immediate increase would cost less than the alternative option by 2033.

Following the initial 28% increase, the city would continue to raise utilities at its regular 3.9% annual rate.

"We want to make good decisions today that will have a positive impact in the future," Mayor Joe Buck said at a meeting Tuesday, Sept. 1. "Even though option one requires us to bite the bullet now, down the road it leads to our ratepayers paying less money per year."

CITY OF LAKE OSWEGO/COURTESY
The new wastewater treatment plant would be located adjacent to the current site in the Foothills District.

The city is planning to finalize rate increases in October and begin construction on the new treatment plant in December. Designing and building the plant will cost at least $369 million and the project will in part be funded through a $123.5 million loan from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The current Tryon Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant in Lake Oswego was built in 1964 and is owned by the city of Portland. The city is building a new plant that it would own and would meet environmental regulations, be less odorous and have less of an impact on the environment. The new facility will also open up land for planned redevelopment of the Foothills District.

Consultant Kyle Rhorer with Carollo Engineers noted at the meeting that the technology needed to build a sustainable wastewater treatment plant is "terribly sophisticated and very expensive on a per unit, per square foot basis."

But Buck felt that the cost would be worth it as the city determined that rehabilitating the current plant would have been even more expensive.

"No doubt there is a cost to building this and it's a high cost just in raw dollars," he said at the meeting. "But there is a cost, of course, to not pursuing this project. And we are here because we have looked at those alternatives, which include rehabilitating the current facility, which we know would be vastly more expensive than the project we have here before us."

Construction is anticipated to be completed in 2031. The city is collaborating with Jacobs, a water operations and maintenance provider, on this project.

Miles announces council candidacy

The attorney wants to focus on schools, community safety and more

By Corey Buchanan
The Review

Attorney and law professor Suzanne Miles has filed her paperwork to run for Lake Oswego City Council this November.

Miles, who was a finalist for the open seat that went to Jackie Manz earlier this year, has worked as an assistant U.S. attorney for the District of Oregon and as a professor for the University of Oregon School of Law and the University of California, Berkeley School of Law. She also has served on the Forest Hills Elementary School parent-teacher organization and as a regulatory specialist for the Environmental Protection Agency.

Miles is the mother of two middle school students in Lake Oswego and said some of her top priorities include maintaining excellent schools, supporting local police and firefighters to keep the community safe, preserving natural resources and supporting small businesses. Miles was endorsed by Lake Oswego School Board Chair Neelam Gupta and Lake Oswego Mayor Joe Buck, among others.

Suzanne Miles

"As a mom and a former prosecutor, I know that safe streets, strong schools, and a healthy environment are the best investments in our community's future," Miles said via email. "I want to use my two decades of experience in law enforcement and education to keep our neighborhoods thriving and our city government accessible and accountable."

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Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality; GHG Sector-Based Inventory: https://www.oregon.gov/deq/ghgp/Pages/GHG-Inventory.aspx (ODEQ Data Prelim. 2023)

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