

Board of County Commissioners

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Rate Change Considered to Maintain Public Water Systems

Westminster, MD, Tuesday, April 9, 2019 –On April 9, 2019 during a budget discussion open session, the Carroll County Board of Commissioners (BOC) voted 4-1 (Commissioner Wantz dissenting), to tentatively approve the recommended 3-year utility rate plan included in the FY20 proposed budget. The three year plan to increase county utility rates will support the cost of running and maintaining the county utility system including operating and capital funding. This vote is a placeholder pending overall acceptance of the budget at the end of May.

The board first heard a presentation from the county Comptroller Rob Burk, Department of Public Works Director Jeffrey Castonguay and staff regarding the history of water and sewer rates. Utility revenue is used to maintain the safety and security of the public systems and to continue the self-supporting nature of the Utilities Enterprise Fund. The average household may see an increase of \$8.05 per quarter (\$32 per year) for water and \$5.21 per quarter (\$20.80 per year) for sewer (an average household uses 12,000 gallons of water per quarter).

The presentation revealed that operating costs to purchase water and maintain the system are increasing. Rates were not increased for the prior two years, putting further pressure on operating costs. Due to not increasing rates last year, the Bureau of Utilities significantly scaled back three capital projects: water meter replacements by 50%; fire hydrant replacement by 100%; and water service line replacement by 50%.

Without an increase for FY20 and adoption of the plan, most utility capital projects will stop. Staff highlighted four critical projects which would cease, or be substantially delayed, due to lack of sufficient funding: fire hydrant program; Sykesville's Route 851 water/sewer projects; sewer grinder pump upgrades and replacements for pump stations and the development of a new North Carroll Pumping Station in Hampstead.

"Water is an essential resource," said Commissioner Ed Rothstein, District 5, "Previous decisions result in the board needing to make tough decisions today. Delaying this decision could result in

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catastrophic failures down the road, so we need to do what is necessary to support the system today."

The presentation is available for public viewing and today's Open Session is available for viewing on the [county meeting portal](#) and [YouTube channel](#). In addition, all meetings will be replayed on Comcast Channel 24.

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