

Let's talk about the wastewater treatment plant, sump pumps and sewer fees.

Did you know that Lennox uses a mechanical plant to treat the city's wastewater? In 2011, the City switched from a pond/lagoon system to a mechanical treatment facility. This means that all the water and waste leaving our properties gets pumped to the wastewater treatment facility (WWTF). It is processed and then pushed out to the creek, instead of sitting in ponds for treatment.

In the past, it was acceptable to plumb sump pumps, drain tile, gutter systems, etc. into the sewer system. The saying goes "dilution is the solution". That may have been acceptable with a pond/lagoon system, but not with a mechanical plant. Every gallon of water sent to the WWTF costs the city in processing. In 2016, 105,306,000 gallons of water were treated at the facility. Of that amount, 55,074,000 gallons is estimated to be ground water coming from illegal connections to the sanitary sewer system. Illegal connections consist of sump pumps, drain tile, gutter systems, etc. According to Lennox Municipal Ordinance - 8.0304(H) & 8.0307(A):

H. "No person(s) shall make connection of roof downspouts, foundation drains, areaway drains, sump pumps or other sources of surface runoff or groundwater to a building sewer or building drain which in turn is connected directly or indirectly to a public sanitary sewer. In certain locations or situations where surface water discharge would create a safety hazard during freezing weather, connection to the sanitary sewer line may be permitted by the Sewer Superintendent.

*Any person, owner, lessee or occupant who has presently made or permitted to be made, or shall make or permit to be made, any connection or installation in violation of Section 8.0304(H) shall immediately remove that connection or correct that installation. If not removed or corrected within ten calendar days after notice of violation has been delivered personally or by certified mail to that person, owner, lessee or occupant, **the City shall impose a surcharge of five hundred dollars (\$500) per month on the sewer bill of the property owners who are not in compliance.** All properties found during regular or periodic re-inspection programs that violation Section 8.0304(H) will be subject, at the discretion of the City, to the imposition of the monthly fee for all months between the two most recent inspections."*

A. "The Superintendent and other duly authorized employees of the City bearing proper credentials and identification shall be permitted to enter all properties for the purposes of inspection, observation, measurement, sampling, and testing pertinent to discharge to the community system in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter."

When estimating the cost to treat wastewater the City uses \$1.35 per 1000 gallons. This number only includes utilities and equipment maintenance/replacement. It does not include costs such as staffing, testing, supplies, repairs and maintenance of the sewer lines and lift stations.

If you do the math, in 2016 the City spent an estimated \$142,164 to treat water at the WWTF and of that amount, \$74,350 was spent treating ground water from the illegal connections listed above. If you use this same number, over the last 5 years of treating ground water the city spent \$371,750 which was basically flushed down the toilet.

The City is planning to work in the “worst” area of the city to help eliminate some of these improper connections. As a property owner, to do your part in keeping this cost down, all illegal connections need to be removed from the sanitary sewer system. The City will be requiring that all connections be permanently removed by August 1, 2017. After August 1, if a property is found in violation, the \$500 penalty will be enforced. **Inspections of all properties will be conducted per the Ordinances.** If you have any illegal connections to the sewer system, make the correction and call the City Office to schedule an inspection. All properties must be in compliance by August 1, 2017. Failure to comply will result in a \$500 surcharge per month until the property become compliant.

With the addition of this mechanical plant (WWTF) comes higher maintenance costs, thus the reason the sewer rates need to increase. Effective with the Utility Bill due on May 5, 2017, all property owners will pay a flat rate sewer fee of \$40. For residential customers, the fee is not based on usage. For commercial customers using over 500 cubic feet of water per month, the flat fee of \$40 will apply along with a usage fee of \$.04 per cubic foot of water used over 500 cubic feet.

Please permanently disconnect all sump pumps from the sanitary sewer system. Then contact the Lennox City Office at 605-647-2286 to have your compliance inspection done before August 1, 2017.