



Upper Moreland - Hatboro Joint Sewer Authority

News

Spring 2024

The Authority publishes this newsletter to keep its service area customers up to date on important activities and to provide helpful tips.

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER – The Authority is aware of the impact prices have on our customers. Similarly, the Authority is also dealing with the rising prices of gasoline, equipment, chemicals, and other operational items. Although the Authority does everything we can to control costs, the Board of Directors approved a rate increase of 4% on water use fees starting in July 2024 to cover the increased costs of operating and maintaining the treatment plant, while meeting permit requirements. For a minimum residential user that uses $\leq 5,000$ gallons/quarter), this comes to less than \$0.50/month increase. The water use rate increases over the past 20 years and since January 2022 have been less than the rate of inflation.

This year's operating budget is \$8,412,100 and the capital improvement budget is \$3,158,600. Some significant capital projects have recently been finalized while others will continue through next year to achieve the desired Reliability, Redundancy, and Resilience in our operations. The major capital projects that are ongoing, or are scheduled for next year include:

- Upgrade our grit channels that remove grit (e.g., stones, coffee grounds) and large debris (e.g., flushable wipes, rags).

- Replacement of our old dewatering press to one that takes the thickened solids from 3% to 25-30% prior to incineration of the solids at $\geq 1,300^{\circ}\text{F}$. The new press will be more efficient, operationally less maintenance/repair and greatly reduce overall energy costs.
- Replace the relief bypass stack on our incinerator.
- Create a pipe inside the pipe (line) approximately 3,000 feet of additional sewer main in 2024 to regain integrity against leaks and tree root penetration, as well as prolong the life of our sewer main. The Authority has lined over 16.6 miles (87,725 feet) of sewer main since 2009.
- Installed removable flood mitigation gates/barriers to fortify our plant to protect against flooding due to the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. These measures will reduce the potential of flooding in key buildings and costly flood damage to equipment.
- Design a replacement ultraviolet (UV) disinfection system to mitigate the discharge of harmful organisms into the Pennypack Creek.
- Upgrade various electrical systems to replace systems that are past their useful life and improve operational efficiency.
- Upgraded our plant security systems.

Electrical costs in this energy-intensive industry are a major budget item. The Authority is constantly looking to reduce our

carbon footprint in a cost-effective way. New more energy-efficient equipment, LED lighting, and other changes reduced our average monthly electrical use by over 23% (611,000 to 465,000 KW/month) since 2009.

Because we operate 24/7 every day of the year, all our modifications/improvements must be performed while the plant is still treating the wastewater. In 2023, the Authority treated over 2,017,434,000 gallons of wastewater, an average of around 5,527,000 gallons per day. Our dedicated staff continues to do an excellent job meeting our permit requirements.

During extreme weather events, flow through our plant can increase dramatically (over quadruple) due to groundwater infiltration, surface water inflow, leaking laterals, etc. Another source is illegal sump pump connections that pump water from basements into our collection system, where this flow exacerbates the high-flow situation. **It is illegal to discharge sump pumps into the sanitary sewer.**

SEWER BILL PAYMENTS - Our Administration Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM. Payments may be put in the office mail slot after hours using checks/money orders. Online payments are available by credit/debit card, or from your bank account, through UMHJSA.MyGovHub.com or by scanning the QR code in this newsletter. Remember that there is a 2% transaction fee when paying by either credit or debit card, which offsets approximately half of the credit card fees charged to the Authority.

Payment can also be made by check through your bank with no fee. Our website (www.umhjsa.org) has an online tutorial that guides you through the payment process. **If you are interested in the convenience of receiving your bill by email, please visit**

our website and use the ecommerce tab.

Note that your quarterly sewer bills reflect water use during the previous 2 to 5 months. Our billing vendor has provided a feature that now allows customers to automate their sewer bill payment. Please visit www.umhjsa.org/ecommerce to read the instructions on how to set up your account for autopay.

Do not pay your bill on DOXO.COM, which comes up when you perform a web search for UMHJSA. This for profit, non-approved vendor will delay your payment and charge you additional fees.

ASSISTANCE WITH SEWER BILLS –

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) administers a fund that supports homeowners in the Commonwealth who were financially impacted due to the pandemic. This program can assist qualified homeowners for delinquencies on your mortgage and utility bills. The Authority is not involved in the operation of this fund and does not determine eligibility. We do encourage homeowners who are having financial difficulty and are behind on their sewer bill to visit our website for additional information and to obtain an application to send to the Commonwealth.

Additional information can be located at: www.pahaf.org

SEWER BACKING UP? If your sewer is backing up, call us before you call a plumber. We will evaluate where the problem is for free and advise you what should be done. Call 215-659-1462.

Sewer Backup Insurance - It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain the lateral (the pipe that connects your property to our collection system in the

street) and safely remove tree roots and other blockages.

Most home insurance policies do not cover sewer backups. We strongly recommend that you contact your insurance agent to discuss adding a sewer backup rider to your property's insurance policy. **This insurance is particularly important if you have a fixture in the basement, such as a toilet.** In the event of a sewer backup, a sewer backup rider may mitigate the costs of cleanup and replacement of furnishings.

Cleanouts – Please check your lateral (sewer pipe connecting your property to our collection system pipes) for open cleanouts, which are a source of unwanted storm water during heavy rain events. If you need a cap, we will help you get one installed – just call us at 215-659-1462. If you do not have a cleanout or are considering having one installed, a two-way cleanout proximate to the curb can facilitate removing blockages in the future. Details of the cleanout can be found on our website under FAQ.

Flushable Wipes - Please remember to “Keep the Wipes Out of the Pipes,” even though they say "flushable." Your fellow ratepayers will appreciate it if you move from a "flush it and forget it" to a "toss them, don't flush them" mindset. It is recommended that you discard these wipes with your regular trash and do not flush them down the toilet.

Other Items Not to Flush Down the Toilet
As with “flushable” wipes, the sewer system is not a magical way to get rid of all your waste. Some material (e.g., pesticides) may be toxic to our biological treatment plant, resulting in plant upsets, like significant events that occurred around December 1st and 10th, 2023. Some products cannot be treated before they are discharged into the Pennypack Creek (e.g., medications) and

should be tossed in the trash or other proper disposal method. A general rule of thumb is "if it doesn't come out of you, it doesn't belong in the loo." Only flush the three “Ps” down the toilet: **Pee, Poop** and (toilet) **Paper**.

HOW TO DEAL WITH FOG – FOG stands for Fats, Oils, and Grease that is found in common foods and food ingredients such as meat, butter, cooking oil, sauces, mayonnaise, and food scraps. If not managed properly, FOG solidifies and sticks to the sides of your kitchen drains and sewer pipes. The most common accumulation comes from your daily dishwashing process. Over time, FOG buildup can plug pipes and cause sewer back-ups in your home or business, resulting in costly repairs and maintenance. It also reduces the efficiency and effectiveness of the treatment process.

Here are a few simple steps you can follow at home to help prevent sewer backups: Pour cooled fats, oils and grease into a covered, disposable container and toss it in the garbage. NEVER pour fats, oils or grease down sink drains or toilets. Put the FOG monster on a fat-free diet. **Cool it, contain it, and trash it.**

Soak up remaining fats, oils and grease with a paper towel and dispose of it in your garbage. Before you wash dishes, scrape food scraps from your plates, pots, and pans into your trash.

Grease Trap Inspections – The Authority has experienced significant problems with excess FOG in the sewer main that have resulted in sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) into nearby water ways and requiring expensive cleanups. Due to this problem, the Authority anticipates conducting random inspections of commercial properties that have grease traps to make sure they are

being properly maintained and not causing excess FOG to enter our collection system.

GARBAGE DISPOSALS – Garbage disposals are not the greenest way to dispose of food waste. These organics can put additional energy and chemical demands on our plant. Please consider composting most of your food waste, which has the added benefit of making excellent topsoil for around your house.

SAVE TWICE BY CONSERVING WATER – You can easily save twice by consuming less water. You can save on your water bill and sewer bill by installing water flow restrictors on faucets and shower heads. These devices are available at your local hardware store.

Also, try to wash only full loads in your clothes washer and dishwasher. Water is a finite resource and we must take care of what we have, as there is no more to replace it!

The Authority has six members of its Board of Directors – There are three Board Members from both Hatboro and Upper Moreland. The current Board Members are:

Alex Kalnajs (HAT), Chairman
Hank Sokolowski (UMT), Vice Chairman
Bill Tompkins (HAT), Secretary
George Hatman, III (UMT), Treasurer
Dave Kistner (UMT), Asst. Treasurer
Suzanne Dougherty (HAT), Asst. Secretary

The Authority appreciates their dedicated service to the community.

**SAVE A TRIP!
TIME!
US IN YOUR FAVORITES!**



**USING YOUR CELL PHONE, SCAN THE QR CODE
TO QUICKLY AND EASILY PAY YOUR SEWER BILL!**