

# PACIFIC GROVE REVIEW



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## Phone Numbers:

Emergency	911
City Hall	648-3100
City Manager	648-3106
City Clerk	648-3100
Planning	648-3190
Building	648-3183
Library	648-5760
Museum	648-5716
Police Business	648-3147
Fire Business	648-3110
Public Works	648-5722
Golf Course	648-5775
Recreation	648-5730

## What's Up with Those Sewers?

When you pick up the morning newspaper and the headline reads, "Sewer Spill Shuts Down Lovers Point Beach," it naturally raises concerns. These alarm-sounding headlines and other brief news reports, however, do not tell the entire story or show how significant efforts in Pacific Grove to repair the sewer system remain a priority of the City Council and staff. The fact is, for more than two years the City has undertaken a major program of activities and expenditures to eliminate sewer spills and other contaminants from entering

Monterey Bay.

This newsletter will outline some of the history and the current program of making sewer repairs, how sewer system finances work, what some of the challenges are in preventing system upsets, and how you can play a role in ensuring the sewer system functions properly.

*The numbered articles in this newsletter correspond with the six basic components to the program listed later in this article.*

The spotlight has been focused on Pacific Grove's sewer collection system since sewage entered Monterey Bay when an underground cross connection between a broken sewer line and a storm drain allowed 70,000 gallons of untreated wastewater (effluent) to go undetected. That line was repaired and the cross connection was eliminated. Since then, massive efforts have been made to prevent a repeat of the spill and to develop a plan for the future of the collection system.

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## Sewer Budget Substantial—Nearly \$2 Million This Year

**5** The wastewater collection system is incorporated into the City's Program of Services as an enterprise account. All revenue and expenditures are held within a special fund for the exclusive use for maintenance, operation, and improvement to the collection system. Below is a five year summary of the Sewer Enterprise Fund.

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	Actual 1997-1998	Actual 1998-1999	Actual 1999-2000	Actual 2000-2001	Budget 2001-2002	Budgeted 2002-2003
Revenue from Surcharges	\$556,059	\$554,716	\$528,852	\$536,247	\$728,366	\$950,000
Other	\$42,916	\$32,856	\$30,668	\$30,147	\$29,071	\$255,000
2001 Bond Proceeds	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$790,560	\$600,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$598,975</b>	<b>\$587,572</b>	<b>\$559,520</b>	<b>\$566,394</b>	<b>\$1,547,997</b>	<b>\$1,805,000</b>
Maintenance & Operation	\$494,405	\$641,433	\$451,655	\$550,423	\$517,607	\$1,003,065
Capital Outlay	\$198,193	\$69,146	\$203,236	\$70,019	\$927,961	\$892,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$692,598</b>	<b>\$710,579</b>	<b>\$654,891</b>	<b>\$620,442</b>	<b>\$1,445,568</b>	<b>\$1,895,065</b>

# Budget For Sewer Improvements...

(Continued from page 1)

The Fund collects revenues from various sources and expends monies for the collection system.

Since the early 1970s, the City has been responsible for maintaining a wastewater collection system composed of approximately 58 miles of pipe, 823 manholes, and a series of pump stations, all of which carry the wastewater to the regional wastewater treatment plant in Marina. Before that time, the City also processed wastewater at a plant on Sunset Drive near the Pacific Grove Municipal Golf Links.

The method of financing maintenance and improvements to the collection system since the change to the regional system has been through revenues collected as a surcharge on the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency's (MRWPCA) sewer service charges.

A surcharge of 50% of the MRWPCA rate had been in effect since 1992. However, the MRWPCA monthly rate schedule has not changed since 1991.

In October 2000, the Council accepted a report from Parsons Engineering Science, Inc. of Monterey, *Summary Report on Capital Improvement Program for the Wastewater Collection System*. The report recommended what capital improvements should be made to the City's system over the next 20 years and listed immediate actions that should be taken in order to repair parts of the system deemed critical. The total estimated cost of the critical needs was \$1,064,000.

What the engineering report failed to take into account was the City's ability to generate revenues in the amounts suggested in the report. Therefore, the City Council reviewed options to implement an ongoing capital improvement program to make improvements at a constant--although slower--pace over the coming years. This program would allow the City to plan for both the immediate critical needs and an annual capital improvement plan from known revenues, while searching for extraordinary revenues such as grants and other outside revenues that occasionally are available.

The Council chose to attack the issue in two phases. First, complete the Critical Needs projects as soon as possible; and second, plan for ongoing capital improvements at a higher rate than past years while continuing a higher level of maintenance activities.

Initially the Council raised the sewer surcharge fee from 50% to 70% in the first year. In subsequent years, it would be raised additionally so that by July 1, 2003, the rate would be 100% of the MRWPCA sewer charges.

Changes to the surcharge would raise revenues from about \$560,000 to more than \$1 million annually.

Residential rates would change as shown below.

Sur-charge	MRWPCA Monthly Rate	City Monthly Fee	Total Monthly Rate	Total Annual Increased Cost
50%	\$9.30	\$4.65	\$13.95	
<b>70%</b>	<b>\$9.30</b>	<b>\$6.51</b>	<b>\$15.81</b>	<b>22.32</b>
<b>85%</b>	<b>\$9.30</b>	<b>\$7.90</b>	<b>\$17.20</b>	<b>39.00</b>
<b>100%</b>	<b>\$9.30</b>	<b>\$9.30</b>	<b>\$18.60</b>	<b>55.80</b>

First, in August 2001, the City issued bonds with the proceeds in the amount of \$1.365 million. The annual cost to repay this debt is approximately \$95,000. The bond issue provided funds for all of the first phase of the Critical Needs of the Capital Improvement Program. A second major component of the capital and maintenance program would be the purchase of a new sewer maintenance truck. Therefore, first year revenue and bond money would go to financing the Critical Needs projects and purchase the new truck.

Secondly, future-year revenues will allow us to continue debt service payments and increase the maintenance efforts by adding additional cleaning activities in critical areas through a contract with an outside cleaning service, and work on capital improvements as proposed in the engineering report. Each additional year would show an increased amount of funds available for capital improvements of about \$400,000, after the initial bond debt service is paid.

Although this method of financing would not complete the proposed improvements as quickly as shown in the Parson's report, it would double the City's sewer revenues and allow the City to spend nearly \$500,000 annually on capital improvement funding.

During fiscal year 2001-2002, the first year of increased revenues, the City completed all of the Critical Needs projects that were outlined in the Parson's Report at a cost of \$714,000 rather than the \$1 million estimated in the report. In addition, a new Hydro-Vac Maintenance Truck at a cost of \$230,000 was placed into service.

# Grease Reduction Keeps Pipes Flowing

**3** Grease in sewer lines is like cholesterol in our blood vessels. It clogs the system so that the normal flow of water and solids is restricted, causing stoppages and upsets.

The Council approved a program to assist and require food service establishments in our community to meet oil/grease reduction regulations. The Grease Reduction program includes a priority listing, which classifies food service establishments according to the probability of allowing grease into the sewer system. With the assistance of MRWPCA staff, all establishments were classified into the following categories:

Priority 1	Very-high grease impact potential
Priority 2	Moderately-high grease impact potential
Priority 3	Moderately-low grease impact potential
Priority 4	Minimal-no grease impact potential

Each of the priority categories had a different schedule for making changes to their grease removal equipment, including the possibility of no change if there is no potential for grease

## What's Up with Those Sewers?

*(Continued from page 1)*

Within this newsletter, we will highlight the details of the program that has evolved as problems with the system have been identified. The City Council has steadily guided the process to ensure that it meets the needs of the community, yet blends smoothly with City programs such as public safety, recreation, library, and public works activities.

### What is the Program?

The Council instituted changes to the City's overall maintenance and operation program soon after the initial spill. There are six basic components to the program:

1. **New Cleaning Schedule**
2. **Rapid Response to Sewer Upset**
3. **Grease Trap/Interceptor Program**
4. **Public Information Program for Businesses and Residences**
5. **Increase Capital Funding for Sewer Maintenance and Capital Needs**
6. **Divert Outfalls Away From Bay**

There has been much discussion about the need to replace the entire system. It was estimated that to do so, it could cost as much as \$40 million. Replacement of the old lines is only one part of keeping the system functional. Cleaning, reduction of intrusions such as grease, creating a fail-safe diversion, and public awareness are also necessary to keep the operation running smoothly.

to enter the system.

Businesses were given four months to install a grease trap; and eight months for interceptors, from the date of notification by the City. The City has had excellent cooperation from property owners on completing installations.



*Michael Petty (front) and Tony Bernardasci of A&R Plumbing install a grease trap at the Youth Center.*

As of July 30, 2002, 14 grease interceptors with the combined capacity of 29,460 gallons were installed through this grease reduction program. Only one interceptor (750 gallons) remains to be installed. Additionally, 86 grease traps with a combined total capacity of 9,516 gallons have been installed. All Priority One, Two, and Four facilities are in complete compliance with the City ordinance, and only six Priority Three facilities are still in the process of installation of interceptors or traps.

Although, as yet, the City has no current data showing grease reduction, field personnel has noted a significant reduction in the amount of grease in the collection system.

Council initiated a program of low-interest loans with payments up to five years for the installation of new grease traps or interceptors. The program allowed loans equal to the cost for grease interceptors up to \$20,000 and for grease traps up to a maximum of \$7,500. A local bank administers the loan program. Materials also were developed and distributed to provide educational information to food service establishments and others interested in the oil/grease reduction program.

# Fat Free Sewers Flow-Don't Clog



Our sewers are aging and require constant attention. To stay healthy, they need to be put on a low fat diet! Kitchen oil and grease poured down the sink cools, hardens, and builds up in waste plumbing lines. This causes slow-draining sinks, and can even result in a sewage backup or spill into Monterey Bay. You can help by pouring old

cooking oil and grease in a covered can and placing it in the garbage.

The City has assembled the following ingredients for cutting residential grease that helps keep our sewers and Bay healthy and clean:

- ❑ Informational mailer kit for each home.
- ❑ Print and media educational reminders on what you can do.
- ❑ "Cease the Grease – Put a lid on It!" school art contest.

For more information call City Hall for a Fat Free Sewer Information Kit.

(This recipe will serve approximately 15,500 people)

# Divert Effluent from Spills Away from Bay

**6** The ongoing program of increased spending, which doubles the amount of money dedicated to the wastewater collection system, should reduce the number and severity of system upsets. However, a final program of capturing errant flows from both the City's collection system and private property sewer failures is now in the planning stage.

In July 2002, the City signed an agreement with the Department of Water Resources for a \$500,000 grant to divert summer storm drain flow that is discharged into Monterey Bay into the sanitary sewer collection system, at the MRWPCA transmission lines.

This system will allow the City to divert all water currently discharging into the Bay at Lovers Point into the sanitary sewer system to be treated and recycled.

It also will allow the City to use the same system to divert potential sewer system upsets that travel through the storm drains back into the sanitary sewer system before reaching the Bay.

The City has applied for a second grant to complete this project from Lovers Point to Hopkins Marine Station on the Monterey border. Both of these projects are the result of extensive support of the City, California Regional Water Quality Control Board staff, and local environmental groups who have assisted in preparing these grant applications and generating support for the proposals.

## Rapid Response to Sewer Upsets

**2** The Pacific Grove Fire Department has developed an emergency response protocol for all potential sewer blockages and potential spills in which it is the first responder to all such calls. The Fire Department treats these calls as hazardous materials responses and immediately establishes an emergency incident command center with a goal to:

**Safeguard and protect the health and safety of the public and emergency response personnel; conduct emergency response to mitigate hazards and life safety risks; and, isolate, confine, neutralize, and remove all contaminants.**



*Fire and Sewer Crews work together to stop effluent escaping from private property line rupture.*

The system works by having all calls concerning sewer spills made to the fire dispatch center. The on-duty fire team is dispatched to the site of suspected upsets along with a chief officer. Public Works crews are dispatched at the same time, although they may take more time to reach the scene during off duty hours. Fire staff and public works crews work immediately to contain the spill and to provide clean-up services as directed by the County Health Department.

Using this immediate response of on-duty fire personnel, the City has been able to reduce or eliminate sewer line leakage that reaches the Bay.

## Cleaning Sewers a Full Time Job



**1** Starting in June 2000, our sewer cleaning crew began to exclusively clean lines with our hydro-jet trucks and, now Hydro-VAC truck, on a full time basis. When minor construction work is required, this work is done by the street crew or by contract so that the sewer crew can continue the

cleaning process uninterrupted.

While the industry average for system cleaning is more than a year or longer between cleaning, Pacific Grove crews clean all 58 miles of sewer line at least once every eight (8) months. Spots known to be problems are cleaned more often.

In addition to our regular City crew, the City has advertised for bids to clean and video more than 80,000 lineal feet, that's more than 15 miles, this fiscal year. Results of the video work will be used to determine the next major project to replace sewer lines.

### Did Your Know?

## Clean Out Required at Household Connection

Every house connected to the City sewer collection system is required to have a cleanout and back water vent on sewer laterals. The vents, sometimes called "Carmel Traps" prevent sewage water from backing up into buildings when a lateral or street main is blocked.

The sewer lateral is the line that runs from the house to the City's main line. The cleanout and back water vent is an extension of the lateral located above ground on private property and is designed to provide access for cleaning and an "escape route" for sewage whenever there is a stoppage. A permit to install the cleanout and back flow device must be obtained from the Building Department who can be reached at 648-3183.

Property owners are responsible for the installation and maintenance of the lateral that connects the building to the City main, which is usually in the street. When a new City main is installed, the City will reconnect existing laterals as part of the project. However, if the lateral is broken or clogged with debris, the property owner must provide for the repair and cleaning of the lateral.

Normally, routine cleaning of laterals is done by one of the various plumbing or routing companies in the area. Usually these companies will use an auger to ream out the lateral, pushing the material plugging the lateral into the City main.

City crews have found bunches of tree roots, diapers, large balls of copy paper, Nerf footballs, wood, and other objects that have been pushed into the main from the lateral.

Therefore, we have asked property owners and companies cleaning out laterals to call the Public Works Department when a lateral is cleaned. This way sewer crews can check the City main for blockages from the same material that was blocking the private property lateral and clean the City main right away.

When your lateral is cleaned, please call the Public Works Department at 648-5722 and let them know about the cleaning action. An after hours call will direct you to call the police department who will make note of the call for the Public Works Crew.

## District, City Win Award for Public Info Campaign

MRWPCA and the City were awarded top honors by the California Association for Sanitation Agencies for a public information campaign "Put a Lid on It," which included:

- A mailer to all residents of the community explaining the grease reduction efforts and enlisting their assistance.
- Theater slides that reached approximately 200,000 people a month ran for 10 weeks in local theaters (including Pacific Grove and Monterey).

- Radio spots on grease reduction ran for two months.

- Newspaper ads reaching approximately 87,000 people ran for six months during the year.

- A plumber's educational workshop was held with attendance of 25 plumbers.

- A school art contest, decorating grease cans, ran in conjunction with school educational programs about grease reduction and other conservation efforts. Approximately two hundred elementary school students participated in the Grease Can Art Contest.

- The City recognized both a plumber and restaurant owner who had done the most to assist the City in grease reduction education through a plumber and restaurant of the year program.

During the coming year a similar program has been included in the Sewer budget and is currently being developed.

CITY OF PACIFIC GROVE

*Butterfly Town, U.S.A.*



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## Utility Users Tax on November 5th Ballot

At a special meeting held on July 31<sup>st</sup>, the City Council instructed the City Manager to prepare an alternate budget for the current year in the event that a Utility Users Tax reduction is approved by the voters in November. The Council learned that the proposed reduction would amount to more than \$400,000 per year and that the average household would save about \$5 per month if the tax reduction is approved.

In preparation for a reduction in these General Fund revenues, the Council approved including budget adjustments that would have the following effect on services:

- ◆ *Eliminate all community group funding.*
- ◆ *Reduce the hours that City Hall will be open*
- ◆ *Reduce the amount of volunteer fire officer shifts that assist full time fire personnel*
- ◆ *Eliminate Sunday service at the Pacific Grove Library and reduce the evening hours on two additional nights*
- ◆ *Eliminate downtown holiday lighting*
- ◆ *Reduce downtown and other public areas beautification efforts*
- ◆ *Eliminate urban forestry efforts*

- ◆ *Eliminate street sweeping except in the commercial areas*
- ◆ *Eliminate the Arts Commission funding*
- ◆ *Increase the time to receive planning and building permits through the elimination of one planner*
- ◆ *Eliminate website development by the cutting of funds for an intern in the City Manager's office*
- ◆ *Increase the time it takes to have streets lights repaired and contract for all electrical services*

The measure on the November 5th ballot, Measure P, would reduce the Utility Users Tax from 5% to 3% on the use of electricity, natural gas, telephone, cable televisions, and water.

The Utility Users Tax was first approved by the City Council in 1968 at 3%. The following year, 1969, the Council approved an increase in the tax to 5%. The Utility Users Tax has remained at the rate of 5% since 1969.

Municipal Code Section 6.10.020 allows persons who meet certain low income criteria to be granted an exemption to the tax.