

Mason County is considering the following planning issues related to rates and fees for side sewer connections and operations of the new sewer system. Some of the decisions have already been made, and some are still being determined. Mason County is working toward having all of these decisions finalized as a part of the Side Sewer Ordinance. Once final, this information will be provided to property owners so they can begin planning for the construction of their side sewers, and will eventually be formalized in Mason County Code.

Low pressure system costs

In certain areas along the sewer alignment, properties are located at a grade that is lower than the sewer main. This requires a low pressure system where individual properties will need to pump into the sewer main, instead of a gravity system where the effluent flows without a pump. Properties connected to the low-pressure systems will require a grinder pump and potentially electrical upgrades to operate the pump. Status: To mitigate the additional costs to property owners along the low pressure system, Mason County will issue property owners requiring a low pressure system a credit for electrical work, and will also provide a standard grinder pump to all these property owners.

Calculating ERU's

The county is working toward keeping rates as low as possible for property owners; however the rates will be based on how many properties connect to the system during the first phase. At this time, the rates are estimated between \$86 and \$100 per month, per ERU. Status: Mason County is in the process of finalizing an ERU calculation as a part of the Side Sewer Ordinance.

Connection Fees

Connection fees will be charged to property owners upon connection to the system. The preliminary connection fee is estimated between \$3,200 and \$5,000 per ERU. All connection fees will be outlined as a part of the Side Sewer Ordinance. Status: Mason County is in the process of determining when property owners will be required to pay connection fees in full, whether installments will be allowed for connection fees, and when the fee will be raised for new connections after the first phase and initial start-up.

Connection Costs

Property owners will be responsible for all construction costs related to building their side sewer. Mason County's current estimate for these costs is approximately \$3,000. Status: These costs will be largely property dependent and will vary based on a property's topography, distance from the building to the property line, and the contractor selected for construction.

Ensuring property owners hook-up to the new system

Once the sewer is operational, Mason County Health Department will set a date at which all existing septic tanks will become "unapproved" systems. Without an approved septic system, a property cannot continue to be occupied. Status: Mason County is still in the process of determining what period of time is appropriate for allowing property owners to get their side sewers in place before making septic systems "unapproved". Mason County is also in the process of setting a schedule for the increase in connection fees after the official start-up date.



Side Sewers: Consistency of Connections

Mason County is considering the following planning issues related to the consistency of side sewer connections and operations of the new sewer system. Some of the decisions have already been made, and some are still being determined. Mason County is working toward having all of these decisions finalized as a part of the Side Sewer Ordinance. Once final, this information will be provided to property owners so they can begin planning for the construction of their side sewers, and will eventually be formalized in Mason County Code.

Design and construction consistency

To ensure that side sewers are built to county code standards, Mason County will provide property owners standard specifications for side sewer designs (both for gravity systems and low pressure systems). In addition, the county will provide a list of certified contractors to property owners for construction of side sewers. Mason County strongly encourages property owners to use a certified contractor for construction of side sewers; all side sewers will require a permit and inspection by Mason County before they can become operational. Status: Mason County will provide standard design specifications and a list of certified contractors to property owners.

Properties sharing side sewer laterals

Several property owners have requested to share a side sewer lateral with their neighbor or adjacent property owner. Standard side sewer laterals can accommodate multiple Equivalent Residential Units (ERU). Therefore, Mason County will allow property owners to share side sewer laterals. Status: In all cases, one lateral will be placed in the public right-of-way, and a separate stub will be installed that touches each respective property line. Each property will be charged a connection fee, and rates will be applied to both properties independently based on their ERU.

Connecting multiple buildings to one side sewer

Similar to two properties sharing one lateral, Mason County will also allow one property owner to connect multiple buildings on a parcel to one side sewer. Each building will be assessed based on their ERU. Status: Mason County is in the process of developing policies related to Accessory Dwelling Units* for how fees will be charged for these types of developments.

*Note: Accessory Dwelling Units include separated garages with mother-in-law apartments and other structures. Duplex-type structures will be similarly addressed.

Mason County is considering the following planning issues related to non-typical property side sewer connections and operations of the new sewer system. Some of the decisions have already been made, and some are still being determined. Mason County is working toward having all of these decisions finalized as a part of the Side Sewer Ordinance. Once final, this information will be provided to property owners so they can begin planning for the construction of their side sewers, and will eventually be formalized in Mason County Code.

NOTE: A “typical” property is one that has a side sewer stub planned or built at the edge of their property, and is ready to connect; the following categories include all of the “non-typical” connections that have been identified.

Landlocked properties

Many properties in Belfair are not directly adjacent to a street right-of-way. In cases where properties do not have a direct connection to the street where the sewer main will be located, connections to the system will need to be negotiated through easements with adjacent property owners. Status: Mason County is in the process of researching information about property owner’s existing easements, and will lead the process to formalize easements as needed.

Vacant properties

Vacant properties that are located within 500 feet of the new sewer alignment will receive a side sewer stub now, but will not be required to connect to the system until the property is developed. Status: Mason County is in the process of determining what fees will be charged to vacant properties once they do connect (i.e. initial connection rate vs. the future rate).

Properties partially within and partially outside Urban Growth Area (UGA)

In two locations along the sewer alignment, the UGA boundary cuts across properties so that parcels are partially within and partially outside the UGA. Status: The Mason County Planning Department is looking into this issue and will work with the County Commissioners to determine a path forward for either redrawing the boundaries of the UGA, or making a determination on whether properties that are both inside and outside the UGA are required to connect to the sewer.

Properties located at the “ends” of the current phase of sewer construction/alignment

For properties that are located at the ends of the sewer alignment, in some cases connecting to the system now would require an extended side sewer or a difficult connection, which would mean added costs to property owners. Status: Mason County has decided to address these property connection issues on a case-by-case basis. It is likely that some “end properties” will be postponed or required to connect in future phases, if they remain in the UGA.