



Sewer Interim Ordinance Fact Sheet ERUs and Connection Fees

In July of 2007, Mason County Commissioners passed Ordinance 91-07 establishing that properties within 500 feet of the sewer alignment in the Belfair Urban Growth Area (UGA) will be required to hook into the sewer system as it becomes available.

In July of 2011, Mason County Commissioners passed Ordinance 48-11 establishing the interim sewer code that includes connection fees and rates for Phase 1 property connections. Below is a summary of the main pieces of Ordinance 48-11. The final sewer ordinance will be developed in late 2011 and will include a public comment period and hearing.

Connection charges

From July 2011 through December 2011, the connection charge for existing developed property in Phase 1 is \$3,000 per equivalent residential unit (ERU). Starting in January 2012, the connection charge will go up to \$5,000 per ERU. From there, the connection charge will continue to gradually increase. The final connection fee escalation schedule will be included in the Final Sewer Ordinance that will be developed in late 2011. All existing development in Phase 1 will be eligible for the \$3,000 per ERU connection fee until December 31, 2011.

ERUs

ERUs (or equivalent residential units) are the basis for billing for the sewer system. When calculating ERUs, commercial water demands are compared to the average amount of water a single-family residential unit uses. The average water usage of a single family residence in the Belfair Urban Growth Area is 155 gallons of water per day (or 7,564 cubic feet per year).

- Single family residential units are considered one (1) ERU.
- Duplexes and multi-family units will be charged 0.7 ERU per unit on their property.
- For businesses, the County looked at individual water records to see how many gallons of water per day each business uses. If a business uses more than 155 gallons per day, they will be more than one ERU. A businesses ERU is rounded to the nearest tenth (0.10) for billing purposes.

Accounting for leaks and seasonal use (in multi-ERU/commercial properties)

When establishing commercial ERUs, the County was interested in identifying how much water each business can expect to discharge into the sewer system. Therefore, there were many exclusions made when looking at the water data for different properties:

- For properties with obvious leaks, where there was a large spike in water usage data compared to the rest of the year, that data was excluded from our analysis.
- Properties that are used seasonally, and only showed water usage during the summer months, were removed from our analysis.
- Summer months for properties with irrigation systems, as seen by increases in outdoor water usage during the summer months, were excluded from our analysis.

Multi-family properties

For properties that have two or more dwelling units in one structure, the property will be considered multi-family and an ERU factor of 0.7 will be applied to each unit. If a property has a single-family structure that is less than 400 square feet, that structure will be counted as a multi-family unit, if another residential or commercial structure exists on the parcel. A mobile home park may also be counted as multi-family if they elect to be treated as a group and billed as a single customer.

Adjustments to ERUs

ERUs will be updated on an annual basis once the sewer is operational based on the most recent water consumption data available. Changes in property's water consumption will be applied to the monthly sewer bill; connection charges cannot be refunded retroactively. However, if property use changes, and additional ERUs are estimated for the new use/business, then the property owner will be charged for the new/additional ERUs at the current connection charge rate.

Permits

All properties connecting to the sewer must apply for a permit before beginning construction of their side sewer. The County will review the design plans for a property's side sewer and ensure that all requirements are met, before issuing a "blue card" which allows a property owner to move forward with their side sewer connection. The blue card is valid for twelve months from issuance. All side sewers will be subject to an inspection by Mason County during construction and before they can become operational.

What happens if a property does not connect to the sewer?

If an existing, developed property inside the Belfair UGA does not connect to the sewer when it is required, there are several actions the County can take to enforce compliance:

- First, there is a financial incentive to connect before January 1, 2012, particularly for Phase 1 property owners.
- If properties do not connect by January 1, 2012, you will lose their chance to buy in at the reduced connection charge rate of \$3,000 per ERU, and will have to pay the current rate at the time of connection.
- Also, it is considered a misdemeanor to not comply with connection requirements, and the County can charge a fee of \$100 per day for non-compliance.