

Street Light Problems?

Even though some of you pay a street light charge on your monthly utility bill, we don't maintain, repair, or replace them... PSE Does. Allow us to explain...

Many water/sewer districts (like Coal Creek) are responsible for street light billing. Here in our area, out of the 4,067 water and/or sewer accounts that we invoice for utility services every other month, 1,545 of those accounts are also charged for street lights.

How in the world did street light charges become the responsibility of a utility district?

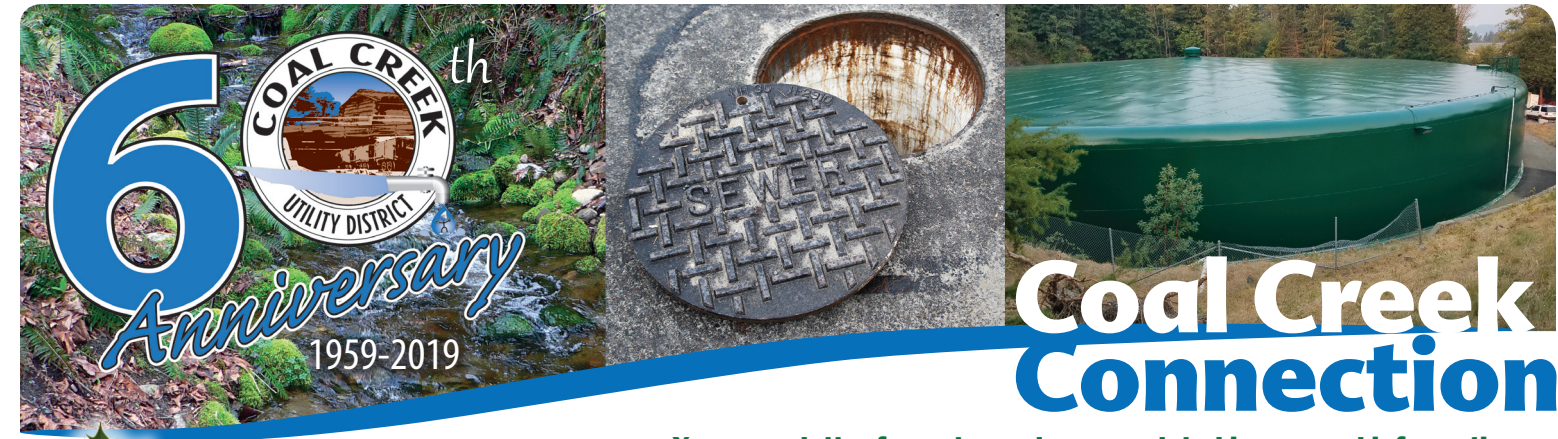
It all started back in 1959, when our area was unincorporated. The only way streetlights could be added to new residential developments in unincorporated areas was to find a local public agency to handle installation and billing, despite PSE owning the street lighting systems. At the time, King County Water District No. 107 (our District's original name) was the only option for those original accounts.

Fast forward to today: Puget Sound Energy continues to own the street lighting systems and is responsible for street light maintenance in our area, paid by an electricity contract through the City of Newcastle. However, these original 1,545 accounts are not included in the contracts, so CCUD must continue to bill for their costs, because the cost to separate and transfer these accounts would greatly exceed the amount collected for their maintenance. Luckily, the City of Newcastle is now in the process of taking this billing responsibility over from us.

If you see a street light that's starting to fail or already burned out, locate its pole number and fill out the report on PSE's website at: www.pse.com/outage/report-street-light-outage



Photo by Alisha Jucevic



Coal Creek Connection

Your newsletter for water and sewer-related issues and information serving Newcastle and the surrounding areas since 1959

Special Holiday Issue 2019

Message from Outgoing Commissioner Rick Anderson



Back in 1998, when a former CCUD commissioner approached Rick Anderson about filling a commissioner position that had been vacated, Rick hesitated. "Even though I'm a self-admitted people person, was living in the District, and serving my community as a police officer for well over 20 years, what did I know about water?" he wondered. He quickly realized being a CCUD commissioner was the perfect way to give back to the community he loved. Working closely with people, making sure they were getting taken care of, bringing his public perspective into the oversight of water, sewer, and even the establishment of fair utility rates, made him feel like he was making a difference at a level that's often easy to overlook: reliable, safe infrastructure. [continued on back]

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Welcoming our Newest Commissioner Suzi O'Byrne

As a Puget Sound native who has resided in

Newcastle for over 45 years, Suzi's been involved with the Cities of Newcastle and Bellevue as a volunteer for over 12 years. She is passionate about giving back to her community.

Suzi retired from the Bellevue Police Department after 30+ years as a 911 Supervisor. In that role, she worked with multiple public safety departments, developing a first-hand understanding of the importance of a dependable water supply and wastewater disposal.

Suzi's new role as CCUD Commissioner begins on January 1, 2020, for which she "welcomes the responsibility of keeping our rates low and infrastructure quality high, while meeting the environmental needs and the demands of population growth and development in our district."

Message from Outgoing Commissioner Rick Anderson, continued

What's the biggest issue Rick's seen in his 23 years as a commissioner? When the City of Bellevue took over a portion of Coal Creek Utility District's service area, "it just didn't make sense to me," he sighed. "The City still has to buy water from us, so all the assumption did was add another layer of government, while charging the ratepayers more money for the same service. It's an easy way for cities to tax utility rates, and the taxes go into their general fund." Special Purpose Districts were established for a reason. "We're very efficient, we don't charge taxes on top of the rates like a City does, and all the revenue we collect goes right back into the utility infrastructure."

Rick is excited about his replacement, Suzi O'Byrne (highlighted at left). "I've known her for years, she has the district's best interests at heart, and will make an excellent commissioner."

So what will he and his wife do with all their spare time? They plan to spend more time traveling with their dog, enjoying their kids and seven grandkids (especially over the upcoming holidays), and gardening. "Most of all however, I'm truly going to miss serving as a Coal Creek commissioner," says Rick. "I met a lot of really great people who became like a second family to me."

Coal Creek Connection: a publication by Coal Creek Utility District

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No Audit Findings for 30 Years!

Coal Creek Utility District recently completed its annual audit with Washington State. Not only were there no findings this year, but we are particularly proud to announce that this is our 30th year of no findings!

Back in 2004, when State Auditor Brian Sonntag, CGFM congratulated us on 15 years of no audit findings, he cited the dedication of our Commissioners and staff to strong oversight of operations good internal controls, and accurate financial reporting. Clearly the same is true today, another 15 years later! Even the cost of this audit came in under budget, thanks to our staff's excellent preparation and organizational efforts.

Discounts for Low Income Seniors and Disabled Persons

Coal Creek Utility District provides utility rate discounts to low income senior and disabled persons. Do you qualify?

If your gross income is \$35,600 or less for a single person, and \$38,000 or less for a household, you are entitled to a 50% reduction in your water and/or sewer bimonthly base rate.

Seniors must be age 62 or older, as documented by a driver's license, social security statement, birth certificate, or passport.

Disabled individuals must be receiving disabled benefits from one or more of the following: Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Veteran Disability Compensation (VDC), Non-Grant Medical Assistance (NGMA), permanent disability insurance benefits, or state permanent disability benefits.

Proof of income must be documented via income tax records (1040, EZ, etc.), Supplemental Security Income Statements (SSI), or Social Security Disability Income statements (SSDI).

These certifications must be renewed annually.

How to Request the Discount:

If you meet the eligibility criteria, contact us at (425)235-9200; we look forward to helping you! This notice is provided in accordance with RCW 57.08.014.

Good News for 2020

After an extensive rate study, Coal Creek Utility District is pleased to report that there will be NO water or sewer rate increase for 2020!

Earlier this year, the District hired a financial consultant to conduct a comprehensive utility rate study. Their goal was to evaluate our revenue sufficiency and develop a proposed rate plan that would enable us to balance our financial needs, while minimizing the impacts to our ratepayers.

The study examined the following components:

- Projected Capital Improvements
- Projected Operations and Maintenance Costs
 - Water supply costs
 - King County wastewater treatment costs*
 - Current and projected system maintenance
- Debt Service: principal and interest
- Water and Sewer Revenues / Utility Rates
- Non-Rate Revenues
 - Connection charges
 - Cash Reserves on hand
 - Contributions in aid of construction
 - Developer Fees

On October 23, our Board of Commissioners reviewed the consultant's findings and voted to keep the same utility rates through the year 2020. We will continue to monitor rates throughout the year to make sure they follow the projections and assumptions in the study.

*The King County wastewater treatment charge is a pass-through cost that increases over time; CCUD has no control over these increases.

Help keep street drains from clogging... Sweep up (and compost!) your Fall leaves



F.O.G. Over the Holidays

How to Avoid **F**ats, **O**ils and **G**rease in Your Sewer System

During the holidays, that luscious roast turkey, prime rib roast, ham, or Christmas goose represents a hidden threat to your sewer—both on the residential side (your sewer pipes) as well as the District's sanitary sewer mains. The threat?

FOG: Fats, Oils, and Grease.



But the problem isn't just roasted meats. Gravy, sauces, salad dressings, cream soups (cream is a fat!), dips, butter, leftover whipped cream, milk, mayonnaise, and even shortening—many of these contain high amounts of FOG.

And FOG isn't cheap... from the mess of a backed-up sewer line in your home, to the cost of repairs to have FOG-clogged lines opened up and cleaned out, FOG is something you definitely want to avoid.

Thankfully, avoidance is simple: never pour fats, oils, and grease down your sink drain, toilet, or garbage disposal unit. Here's what we recommend:

Tip #1: pour *any* excess fat, oil, and grease into an empty soup can, refrigerate or freeze until solid, and dispose it in your garbage. Some families prefer to save coffee to-go cups for this purpose; just double them up if you need extra leak protection. If nothing else, put the pan into your freezer to harden the FOG so you can scrape it directly into the garbage.

Tip #2: when cleaning up the dishes, use paper towels to wipe the excess grease from your pots, pans, and utensils before washing. Toss them into your garbage can or better yet, put fat- oil- and grease-soaked paper towels into your compost bin.

Myth #1: if you mix in enough detergent when cleaning fat, oil and grease from your dishes, this keeps the grease from clogging your pipes.

Truth: dish soap may emulsify grease and enable you to remove it from your pans, but it does not break it down enough to move it completely through pipes. The problem gets even worse during winter months, when pipes are more likely to get cold (especially those located on exterior walls of your home): grease solidifies into a pipe-clogging mess—whether or not you've added soap.

Myth #2: there's barely a tablespoon of oil left in my frying pan, surely with enough hot water, that will flush it through the system?

Truth: eventually all fats, oils and grease wind up somewhere. There's no such thing as getting it through the system.