



# Thurston PUD Newsletter

We are committed to providing safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable water services to our customers.

May 2021

## Leadership Message

### Looking Forward in 2021

By: TaSeana Tartt, Finance & Customer Service Manager

The beautiful spring weather has certainly arrived! Spring is a busy time for those of us on the PUD’s Finance & Accounting Team. Let me share some of the processes we’re currently working on and other tasks we’re looking forward to later in 2021.

#### Preparing Financial Statements

Every local government in Washington State is required by RCW 43.09.230 to file an annual financial report with the State Auditor’s Office (SAO) within 150 days of the close of each fiscal year. For the PUD, this means that each year our financial statements must be submitted to SAO by May 30. To meet this deadline, our team is working hard to organize, analyze, and compile the PUD’s 2020 financial data for submission to the SAO.



TaSeana Tartt, Finance & Customer Service Manager

#### The Budgeting Process

Each year, the PUD’s Administration/Management Team and the Board of Commissioners collaborate to define goals, needs, and projects to be included in the budget for the upcoming year. This process normally begins in July. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the budgeting process for 2021 started earlier last year to accommodate social-distancing restrictions.

For 2021, we will start the budgeting process after financial statements are submitted to SAO. Though planning is still a bit uncertain due to COVID-19, we will keep customers updated on any Public Hearings scheduled later in the year. As always, members of the public are welcome to submit public comments not only at the Public Hearings, but also in writing by letter or email. Members of the public are also welcome to attend all Commission meetings, usually held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. You can find more information on these meetings on the PUD’s website at [www.thurstonpud.org](http://www.thurstonpud.org).



*(Continued on Page 2)*

### Thurston PUD Commissioners

#### District 1

Linda Oosterman





#### District 2

Russell E. Olsen

#### District 3

Chris Stearns

## Important Messages

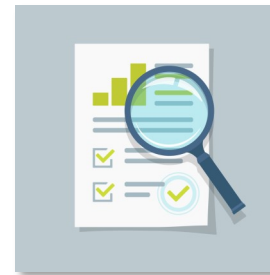
-  PUD offices remain closed until further notice.
-  Don’t let your bill surprise you! See Page 2 for an important announcement.
-  Help our crew find leaks! Read more about finding leaks on Page 3.
-  Do you qualify for Project Help? Review Page 4 for more information on this important Customer Support Program.

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## Looking Forward in 2021 (Continued from Page 1)

### Being Audited

The word *audit* can have some negative connotations associated with it (especially around tax season), but for the PUD, being audited is a normal, annual occurrence. SAO conducts both accountability and financial audits. What's the difference, you may ask? An accountability audit evaluates whether the PUD has adhered to applicable state laws, regulations, and our own policies and procedures; accountability audits are conducted once every three years. A financial audit provides an independent opinion on the PUD's financial statements and the results of its operations and cash flows; these audits are conducted every year.



Usually, the SAO audits the PUD's financial statements each fall. For our 2020 financial statements, we expect to contact SAO around October to start the audit process. The 2019 financial statements were audited in December 2020, and the PUD received a clean, favorable audit from SAO. If you'd like to review the PUD's 2019 financial statements, visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org](http://www.thurstonpud.org) and click on the "2019 Audited Financial Statements" link under "The Latest" on the right side of the webpage.

### Equal Payment Plan (EPP)

In 2019, we introduced the Equal Payment Plan (EPP), a budgeting tool requested by our customer-based Utility Rate Advisory Committee (URAC). The EPP program gives enrolled customers a set monthly bill by averaging the prior year's consumption amounts. We will open enrollment to this program later in 2021, so please be sure to check future newsletters for notices related to the EPP program.

### Forecast5 Financial Dashboard

Forecast5 Analytics is a cloud-based software platform that allows staff to upload financial data from our accounting software so that we can generate reports more easily and automate budget forecasting, and many other convenient features. Staff will pilot this financial dashboard to the PUD's Board of Commissioners, and we hope to have public access established by the end of 2021.



Many customers have questions about the Capital Surcharge and how it's being used that we believe the dashboard can answer. We are also creating a Capital Improvement financial dashboard that can provide transparency on the projects being completed on the PUD's water systems, funded by the capital surcharges collected each month (\$10 per equivalent residential unit or ERU). This dashboard will supplement the quarterly letters sent directly to customers regarding Capital Improvement Projects, so keep an eye out for information in upcoming newsletters.

If you have any questions about any of the Finance & Accounting Team processes listed, please contact us at (866) 357-8783 or by email at [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org). We welcome any questions or concerns you may have, and we'd like to wish all of you a happy spring!

## Don't Let Your Bill Surprise You

The hotter it gets outside, the more water you use - this is a trend we've seen year after year when analyzing consumption and usage patterns. Since your billing statement reflects consumption from anywhere between 10 and 60 days prior to the billing date, we encourage customers to make conservation a habit during milder months to avoid any surprises on their bill during warmer months.

For information on how to conserve water, visit [www.ThurstonPUD.org](http://www.ThurstonPUD.org) and click on the "Water Systems" link at the top of the web page. Not only will you find ways you can conserve water during hot summers, but you can also check out our current conservation programs. If you have any questions regarding conservation programs, contact Erica Cecil, our Senior Operations Specialist, at [erica.cecil@thurstonpud.org](mailto:erica.cecil@thurstonpud.org).

## What's Happening at the PUD?

This month, we'd like to put a spotlight on the PUD's Finance & Accounting Team. This team ensures that the PUD's financial information is reported accurately. Read below to learn more about this vital part of PUD operations.

### What specific functions does the Finance & Accounting Team cover?

The Finance & Accounting Team covers many specific duties and processes within the PUD. Below is a list of some of the most important tasks carried out by this team.

- Budgeting - General Fund, Water Fund, and Capital Fund
- Preparing financial statements
- Coordinating the annual audit with the Office of the Washington State Auditor (SAO)
- Internal auditing (vehicle inventory checks, small & attractive assets tracking, etc.)
- Accounts Payable (AP)
- Payroll
- Processing Auto Pay and Direct Debit payments
- Year-end reporting



### How many people are employed within Finance & Accounting?

Currently, the Finance & Accounting Team is comprised of two employees, the Finance & Customer Service Manager and an Accounting Assistant. Recently, the Finance & Accounting Team has recruited for an open position, and soon a new employee will join our ranks.

### What is the Finance & Accounting Team working on now?

Most Finance & Accounting duties are recurring, which means that tasks like AP and expense/revenue analysis are processed each month like clockwork. For information on what the Finance & Accounting Team is working on now, be sure to read the Leadership Message on Page 1 of this newsletter. Thank you, Finance & Accounting Team!

## Help Our Crew Find Leaks



A large puddle on a dry road, caused by a mainline leak.

Dry, warm weather is officially here! One benefit to the PUD during periods of dry weather is that major leaks may be easier to identify and repair.

Repairing leaks as soon as possible is critical:

- Leaks contribute to the “wear and tear” of a water system. More “wear and tear” could lead to infrastructure failure.
- Leaks can lead to higher energy costs - the more water pumped from the ground, the more energy it takes to pump.
- Leaks are a potential pathway for bacteria and other harmful contaminants to enter a water system.

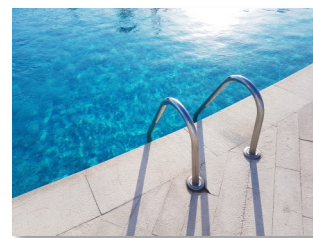
If you see something, say something! If you spot a patch of wet concrete or a damp area in the yard that can't be explained by recent irrigation, this could be a leak.

**Please report these cases to the PUD any time by contacting us at (866) 357-8783 or [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org).**

## Filling a Pool?

As temperatures rise, swimming is a fun way to cool off. If you have a pool that you'd like to fill, please keep a few things in mind:

- For your water system, peak demand times may vary, but usually customers are using the most water in the morning (when getting ready for work) and in the evening (when returning from work).
- It may take several hours (approximately nine hours) to fill a 5,000-gallon pool with a ½-inch garden hose.
- Filling a 5,000-gallon pool will add approximately 668 cubic feet (cf) to your monthly consumption total which will in turn increase your consumption charge for the month.



Based on the information above, we suggest filling your pool in increments over a few days during off-peak demand times. This will help prevent possible outages if your water system's well cannot keep up with demand; this could also help prevent certain water quality issues caused by an overworked water system.

## Project Help - Customer Support Program

Do you qualify as income-eligible and need assistance with paying your water bill? Have you and your family been affected financially by the COVID-19 pandemic? You may qualify to receive a credit towards your utility bill through our Project Help Program. For other available resources, please visit our website at [www.thurstonpud.org/customer-support.htm](http://www.thurstonpud.org/customer-support.htm).

To be eligible for assistance you must: (1) be a customer with the PUD, with an active account in your name, (2) have received a past due notice for your water service, and (3) provide documentation that household income is \$40,000 or less **or** have been financially impacted by COVID-19 and can provide documentation of your employment status. If you are a customer in need, we encourage you to reapply yearly. Contact our Customer Service Team with any questions or concerns about the program's requirements.

To apply, visit our website at [www.ThurstonPUD.org](http://www.ThurstonPUD.org) to complete the Project Help application (found on the front page of our website). If you'd like to request a paper copy of the application, please call us at (866) 357-8783 to speak with our Customer Service Team.

If you're interested in making a one-time or monthly donation, please call us at (866) 357-8783, email [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org), or return the form below with any payments mailed to our office at Thurston PUD, 1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503.

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I authorize Thurston PUD to bill my account \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

- One-time only
- Each month

This authorization shall remain in effect until the PUD receives written notification from me to terminate this agreement. I understand that if my account becomes past due, this authorization becomes invalid.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Account No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Service Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_