



Thurston PUD Newsletter

We are committed to providing safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable water services to the customers we serve.

August 2018

Commissioner's Corner

Dates For Public Hearings on the 2019 Proposed Budget and Rates

By Linda Oosterman



Thurston PUD Commissioners will hold two public hearings on September 11th and September 18th. Both meetings will be held at the Lacey Community Center and will solicit public comment on the proposed 2019 budget, utility rates and capital surcharges. The September 11th meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the September 18th meeting will begin at 5:00 p.m. Members of the public are welcome to attend these meetings. Information regarding the proposed budget and rate increases will be posted on our website, www.thurstonpud.org, by Friday, August 31st. If you'd like to receive a copy of the proposed budget, please call us at (360) 357-8783 or toll free at (866) 357-8783.

How Can I Ask Questions or Provide My Comments?

You are invited to attend the public hearings or submit written comments.

You may submit comments in writing to the address below:

PUD Commissioners
1230 Ruddell Road SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Or by email: PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org

Written comments received by close of business September 17th will become part of the public record. The Board will hear, read and discuss your comments.

Public Hearings

Lacey Community Center, 6729 Pacific Avenue SE, Olympia, WA 98503





Tuesday, September 11th, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, September 18th, 2018 at 5:00 p.m.

About Commissioner Linda Oosterman

Linda Oosterman has served as PUD Commissioner since 2012. She received her undergraduate degree in Organization Management and earned her Master's in Systems Theory and Family Therapy from the University of Wisconsin. She has received certification from the American Water Works Association for successfully completing the Public Officials Program. She has served as a manager of the county-wide Crisis Response Programs in eastern and western Washington. She was also the Director and an instructor in the Human Services Program at Grays Harbor College. As PUD Commissioner, Linda focuses on Emergency Management Planning, Prevention and Intervention. She supports science and engineering that advances water conservation, drinking water management, and sustainable practices.

In this Issue

-  Investing In Your Water System
Page 2
-  Meet the PUD's Senior Accountant
TaSeana Tartt
Page 2
-  Moving? Learn About Your Final Bill
Page 3
-  Conserve Like a Californian
Page 4

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The Value of Water Series: Proactively Investing in Your Water System

Imagine you just purchased a brand-new car, and it's the only vehicle you have. You rely on it to get you to and from work, to transport your children, and to run important errands. Because you rely heavily on your car, you schedule maintenance according to its mileage, regularly get the oil changed, and keep track of the miles you put on its tires. Typically, you have service reminders in the form of lights on your dashboard that trigger your attention. Ideally, with a new vehicle you wouldn't wait until something fails before you would tend to it. Here at Thurston PUD, we feel the same way about your water service.

We've spent the last year evaluating our newly acquired water systems and learning about their capital assets (e.g. types and age of pumps, motors, pipes, etc.). It is important for us to know this information so we can build an **Asset Management Plan** for each of the 274 water systems we own.

An asset management plan (AMP) is a planning tool that allows utility professionals to make sure planned maintenance can be conducted; capital assets can be repaired, replaced or upgraded on-time; and that there is enough money to pay for it. A good, detailed AMP provides critical information on each water system like their condition, performance and the age of certain assets. This information helps our operations team determine the current state of our capital assets and forecasts when it's time to replace them. Consider it the service light on *our* dashboard. By using the AMP to manage infrastructure, we can minimize the total cost of owning and operating water systems, and make sure they are in good working order. ***It's more cost effective to replace an old pipe, than it is to repair a broken old pipe.***

All forecasted replacements are funded by the capital surcharge you see on your monthly bill. Money that is collected for capital surcharges is reserved and solely used for infrastructure replacement. As stated in the last month's *Value of Water* article, water infrastructure around the country is aging and reaching the end of its lifecycle.

And just like cars, water systems are just as vulnerable to the unexpected. By belonging to a PUD, you have peace of mind knowing that if an unfortunate event occurs to your water system, the cost of repairing the issue is covered through your investment in capital surcharges.

By creating an asset management plan, we take the time to understand your water system and it's needs, which in turn can result in fewer disruptions to your water service; stabilized rates, fees and charges; and lessen the likelihood of unforeseen issues arising. Water infrastructure is one of the cheapest investments you'll ever make with the greatest value of returns. Water is still the best deal around.

Researchers predict the U.S will have to invest over \$1 trillion toward water infrastructure replacement over the next 20 years, but with advanced asset management planning like we are doing, water utilities can save over \$41 billion.

Developing and maintaining an asset management plan is one of the many ways we stand by our commitment to being good stewards of your water and responsibly allocating where your money goes.

Employee Spotlight: TaSeana Tartt, Senior Accountant

TaSeana Tartt is a Senior Accountant who's been on the team since early January. She's responsible for a multitude of budget and financial functions including accounts payable/receivable, payroll, bank reconciliations and financial reporting. Having earned her degree in Accounting and with years of experience in accounting and billing, this is TaSeana's first time working in the water industry. "I've had to learn a different language here [at Thurston PUD]," she said. "I came from a medical billing and accounting background, and I find water system billing and accounting to be more intricate."



TaSeana recently attended a Financial Management seminar centered on rate-making principles and processes. This class gave her a deep understanding of how utilities companies determine the cost of water. "I didn't realize the various components necessary to provide water and the complexity of the formulas in determining the cost," she admitted. "I definitely value water a lot more."

In her spare time, TaSeana enjoys spending time with her family by watching movies or playing competitive games. She also shares her new-found appreciation for water with her family. "Water conservation is an ongoing conversation in my home. It is extremely important to reduce the amount of water being used," she said.

TaSeana has been a great addition to the Thurston PUD family. "Thurston PUD is my home away from home. I have the opportunity to do what I love amongst a great group of individuals working toward a common goal."

Ask a PUD Employee: I'm Moving. How Do I Stop My Water Service and When Will I receive My Final Bill?

Customer Service Representative Lead Cathy Easton is taking the lead on this month's question. Cathy has been with the PUD for over 13 years.

Moving can be a stressful event, so we try to make closing your water service account easy. If you need to stop service, simply call us and we can begin the process of closing your account. We ask that you provide at least five (5) business days' notice when closing your account.

You will need to provide the following information to close your account:

- Your full name
- Your Customer Account number
- The date that you are moving
- A forwarding address for your final bill

Sometimes with home sales, things can get delayed. So, if you own your home and are selling it, please call us *after* your home sale has closed and provide the closing date along with the information listed above.



Finally! You're all packed. Did you remember to stop your water service?

Final Meter Reading

Once we receive a confirmed last day of service from you, we send a request to our meter reading team to go out to your home or property to get a final meter read. We want to ensure that your final bill will be correct.

What is a final water bill?

A final water bill separates the previous property owner/renter from the new property owner/renter. We want to make sure that the person moving out has a clearly defined end-of-service date and the person moving in has a clearly defined start-service date, so everyone is billed correctly.

Why do I need a final water bill?

Water accounts are attached to an address, not an individual, and it's important to clear an account of an unpaid balance when a property is sold or if a tenant is moving out. Without a final bill, the purchaser or landlord becomes responsible for any outstanding balance on the account.

How do I get a final water bill?

1. The property owner, landlord, renter or selling agent gives us a call at (360) 357-8783 to initiate closing the account.
2. Our Customer Service and Accounting Teams process the final bill after receiving all necessary information. The bill is mailed or emailed (for paperless customers) to you at your forwarding address.

When will I get my final water bill?

You will receive a final water bill after the final meter read. Be aware that it may appear like you're receiving two bills in one month, but the "second bill" is the final bill that's calculated after the final meter read.

Security Deposit

If you paid a security deposit, it will be returned to you (if it hasn't already) on your final bill. We will send any remaining security deposit to your forwarding address.

Conserving Like a Californian

California is the home to many great things: The Golden Gate Bridge, year-round sunshine, beautiful coastlines, and the Redwood Forest. It has the headquarters of technology and wine with Silicon and Napa Valleys; the epicenter of fun, Disneyland; and the hometown of movie celebrities, Hollywood. It even boasts some of the top schools in the world. California has an unrivaled number of professional sports teams: four football teams, five baseball teams, four basketball teams, three hockey teams and three soccer teams. California appears to be the land of excess, but one thing it doesn't have plenty of is water.

It seems like each year California's Governor is issuing an executive order for the state's citizens to conserve water to address continuous droughts and booming urban populations water demands. The San Francisco Gate and Los Angeles Times posted articles to locals about saving water that we thought offered some creative insight.

Both publications agree that sprinkler irrigation can waste 30 to 50 percent of water through evaporation and other factors like runoff and poor soil conditions. The L.A. Times even goes as far as to suggest that serious water conservationist completely remove their lawns. But if you're not ready to make take the leap to minimalist and native plant gardening, here are some less drastic ways to save water.



Above: How Californians do drought-resistant landscaping

In the Yard

- Talk to a gardening expert about whether aerating your lawn—punching little holes through the compacted soil—can help you cut down on the water needs (Do-it-yourself aerator sandals cost about \$20).
- Adjust sprinklers to hit only the lawn—not the sidewalk, the front porch and your neighbor's front porch.
- Skip one or two lawn waterings a week.
- Scale back your sprinklers' run time by two to three minutes.
- Download a weather app onto your phone. As we get closer to autumn, it doesn't hurt to keep track of days its going to rain and adjusting your sprinkler settings.

In the Kitchen

- While waiting for the dishwasher to warm up, use the cooler stream to fill up your pet's water bowl, fill ice cube trays, fill reusable water bottles or water pitchers.
- Got ice cubes left over in water glasses after a dinner party? Toss them onto the lawn.
- Your dishwasher is most efficient when it's full. Some dishwasher models, however, offer half-load options, which can be helpful if you live alone or rarely cook.



Above: These may not be very fashion-forward, but we think conserving water is always in style.

In the Bathroom

- Don't walk away while the shower is "warming up." Be brave. Meanwhile...
- Position a sturdy plastic bucket in your shower to collect the cooler water and then use it on your potted plants.

Around Town

- Stop restaurant servers before they plop down glasses of water at your table unless you intend to drink them.
- Go to the carwash instead of washing your car at home. Washing a car at home can easily use up to 100 gallons of water. Commercial carwashes have become more efficient and use up to 40 gallons of water.



DON'T LET YOUR SUMMER BILL SURPRISE YOU! UNDERSTAND YOUR WATER RATES. THURSTON PUD CHARGES TIERED WATER RATES WHICH MEANS AS YOUR USAGE INCREASES, THE COST INCREASES. LET WATER CONSERVATION BE A WASHINGTONIAN EFFORT TOO!