

3/20/15

## Sewer costs out of control

Hold on to your pocketbooks. At the last budget meeting, it was announced that \$1.2 million was needed to fund the sewer utility which was created under the previous city manager. (I was the only Council member to vote against creating a separate sewer utility).

Passaic Valley Sewage Commission has raised the fees 6.5 percent or almost \$400,000. The rest of the \$1.2 million is needed due to an error when the sewer charges and associated costs were separated out of the annual budget, and to fund the down payment for the bonding financing for the much-needed sewer repairs like Patricia Place and Hoffmann-La Roche. It seems not all the charges were included. Who is accountable for this error?

Separating costs related to the sewers into a separate utility was a huge mistake - here is why. Even though the surplus is about \$10 million, none of this money can be used or moved into the sewer utility. There is no mechanism to fund the much-needed repairs to the sewer system other than to raise the rates. This is something as a councilperson I fought against. As it is, residents pay the bulk of the sewer charges even though residential output into the sewers is only one-third of the charges.

Second, since our infiltration rate is about 40 percent, taxpayers are paying for this in their bills. Our sewer bills are high enough.

As a taxpayer, I am outraged this Council is even considering raising the sewer fee. Remember since this is a "fee" and not part of your tax bill, taxpayers can not claim this as an IRS deduction. Second, seniors whose taxes are frozen will still be hit with this huge increase. This council needs to dissolve the sewer utility and put those costs back in the general budget so that some of this surplus can be used to fund these repairs.

How dare PVSC raise the rate 6.5 percent in wake of the 2 percent cap municipalities face? Once again, I urge all residents to call Governor Christie and object to this increase. The governor needs to re-look at PVSC as he did a few years back when he found huge waste and abuse in salaries and benefits at PVSC. His number is 609-292-6000. It is time this governor and the Clifton Council start looking out for the taxpayers.

CLIFTON JOURNAL  
3.20.2015  
Mary Sadrakula  
Clifton