

Clifton Journal
More sewer costs

Seven years after Clifton enacted our sewer fee it appears it still can't get the billing correct.

At the May 17, meeting, this City Council voted to spend \$30,000 (and more) to hire Penoni Associates to "provide consulting services as they relate to the creation of a sewer usage billing database."

According to a letter submitted to the council by the CFO Joe Kunz he states that due to changes in the PVWC billing software and Clifton's own software changes "the city has seen some unexpected errors from this transition and would like to correct this going forward... The cost for this would all come out of the sewer utility budget."

The bottom line is this cost will be added to your future sewer bills. Clifton has no clue if the sewer bill they generated for you is correct or incorrect.

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How many more consultants need to be hired to ensure Clifton taxpayers aren't being overbilled (which we all know we are)?

Back in 2009, the city claimed the sewer fee for the average taxpayer would be less than \$100 and was just supposed to cover the bill from PVWC. We all know that was a lie!

Then, City Manager Watkins' parting gift to the Clifton taxpayers was the creation of a sewer utility which took costs like that out of the general budget and added more costs to our sewer fees. Costs like salaries and benefits of both the sewer employees and pro-rated salary costs of city manager, legal, tax and other personnel were added as well as cost of equipment and overtime.

In 2015, this council hired Lerch, Vinci & Higgins (at an undisclosed cost- which was added to our sewer fee) to conduct a "Sewer Rate Study" - which added \$1.2 million more costs into the 2015 sewer budget - costs the administration somehow forgot to include and proposed a rate increase of more than 25 percent to over 30 percent of Clifton taxpayers and a 15 to 25 percent rate increase to more than 40 percent of Clifton taxpayers, which this council voted for.

A major flaw in this LV&H Sewer Rate Study is that there is no distinction in the service fee charged to a single family residence or an apartment or condo unit with several hundred users. Simply put, a single family residence pays the same \$160 flat fee service charge (including 40 ccfs of usage) as an apartment building which may have over 1,000 units the building or a garden apartment complex with several hundred individual buildings with thousands of apartments.

So, this council instead of voting to change this flat service fee structure instead chose to spend more of our money to hire yet another consultant to study our sewer fee. Here's an easy 2-minute study and its conclusion: Clifton has overcharged Clifton taxpayers with this sewer fee for seven years and is unwilling to make things right.

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