

Clifton Journal 4/27/18

LETTERS

Part 1 of Clifton's Sewergate

This is the first in a series of three letters outlining my findings regarding inconsistencies in the sewer fee billing practices of the city. All findings were confirmed through OPRA requests.

Clifton homeowners, imagine this. The city did not bill real estate taxes for the last eight years – 2008 through 2016 on your property – and does not retroactively bill you for the total amount due. Sounds crazy, right? Don't we all wish!

Well, this is exactly what happened with our sewer fee in that many large complexes were never billed for their sewer charges from the years 2008 to 2016 and the city has never retroactively billed them.

So, this means you and I as property owners in Clifton have paid their share of the sewer fee. Outrageous, right? No wonder our bills are so high!

This is exactly what happened with a large apartment complex and several malls like Clifton Towne Center and Mad River Development.

To date, the city can not quantify the total amount of lost revenues for prop-

erties which were not billed for the sewer fees going back to 2008. Nor did the 2015 Sewer Rate Study which this council used as a basis to raise our sewer fees between 50 to 77 percent catch any of these errors.

For example, let's just look at the lost revenue from the Country Club Towers Complex. There are two buildings: Building I has 141 apartments and Building II has 263 apartments. Only Building I was billed from 2008 (when the sewer fee was enacted) through 2017 and paid a total of \$75,309. The city only began billing Building II in 2017 and only billed \$10,390 for the first half of the year and did not bill for the remainder of the year.

Please remember the sewer fee charges are based on water usage. So a building which is almost double the size of the other building uses significantly less water than its counterpart half its size? I don't think so. How many more apartment complexes were only charged for one building and not the total amount?

The same holds true for the malls (Clifton Towne Center and Mad River) where individual businesses were not charged a sewer fee. Additionally, once the city finally started billing these individual businesses in 2017, I question the

amount of water used which is the basis for the billing. For example, in 2017, Supercuts used 252 ccf's of water; Pet Value used 196 ccf's; House of Cupcakes used 318 ccf's; and Smashburger used 756 ccf's of water for the entire year (according to the city's sewer billing records). Check your usage on your sewer bill for 2017 but mine is much more than these restaurants and businesses!

There are many more inconsistencies and errors which I will address in my next letter to the editor and will hold my conclusions to the end of this three-part series of letters to the editor. I hope I have begun to open your eyes to these outrageous errors which is costing each one of us money. Stay tuned for the next letter.

Mary Sadrakula
Clifton