



## EMMETSBURG SEWER AND WATER RATES INCREASING DUE TO UPCOMING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Emmetsburg Municipal Utilities (EMU) would like to make customers aware of two major upcoming infrastructure projects that will have an impact on customers' monthly bills: a new wastewater treatment plant and a new Reverse Osmosis system for the water plant. The new water and sewer rates will go into effect August 1st, with customers receiving these bills around September 10th.

The current wastewater treatment plant, built in the 1970s, has outlived its forty-year life expectancy and is in dire need of replacement. The new wastewater treatment plant is estimated to cost approximately \$30 million. Construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2023 and take approximately two years for completion.

The Emmetsburg Municipal Utilities Board of Trustees has been working for over ten years to develop a cost-effective plan to reduce our chloride levels in order to comply with Iowa Department of Natural Resource (DNR) discharge requirements for the wastewater treatment plant, including the updated chloride limitations in the plant's 2009 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The board has investigated lower cost alternatives and partnered with engineering firm Bolton & Menk to conduct a feasibility study to determine if updates could be made to the existing water plant or sewer plant to meet these standards. However, after exhausting all other options it was determined that the addition of a Reverse Osmosis system to the water plant is EMU's only option for compliance. The estimated project cost for the Reverse Osmosis system is \$8-10 million. This project is scheduled to be completed by December 2026 to comply with the DNR's Administrative Consent Order.

EMU has been working closely with Public Financial Management (PFM), independent financial advisors and consultants, to review finances and determine necessary water and sewer rate increases to finance these infrastructure improvements in the coming years.

Water rates in fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023) will increase by 20% for both base and volumetric rates. The average Emmetsburg household can expect an increase of \$5.07 to the monthly water bill.

The fiscal year 2023 sewer base rate within city limits will increase from \$16.75 to \$25.00. The sewer volumetric rate will increase by 15%, and the sewer debt service will increase to \$15.00. The average household can expect an increase of \$20.39 to the monthly sewer bill.

EMU Board Chairman Kirk Haack shared, "The EMU Board of Trustees and Professional Staff are committed to managing costs efficiently and sustainably in order to ensure the safety, reliability and maintenance of our water and sewer services. We will be doing all we can to apply and qualify for grants and financial assistance to minimize the financial burden on EMU customers. Our rates and fees for service have been in the middle to lower end of the range of charges we've surveyed relative to area communities. We very much understand that these increased costs will be a burden for many of our fellow citizens. Unfortunately, these upcoming investments are unavoidable and cannot be put off any longer."

Emmetsburg Municipal Utilities will continue to provide more details about these infrastructure projects through an informational series in the City of Emmetsburg newsletter, Emmetsburg Reporter-Democrat, and online in the coming months to help customers understand the background and regulations that have led to these changes as well as how these projects will affect customers and the community. If you have any questions, please contact the EMU office at 712-852-2550.