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2 Jul 2015 | *The News Herald (Willoughby, OH)* | *Simon Husted* SHusted@News-Herald.com @SimonSaysNH

Lake County increases sewer rates 4.8 percent

About one-half of Lake County's sanitary sewer users might notice an uptick in their utility bills later this summer.

Lake County commissioners unanimously approved a 4.8 percent rate increase for sewer customers served by the county's Department of Utilities at their June 30 meeting.

The rate increase takes effect July 31 and it'll be the first since the county approved a similar one in 2011.

Rick Martin, director of the county's Department of Utilities, said the price of sewer service has been steadily increasing because of a combination of factors. They include the cost of operations and maintenance, chemicals – some of which are petroleum-based – and ongoing infrastructure replacement projects. He said that some of the county's sewer pipes date back to World War I.

"We have \$42 million of projects on the table now," Martin told The News-Herald after the meeting. A \$26 million project to upgrade the Madison Waste Water Treatment Plant makes up most of that.

Since 2002, the department has had an agreement with county commissioners not to increase sewer rates by more than 5 percent at a time, Martin said.

The county's sanitary sewer division serves all five of the county's townships, the villages of Grand River, North Perry, Perry and Fairport Harbor, as well as the cities of Mentor, Mentor-on-the-Lake and portions of Kirtland.

The county's sewer system served 39,555 customers as of the beginning of 2015, said department spokesman Matthew Armand. He said that figure might have grown closer to 40,000 over the last seven months as new construction ties itself to county utilities.

The department divides its sewer rates between residential and commercial property users. The flat sewer fee that homeowners are billed will increase to \$77.49 from \$73.92 per three months. Commercial property owners will see their usage rate increase to \$3.69 per 1,000 metered gallons from \$3.52 per 1,000 metered gallons.

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