

Chardon water and sewer rates going up

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After months of deliberation, Chardon City Council on Thursday officially raised water and sewer rates for home and business customers.

Rates will increase 9.5 percent in 2013, which adds \$6.49 a month to the average customers' bills.

Increases will be smaller in subsequent years.

Commercial and industrial customers will pay an

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average increase of 8.5 percent over each of the next five years, starting with almost 24 percent in 2013.

The increases are needed to offset the amount the city is paying out of the general fund to subsidize water and sewer operations.

The vote was 6-1 with Deborah M. Reiter dissenting.

The last rate hike was in 2006, when council voted 4-3 to approve nearly a 30 percent increase to pay for a \$7 million Environmental Protection Agency-mandated water treatment plant.

In other action, council:

■ Authorized accepting a

\$30,000 grant from the Chardon Healing Fund to use toward establishing a full-time school resource officer at the high school. The city is paying for different part-time officers to take turns filling that role.

Under the new scenario, the city, school and potentially other communities in the district would share the estimated \$105,000 cost — including benefits — of adding a full-time officer to the police department to serve at the school.

■ Approved making a more business-friendly amendment to an ordinance related to system development fees charged when commercial businesses come to town. The fee, previously required up front in its entirety, is imposed

so that the user developing or expanding pays a proportionate share of the cost to expand the wastewater treatment plant.

The new arrangement requires only half the fee upfront and establishes a payment plan for the rest over two years at 2 percent interest.

■ Authorized entering a contract with Hidden Glen Associates LLC for the purchase of a vacant 10-acre parcel for extending the Maple Highlands Trail from South Street to Park Avenue and for constructing a sewer main to serve the southwest quadrant of the city.

The \$270,000 purchase price will be paid by the city by granting Hidden Glen a credit in that amount

to be redeemed for water and sewer tap fees and/or system development charges on a proposed housing project.

■ Approved allowing Heritage House donors to recoup their donation if the project doesn't go forward. Mayor Phil King said he is confident the project, to replace the log cabin on the square, will happen with the help of a \$25,000 matching grant expected from the Lake-Geauga Fund.

■ Authorized continued lease of 223 Center St. from Geauga County for the city's temporary service garage. The cost is \$2,500 a month, not including utilities. The city's new public service facility is to go to bid in December.