



**BRECKENRIDGE CITY COMMISSION
AGENDA SUMMARY FORM**

Subject: Discussion and any necessary action regarding sewer stoppages

Department: Public Works

Staff Contact: Cynthia Northrop

Title: City Manager

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The City’s Wastewater infrastructure is aging; with an estimated 75% clays lines over 50 years old. Over the last several years the city has had an inconsistent approach to addressing sewer stoppages including assuming private property owner’s liability for sewer stoppages. This has created a culture of using city resources to trouble-shoot sewer stoppages instead of the property owner first calling a plumber to confirm their service line/lateral line is clear before calling the city to the main.

Sewer Stoppages	Number	Estimated Cost Impact	Repairs
9.12.2022 - current	60	\$30,000*	
2022	98	\$49,000*	
In-house (\$2K per occurrence – 2X per month/12)			\$48,000**
Outsource (\$3K per occurrence – 2X per month/12)			\$72,00**
Estimated annual impact			\$97K - \$121K

*Estimate avg cost per occurrence - \$500 (clearing main and/or clearing from clean-out to the main).

**Factor in estimated avg. of digging, camera, equipment, fuel, repairs) per occurrence:

In-house - \$2000 (2X per month/12=\$48,000 - *Outsource* - \$3000 (2X per month/12=72,000)

Our ordinances are silent on this issue, though our cost structure for sewer taps implies the homeowner is responsible for their service line/lateral lines. Most cities also assume property owners are financially responsible for maintenance of their service lines to the main.

However, there are some common options used by cities on how the work is handled and cost is assessed:

1. City crews
2. City contracts out requiring licensed plumber and city inspects

Options for covering the cost:

1. Assess individual property owner based on cost
2. Assess a surcharge to all system users. Adding a \$5 surcharge to every user would generate approximately \$132K (2200 accounts X \$5=\$11K X 12 months = \$132K).

A related issue is concerning clean-outs. It is estimated that 50% of the properties in the city do not have clean-outs. Staff is recommending we update our ordinance to require clean-outs be installed at the curb, which again is a requirement in most cities. Staff recently met with several local plumbers recently and most were in agreement with the need to require clean-outs at the curb.

It is important to remember that the entire water/wastewater system is an enterprise fund where charges for service should cover the cost of operations, maintenance and necessary and required improvements.

Dependent upon Mayor/Commissioner directive, staff will develop appropriate policy on process.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

A conservative estimated cost impact is \$97K-\$121K annually

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt ordinance language (attached) and consider assessing associated cost to either the individual property owner or to all system users via a \$5 surcharge per month added to utility bills.