



# Town of Mineral Utilities Committee Report

05/13/2024

In March, we had a public meeting in anticipation of having to raise water rates to receive funding for a required Lead Inventory of our Water Service Lines. Turns out, we did not need to raise water rates, but we received good feedback from townspeople who attended. Unfortunately, just after that meeting, Louisa County announced that it was holding a public hearing to raise its water rates 24 percent. The Town of Mineral gets most of our water from the Louisa County Water Authority because we have only one partially functioning well. Thus, any increase in their rates requires an increase in our rates. Further, our Town has fallen behind in rate increases over the years. No Council, Town Manager or Utilities Committee wants to raise the water rates of the citizens and, naturally, the current one would prefer not to do so either. But it would be financially irresponsible for the Utilities Committee not to recommend it to the Town Manager and the Council. Thus, we find ourselves in the position of letting you know that we are working on raising rates.

The guys from Virginia Rural Water Association (VRWA) are helping us do the calculations of what is needed to pay our bill at Louisa County Water Authority plus take care of the lines that we have. Naturally, we cannot raise it fully to revamp our entire water and sewer at once, but we will need to move in the direction of the water and sewer system paying for itself. Once we get figures from the VRWA, we will consult with the Town Manager, who will set the rate and present it to the Town Council. It will then be put to a Public Hearing at the June 2024 Town Council Meeting. We hope the citizens will participate and give us feedback, not only about rates but about their utilities experience in general.

Although we have not received a letter from the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water yet, we have been informed by phone that our grant for the Lead Inventory has been approved and will be 100% non-repayable funds. We have until October to determine where lead-containing lines are in our system. Lines to your meter box are Public and lines from your meter box are Private. But both PUBLIC and PRIVATE will be replaced AT NO INDIVIDUAL COST TO THE CITIZENS starting in 2025 if they are

determined to contain lead. In the meantime. We want our citizens to know that we will be looking in their meter boxes and investigating waterlines.

The Utilities committee has been meeting with VWRA staff and there will be upcoming tests for leaks. Smoke testing for sewers will be announced ahead of time and will involve town staff and the fire department, as well as volunteers. We will let you know well before that starts. Clean water testing is ongoing, but no leaks have been found yet. VRWA has suggested some trainings for town staff that we will be scheduling. Also, their Source Water guy will be by soon to talk to us about our wells and about protecting them, as well as about rain barrel grants for citizens who are interested in gathering rainwater for their gardens.

Utilities is asking the town if Utilities can put water conservation “stickers” on the water bills, as well as the notice for the upcoming sewer test and rain barrel grant to try to get the word out on months where the town is not already doing a sticker on the water bill. The Utilities Committee is also suggesting that the town put on the electronic sign occasionally urging citizens if they see leaks of any kind to report it to the Town office.

The VRWA agrees that our town’s #1 Water/Sewer concern is the infiltration at East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Lagoon manhole area which continues to send tens of thousands of gallons of rainwater through the Louisa County Water Authority sewer meters. Again, this is trending upward in the last three months to \$6,000-8,000 per month we pay for storm water processing as sewer to Louisa County.

The Committee has welcomed Nicole Washington, Town Manager, as a regular attendee of our meetings, providing a vital link between the decisions, standards, and policies of the committee and the implementation of them in the town. She has been an active participant in the meetings, and we welcome her input. She will be receiving some training in Water/Sewer Asset management from VRWA as well.

The Committee Chair would like to especially thank Mike Leman from Main Street Plumbing and Electric for taking the VRWA guys on a tour of the town wells, manholes and vaults with Hank Staudinger, and for showing up for weekly meetings and making contributions. He has taken so much of his business time to work on this water project for the town and is a much-appreciated Business Citizen of this town.

All Utilities meetings are open to the public.

Michelle Covert, Chair