

2.2.2025 Mayor opening comments

Before we turn to the specific questions I have for staff on sewer rates, I want to briefly restate my perspective so it's clear why I'm asking them.

At our prior public hearing, I said that before I could support final sewer rates, I needed three things: an evaluation of whether an affordability analysis is feasible; a clear look at project timing and sequencing so we understand where flexibility exists; and an examination of whether there are less burdensome ways to pay for necessary improvements.

I want to be clear—rates will have to increase. There is no responsible path that avoids that reality if we are going to maintain a safe and reliable sewer system. The question for me has always been about timing, structure, and whether Council has the right information before making a final decision.

I understand staff is requesting additional time on sewer rates, and I appreciate that. My questions this evening are intended to confirm what work has been completed to date, what has not yet been done, and what information Council can reasonably expect before we are asked to take final action.

With that context, I have several questions for staff.

Mayor Notes on Sewer and Storm Water Rates

I. Sewer Rates – Resolution No. 3229

1. Before I can support final sewer rates, I said I needed three things: an evaluation of whether an affordability analysis is feasible; a clear look at project timing and sequencing; and an examination of whether there are less burdensome ways to pay for necessary improvements. I understand staff is requesting more time.
2. Can staff walk us through—specifically—what work has been completed on each of those three items to date?
3. Did staff evaluate whether an affordability analysis for sewer rates is feasible—meaning what data would be required, how long it would take, and what it would cost—or was that evaluation not conducted?
4. If that evaluation was not conducted, can staff explain why, and when Council could reasonably expect to receive that information?
5. For the sewer system, did staff analyze which capital projects are time-critical for regulatory or

operational reasons and which could potentially be sequenced or phased differently?

6. If that analysis has not yet been completed, when do you anticipate Council will be presented with information about whether flexibility may exist in the sewer capital program?
7. Beyond ratepayer increases, did staff examine alternative or supplemental funding approaches for sewer projects—such as financing structures, grants, or phased delivery—that might reduce near-term rate pressure on households?
8. If those alternatives were not evaluated, is that because they were infeasible, or because that analysis has not yet been undertaken?
9. Given the answers to those questions, would staff agree that continuing Resolution 3229 is appropriate so Council can receive the additional information it has requested before making a final sewer rate decision?

II. Stormwater Rates – Resolution No. 3230

10. Turning to stormwater rates, I want to confirm that the same three considerations apply for me: affordability analysis feasibility, project timing and sequencing, and less burdensome funding approaches. Can staff explain how Resolution 3230 addresses each of those?

11. Did staff evaluate whether an affordability analysis specific to stormwater rates is feasible, or does Resolution 3230 proceed without that evaluation?
12. If no affordability feasibility evaluation was done, what information is Council being asked to rely on tonight to understand the impact of these stormwater rates on cost-burdened households?
13. Resolution 3230 presents multiple rate implementation options. Did staff also analyze alternative project sequencing options—meaning changes to when projects occur—not just how quickly rates rise?
14. So is it fair to say the options before Council adjust rate timing, but not underlying project timing assumptions?
15. Did staff examine less burdensome ways to fund stormwater improvements beyond rate increases, or does Resolution 3230 assume ratepayer funding as the primary mechanism?
16. If Council wanted to explore alternative funding strategies in parallel with rate increases, would adoption of Resolution 3230 preserve that flexibility, or would it effectively lock in the current approach?
17. From a household perspective, sewer and stormwater costs are cumulative. How should Council

evaluate stormwater rates tonight knowing that sewer rate impacts remain unresolved?

18. Would staff characterize adoption of Resolution 3230 as a final policy decision on stormwater rates, or as an interim step that Council can revisit once affordability, sequencing, and alternative funding analyses are completed?

Mayor Comments on Storm Water Rates.

Before we take up Resolution 3230, I want to clearly explain how I am approaching stormwater rates tonight.

Last year, a prior City Council adopted the 2024 Stormwater Master Plan in Ordinance No. 890. That plan provides important long-range guidance. It identifies system needs, prioritizes projects, and helps us understand the scale of investment required over the next 20 years. But it is a planning document—it does not set rates, it does not determine project sequencing, and it does not analyze affordability or funding options.

As I said at our prior hearing, before I can support final stormwater rates, I need three things: an evaluation of whether an affordability analysis is feasible; a clear look at project timing and sequencing so we understand where flexibility exists; and an examination of whether there are less burdensome ways to pay for necessary improvements.

I want to be very clear: stormwater rates will need to increase. Maintaining and improving this system is not optional. At the same time, from a household perspective, stormwater costs do not exist in isolation. They are experienced alongside sewer rates, rent, utilities, and other rising costs. That reality matters when Council is asked to make final decisions.

The questions I am asking staff tonight are intended to clarify what analysis has been completed, what assumptions are embedded in the options before us, and whether adopting Resolution 3230 would represent a final policy decision or an interim step that Council can revisit as additional information becomes available.

My goal is not delay for delay's sake. My goal is to make sure we are making a responsible, transparent decision—one that protects the long-term integrity of our stormwater system while also recognizing the real impacts these decisions have on the people we serve.

With that context, I have several questions for staff.