

UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD
Thursday, December 19, 2024
8:30 – 9:30 am
Lucy's - 1747 Plainfield Ave NE
AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes – November 7, 2024
2. Public Comments on Agenda Items
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Kentwood Sewer USD Modification – Final approval and signature – James Ouzts
5. Updates
 - a. 2024 Water/Sewer Rate Study update – Tai Verbrugge
 - b. Affordability Bills – Wayne Jernberg
 - c. Fluoride – Wayne Jernberg
 - i. Talking Points
 - ii. Website
6. Set 2025 Meeting Schedule:

• January 16	• July 17
• February 20	• August 21
• March 20	• September 18
• April 17	• October 16
• May 15	• November 6
• June 19	• December 18
7. Public Comments
8. Items from Members
9. Next Meeting – January 16, 2025
10. Adjournment

UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD
Thursday, November 7, 2024
MINUTES

Members Present

James Hurt (chair), Mark Bennett, Brian Bradley, Tiffany Berry, Tim Burkman, Scott Connors, Samarhia Giffel, Jared Grabinski, Wayne Jernberg, James Kirkwood, Doug LaFave, James Ouzts, Jeff McCaul, Valdyne Schwallier, and Tai Verbrugge

Alternates Present

Alan Avitia

Others Present

Kolene Allen, Rachael Brower, Izamar Contreras, Alexia Hall, and Kieran Kelley

Call to Order

Mr. Hurt called the meeting to order at 8:31 am.

Approval of Minutes – October 17, 2024

Motion to approve the agenda by Mr. Jernberg and seconded by Mr. Grabinski.

MOTION CARRIED.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

None.

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Mr. LaFave and seconded by Mr. Bennett.

MOTION CARRIED.

Preliminary 2024 Water/Sewer Rate Study

Mr. Verbrugge gave a presentation on the Preliminary 2024 Water/Sewer Rate Study. This is the 48th Annual Preliminary Rate Study. The rates recommended would go into effect on January 1, 2025. Overall, Water rates are increasing 2.8% and Sewer is increasing 2.91%.

Mr. Verbrugge gave a quick overview on how the Rate Study is performed and what factors impact it, including the revenue requirement, expenses, revenues collected, and billed volume.

Main drivers of this year's increase on the Water side of things are operating expenses, like lead line replacements and other water main additions. Revenue expectations from billed volume is down slightly when using the 3-year average which has an upward pressure on rates. This was offset some by adding new meters to the system. Integrated connection fees helped to reduce rates, as well as penalty offsets (application of the circuit breaker program) and unused penalty credits from the prior year that are rolled into the following year.

On the Sewer side, the biggest driving factor was O&M costs. Revenue that helped to keep rates down was \$3M from Renewable Natural Gas sales. Billed volume was offset by the addition of new meters in the system.

Regarding billed volume, Water decreased by .69% (3-year average) and Sewer decreased by .06% (3-year average).

Additionally, Mr. Verbrugge explained how the assistance and affordability programs affect rates. All of the late penalty fees collected by retail customers go into one pot. 12.5% of these fees are put towards affordability programs to help people who need assistance paying their bills. The remaining 87.5% are used to lower retail community rates that are higher than the system average.

The next steps for the rate study are to present it to the City Commission on November 12th and to have it approved by December 17th.

Mr. Hurt thanks Mr. Verbrugge and his team for their work on the Rate Study and the board for adjusting their schedule for it.

Ms. Giffel added information on the ICB and CCB programs. She reminded the board that these programs are both payment assistance programs and that these help to keep the rates low.

Motion made to recommend that the Preliminary 2024 Water/Sewer Rate Study be presented to the City of Grand Rapids Commission on November 12, 2024, made by Mr. Jernberg. Second by Mr. LaFave.

MOTION CARRIED.

Kentwood Sewer USD Modification Request

Mr. Ouzts presented a memo to the board requesting to add 4775 Walma Ave SE to the City of Kentwood's Sanitary Sewer Utility Service District which would increase it 0.03 sq. miles to 14.40 sq. miles total.

Mr. Kirkwood added that this is because the location is closer to Grand Rapids system than was previously planned due to requirements requested by EGLE.

Mr. Jernberg added that there is also confusion regarding service to Kentwood's Justice Center across the street located at 4740 Walma Ave SE. Kentwood believes that it is on the City's sewer system but when City staff checked records, there is not an account nor have there been any inspections at the location. Mr. Kirkwood is requesting that it be added into the USD once more research is done and maps are reviewed.

Mr. Hurt included that if this modification is made, it will not be included until the 2025 Rate Study.

Motion made to approve the addition of 4775 Walma Ave SE to the USD with the understanding that we will be coming back later to add the other parcel at 4740 Walma Ave SE. Motion seconded by Mr. Kirkwood.

MOTION CARRIED.

Updates

a. 2024 Water/Sewer Report (October)

Mr. McCaul gave an update on the October awards. The only award for October was the Reconstruction of Division Avenue from Fulton St. to 345' N. of Crescent St.

Report received and filed.

b. Individual Circuit Breaker (ICB) Payment Assistance Update

Ms. Giffel gave the quarterly report on the Water/Sewer Payment Assistance Program. She doesn't anticipate us using the \$80,000 so it will be going back into the rates next year. She wanted to update the board on the demographics using the program. In 2023, the number of households served in the 3rd quarter was 51 making the year-to-date total 159. This year, 107 households used the program in the 3rd quarter making the year-to-date total 247. This increase is because we are no longer using the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) and a few other assistance programs we used previously.

Mr. Verbrugge asked for clarification on the difference between the Failed Screening Process and Denied After Completed Process listed in the report. Ms. Giffel explained that Failed Screening Process means that the applicant wasn't eligible for the program and the Denied Process could mean that the applicant didn't verify their address.

c. December Holiday breakfast meeting

Mr. Hurt led a discussion regarding the annual holiday breakfast and asked if any partner communities would like to host it this year on December 19, 2024. Scott Connors said he'd be interested in hosting it at Walker. Other options would be moving the meeting to a restaurant or having it catered. Mr. Hurt said we'd make a decision and let the board know.

Public Comments

None.

Items from Members

- Mr. Connors said that Walker has some water main looping projects that are affecting their rates but the projects are necessary as a growing community to close those loops.

- Ms. Brouwer said that ESD's engineer review for the EPA is in process.

Mr. Hurt added that the Rapid entered into a contract for a company to buy gas and manage their fueling system and assets for RINs. The City's goal is to back on track with RNG sales by January.

- Mr. Verbrugge added that regarding the Rate Study, there are a couple of pages in the agenda packet that were not included in the Rate Study presentation. These show how quarterly bills will change in communities for residential and commercial users and what the new rate will be for retail and wholesale communities.

He further explained that a community can pay a buydown contribution in the next 30 days to keep their rates down to customers, but it wouldn't mean that their community rate decreases, it just decreases the rate they charge their customers.

- Ms. Schwallier introduced herself to the board. She is the treasurer of Tallmadge Township and explained that while she's been invited to meetings for a long time, that this was the first meeting she has attended.

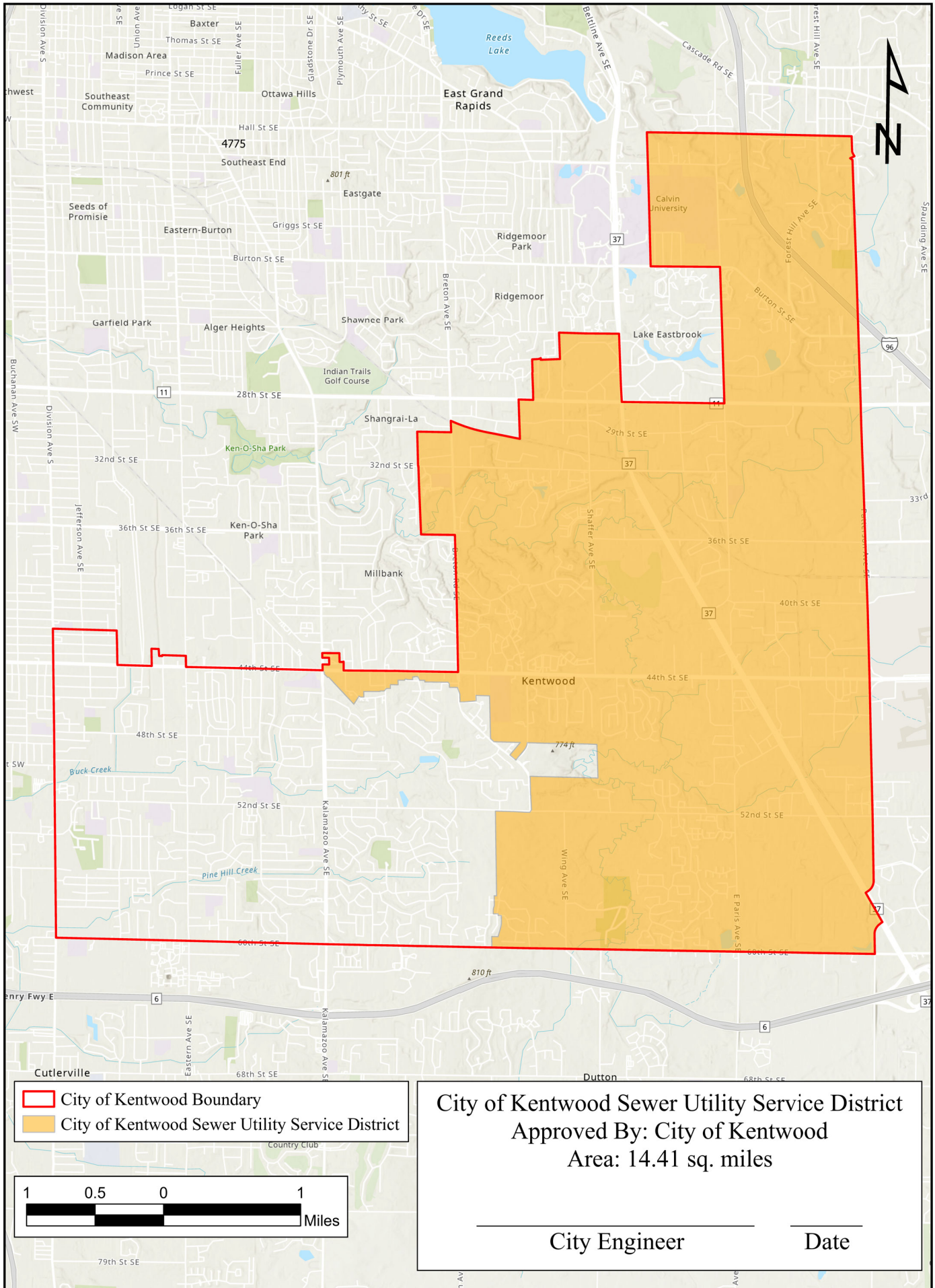
Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2024 at a place to be determined soon.

Adjournment

Mr. Hurt adjourned the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

City of Kentwood Sewer Utility Service District



Community Water Fluoridation

Talking Points:

What Health Experts Say

- After eight decades of evidence, public health experts and every major health organization agree that optimally fluoridated water protects your teeth without posing risks to your health.
- While almost all water contains naturally occurring fluoride, the community water systems that serve most American households adjust the level of fluoride in their drinking water source to achieve the optimal amount to reduce tooth decay.
- Health organizations say water fluoridation is one of the major reasons most people no longer need dentures that were so common before widespread fluoridation, and studies have shown that dental costs are declining, and oral health problems have been greatly reduced in fluoridated communities, an outcome that has had a major impact on our overall health.
- According to the [American Dental Association](#), “Community water fluoridation at optimal levels is currently defined as 0.7 parts per million by the U.S. Public Health Service and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and many leading public health authorities.”

The City's Community Water Fluoridation process

- Fluoride is present naturally in the City's water source, Lake Michigan, at varying levels of 0.1 to 0.2 milligrams per liter (mg/L).
- The City's drinking water is carefully fluoridated to 0.7 mg/L, the optimal level established by the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) and [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) guidelines. The City monitors and measures the concentration of fluoride to ensure it meets this recommended level.
- The City's annual fluoride cost is approximately \$100,000. This equates to just 0.16% of the water system's overall operational budget.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers community water fluoridation to be a safe and effective method in preventing tooth decay and has been recognized as one of the top [10 public health achievements of the 20th century](#). It is also considered to be “the most cost-effective method of delivering fluoride to all members of the community, regardless of age, educational attainment or income level.” ([SOURCE](#))
- The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), the agency that regulates the City's Water System, and the American Water Works Association both advocate for the addition of fluoride in public drinking water systems to the .7 mg/L level.
- Additionally, the [past five Surgeons General have supported community water fluoridation](#) and encouraged communities to fluoridate their water.
- The quantitative evidence demonstrates that positive benefits of fluoridated water continue to outweigh any perceived negative impacts.

Community Water Fluoridation

- The City considers this data, as well as the leading agencies and organizations (CDC, EPA, WHO and others) to be the authority on community water fluoridation and will continue to follow these guidelines and our current practice of fluoridating water to the 0.7 mg/L guideline.

The History of Fluoride in Grand Rapids

- In the 1920s and 1930s a link was made between fluoride concentrations in drinking water and a reduction in tooth decay.
- In 1945, Grand Rapids became the first city in the world to fluoridate its drinking water to study this link.
- The Grand Rapids water fluoridation study was originally sponsored by the U.S. Surgeon General but was taken over by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) shortly after NIH's inception in 1948.
- During the 15-year study, researchers monitored the rate of tooth decay among Grand Rapids' almost 30,000 school children.
- After just 11 years, the cavity rate among Grand Rapids children born after fluoride was added to the water supply dropped more than 60 percent.
- This finding, considering the thousands of participants in the study, amounted to a giant scientific breakthrough that promised to revolutionize dental care, making tooth decay for the first time in history a preventable disease for most people.
- You can read more about this study and the history of fluoride in our drinking water [from the NIH](#).
- Since that time, thousands of studies have been conducted over the past 80 years to confirm these findings.

What fluoride opponents say

- Anti-fluoride activists advocate that every community should discontinue adding fluoride to their drinking water because they incorrectly believe that community water fluoridation is harmful to the public.
- While it is true that ingesting large amounts of fluoride can lead to serious health issues, the City, as well as most communities who add fluoride to their drinking water supply, closely monitor and control the level of fluoride in their water sources to ensure they remain safe and in accordance with the recommended levels of the leading agencies on this topic.

grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Water-System/Water-Quality

Water Quality

- [2023 Water Quality Report](#)
- [What is in your water? 2023 Water Analysis](#)
- [Lead and Copper Rule & Sampling Results](#)
- [PFAS and Sampling Results](#)
- [Fluoride](#)

Fluoride

Background

Fluoride is a naturally occurring element found in many ground and surface waters. In the 1920s and 1930s a link was made between fluoride concentrations in drinking water and a reduction in tooth decay. In 1945, Grand Rapids became the first city in the world to fluoridate its drinking water to study this link. The Grand Rapids water fluoridation study was originally sponsored by the U.S. Surgeon General but was taken over by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) shortly after NIH's inception in 1948. During the 15-year study, researchers monitored the rate of tooth decay among Grand Rapids' almost 30,000 schoolchildren. After just 11 years, the cavity rate among Grand Rapids children born after fluoride was added to the water supply dropped more than 60 percent. This finding, considering the thousands of participants in the study, amounted to a giant scientific breakthrough that promised to revolutionize dental care, making tooth decay for the first time in history a preventable disease for most people. You can read more about this study and the history of fluoride in our drinking water from the NIH. Since that time, thousands of studies have been conducted over the past 60 years to confirm these findings.

Community Water Fluoridation

The City of Grand Rapids' drinking water is carefully fluoridated to the optimal level established by the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) and [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) guidelines. This level, 0.7 milligrams per liter, is the optimal level according to these U.S. agencies as well as the [Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy](#). The City monitors and measures the concentration of fluoride to assure it remains within this guidance. You can find a copy of our annual [water quality reports](#) on our website. This report lists the amount of fluoride in our drinking water.