

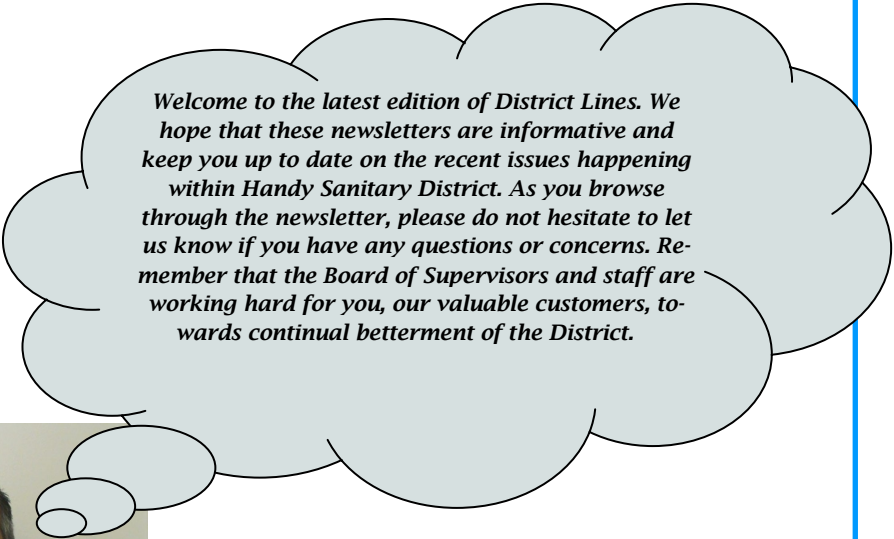


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DISTRICT LINES

A Handy Sanitary Newsletter

A Few Thoughts from our General Manager, Randy Welch



Welcome to the latest edition of District Lines. We hope that these newsletters are informative and keep you up to date on the recent issues happening within Handy Sanitary District. As you browse through the newsletter, please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or concerns. Remember that the Board of Supervisors and staff are working hard for you, our valuable customers, towards continual betterment of the District.



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Slight Increase to Water Rates May Pave the Way to Lowering Water Loss Percentage

Following the leak detection work completed this spring with the assistance of NC Rural Water Association, Handy's field personnel repaired all of the unsurfaced leaks that were located. Unfortunately these leaks only accounted for a small portion of the District's high water loss percentage, which is still averaging over 31% for the calendar year. But, we're not giving up! We plan to keep working with NCRWA whenever possible to continue locating unsurfaced leaks to repair throughout the system.

In addition, as noted on the bills mailed out on July 1, there was a slight increase to water rates, that was in effect for the bills mailed out on August 1. The minimum bill went from \$19.50 to \$21.00, and the District

changed from charging a decreasing block rate to charging a flat rate per 1,000 gallons (\$6.00). The reasoning behind these changes is to meet Local Government Commission regulations, as well as to operate and maintain our systems. Preventative maintenance is key to longevity, just as we all experience regarding our homes and vehicles. This rings true for the District, currently in regards to lines, tanks, and equipment within the water system. The water rate increase also allows the District to establish capital reserves, in particular, a reserve fund for the water department. This will provide the foundation for the replacement of our system's aging water lines, which is a long-term solution to the District's water loss problem.

With the ground being dry during

the summer, leaking water is quickly absorbed, therefore making leaks harder to spot since they take longer to reach the surface. A big thank you to all of our customers who keep their eyes open and report possible leaks. Sometimes even the smallest trickle is actually a big leak and with over 160 miles of water lines in the District, it is not feasible for our field personnel to patrol every inch of line, every day. Please continue to let us know if you notice a potential leak and we will be glad to investigate it.

Regarding the actual leak repair process, we are also making strides to complete each one in a method that ensures that it is a final repair, so as not to return to the same location. This repair method is time consuming but pays dividends in the future.

Special points of interest:

- Late fee decreases from \$25.00 to \$15.00
- We want YOUR opinion about online bill pay



Your Handy Sanitary District Board of Supervisors: Standing, from left, Arlin Sechrist, Karen Nash, and Norman Hunt. Seated, from left, Dan Caudle (Chairman), and Keith Loflin (Secretary)

Board Approves 2011-2012 Budget

The District's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30th. A budget for 2011-2012 was approved by a 3-2 vote at the June 9th Board meeting, and went into effect on July 1st. Currently, the majority of the District's revenue comes from water sales and the budget approved included an increase to the water rate. You may be wondering exactly how the revenues we collect are being spent. Well, the expenses side of the budget this year includes funding for the following capital costs :

- 1) The rebuilding of a pump at the Byron St. Tank, which is crucial to day-to-day operations
- 2) The purchase of a new service truck to be used for repairing/maintaining the water system
- 3) To establish a maintenance program for all of the District's water tanks, which improves the quality of water
- 4) The purchase of essential updates to the automated meter reading system and the mapping program
- 5) To establish reserves which set aside funding for improvements to the District's systems

Billing Software Update Complete, and a Big Success; Meter Reading Software Update Happening Next

As planned, the update to the District's billing software system took place on July 13th. The new version of the system offers a variety of features including:

- Easier to access and input customer information (only with designated login)
- Simpler and more accurate process for payment posting
- More streamlined process for making bill adjustments when necessary due to leaks, late fees, etc.
- Faster to process and update work orders
- Easier to track work orders historically

The office staff is currently working with Computer Software Innovations, the District's billing software com-

pany, to iron out a few minor details resulting from the update. We are very happy to report that overall the new system is operating smoothly and efficiently. The office personnel are enjoying the well-organized structure of the new software system and our own Customer Service Representative, Angela Jennings, had this to say about it: "Based on my experience with the new software, I have no doubts that

it will be beneficial for office utilization, in addition to providing another avenue with which we can better serve our customers."

Prior to starting the Automated Meter Reading software update, we are awaiting finalization of the billing software update, since these systems function together, as well as independently. We anticipate turning our attention to the AMR update in late fall.

Badin Lake Sewer Project

On July 6th, the District began pumping sewer from the developments of Badin Shores Resort and Uwharrie Point to the wastewater treatment plant in Troy. More recently, Ritchie Construction has started dismantling the wastewater treatment plant and the lagoons, and Terry's Plumbing has completed all force main line installations inside the developments. As the construction phase comes to a close and the operational phase progresses, we have encountered several burdensome problems. Currently, the main concerns include

generator malfunctions and odor control issues at the lift stations. We have been working closely with Hobbs, Upchurch, & Assoc., Wateree Construction, as well as the manufacturers, to resolve these problems. (For those of you experiencing the stench from the lift stations, a chemical adhesive may be added to help eliminate the odor.) The primary focus for this fall, regarding the project, is to work out these difficulties before connecting the remaining developments on to the system. This will allow the District staff to get a firm grip on the daily processes of the system prior to

becoming fully operational. As we approach the point when property owners in the developments can connect their homes to the sewer system, the District will provide notification by mail. This correspondence will include a list of plumbers and electricians who have completed a class with E-One (the manufacturer of the individual grinder pump/tank at each residence) which covered basic information on how to connect to the grinder tanks. The District will not be recommending any particular plumber(s) or electrician(s), and it is up to each individ-

ual property owner to determine who they chose to connect their residences to the sewer system. Both Davidson and Montgomery county inspection departments will require permits for the electrical and plumbing work. Property owners are not responsible for the cost of the plumbing permit, because the Board of Supervisors voted in favor of the District paying this expense for the property owners. However, property owners will be responsible for the cost of the electrical permits. Additional information regarding the permits will be included when you receive connection notification.

Reconnect Fee Goes Up, But Late Fee Comes Down

Following much discussion and consideration over the District's controversial late and reconnect fee amounts, the Board of Supervisors approved in a 4-1 vote at their June 9th meeting to increase the reconnect fee from \$50.00 to \$65.00, while decreasing the late fee from \$25.00 to \$15.00. The changes became effective July 1st and overall have had a positive impact during the first couple of months.

The District mails out bills on the 1st of each month, and the due date is the 21st. To avoid the late fee, be sure to pay your bill by the 21st. If a bill is not paid by the 10th of the following month, it is subject to disconnection. To avoid disconnection, and the accompanying reconnect fee, pay any past due balance by the 10th.

Online Bill Pay? We Want Your Input!!

At their September 8 meeting, the Board reviewed a slide show presentation from a representative of the District's billing software company, regarding the online bill payment option and how it would work. If the online pay option is approved, the District's website, www.handywater.com, would include a link to "Pay Your Bill Online". By clicking here, a customer would be led through a secure online process to pay their bill, by use of their credit or debit card, for a minimal fee. The amount of this small fee would be set by the District and based on the number of customers using the online bill pay service. The more customers that use the online bill pay, the lower the fee. (Note: This fee would

not be charged to all District customers, only those who actually use the online bill pay service.) In addition to paying online, customers would also be able to view their account's usage and payment history online. However, before our Board approves the online bill payment option and sets a fee amount, we are trying to get an estimate of how many Handy customers may actually be interested in using this service. Determining this would keep the fee from being set too high or too low, and ultimately, from varying in upcoming months as the system is integrated. Here's where YOU come in! If online bill pay was available and you would consider using this payment method, please let

Looking for a fall project?



Prepare for colder weather by insulating your home's water pipes to avoid freezing, as shown above

us know by contacting Angela Jennings at the District office. She is keeping track of the number of customers who may be interested. Please note that expressing interest does NOT commit you to using this service. The Board will review the estimated number of interested customers, along with other pertinent information and make a decision regarding whether to proceed with the online bill payment service, at an upcoming Board meeting.



New Auditing Firm Selected

The Local Government Commission requires that an audit of the District's financial statements be completed and submitted annually. Steven D. Scarboro, CPA has previously performed Handy's audit for several years but chose not to submit a contract renewal for the 2010-2011 audit. Following the required bidding process, proposals were received from five auditing firms. Martin, Starnes, & Associates, CPAs, P.A. was chosen as the new auditing firm for the District at the July 14th Board meeting.

Established in 1987, Martin, Starnes, & Associates, is a large organization with offices in Hickory and Taylorsville, NC. The firm serves as the auditor for many municipalities and sanitary districts across North Carolina, including locally, Davidson and Montgomery counties. The annual auditing process started for the District's staff around the end of July, and following Martin, Starnes, & Associates' report of findings to the District Board of Supervisors at their October 13th meeting, will conclude with the sub-

mission of the audit report to the LGC. Following working with Martin, Starnes & Associates, through the transition phase and on the 2010-2011 audit, Handy's Office/Finance Manager, Lisa Hedrick, expressed that she is pleased with the business relationship that has been started with the firm, and looks forward to helping the District maintain a long-term professional affiliation with Martin, Starnes, & Associates.

Employees Obtain Licenses Important to Water and Sewer Operations

Following completion of a NC American Water Works Association (NCAWWA) course of study, and the passing of an exam through NC Water Treatment Facility Operators Certification Board (NCWTFOCB), both Ken Clippinger and Greg Carroll recently received their Grade A Distribution Operator Licenses. This is the highest level achievable for Distribution certification and must be preceded by first acquiring Grades D, C, and B. NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources sets the grade of a water distribution system, depending on the number of customers served, and requires each system to have a person designated as Operator in Responsible Charge (ORC). The District's system is currently a Grade B and not far from being a Grade A and Ken Clippinger is presently the ORC of the water distribution system. With Greg Carroll's acquisition of the A Distribution license, Handy has an additional employee eligible of being appointed



Pictured left to right: Ken Clippinger, Greg Carroll, Robbie Haltom and Michael Stepp, Jr. with their recently acquired certifications

ORC. In addition to Ken and Greg's accomplishments, Michael Stepp, Jr. and Robbie Haltom received their Grade C Distribution Operator Licenses. Another NCDENR requirement is for the distribution system to have an appointed ORC of the cross-connection program. Following completion of a NCAWWA course of study, and the passing of an exam through the NCWTFOCB, Greg Carroll recently acquired a Cross-Connection Control Operator License, which makes him eligible for being appointed Cross-Connection ORC. On the wastewater side, following completion of a

NCAWWA course of study, and the passing of an exam through NC Water Pollution Control System Operators Certification Commission, Robbie Haltom recently received his Grade 4 Collections System Operator License. This is the highest level achievable for Collections certification, and must be preceded by first acquiring Grades 1, 2, and 3. With the Grade 4 License now in hand, Robbie is eligible to be appointed Operator in Responsible Charge (ORC) of Handy's wastewater collections system. Congrats to Ken, Greg, Robbie, and Michael on their achievements!!

Charles Harp Recently Appointed as Attorney for the District



Following the resignation of attorney Franklin Wells, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously at their July 14th meeting to appoint Charles Harp as the District's new legal representation. He currently resides in Lexington and practices law out of an office in Denton as well as one in Lexington. Mr. Harp served as Handy's attorney several years ago

the District was originally formed and is excited about being a part of the organization again. His role as attorney for Handy includes working with staff to ensure that applying General Statutes are followed in the operations of the District, as well as advising the Board legally during closed session matters such as personnel and contract negotiations.

From the Desk of General Manager Randy Welch : Organizational and Operational Changes to Better Serve You!

In conjunction with the sprucing-up of the office and parking lot completed earlier this year, I have been looking at ways to improve the daily, internal operations of the District to better serve our customers. Recently, I have implemented a few changes that I think will have a positive impact on the entire Handy organization, from the employee level, to each and every customer.

Following Board approval at the August 4th meeting, job descriptions were introduced to employees. Job descriptions provide a foundation for each position with the District and serve as a multipurpose tool that can be used in virtually every aspect of the employment process, including recruitment, interviewing, selection, training, performance appraisal,

and disciplinary actions. An organizational chart was also presented to the employees, which helps them to understand and utilize the proper chain-of-command.

Another recent development was the clarification of three separate departments (Administration, Water, and Wastewater) working together within the District. With the sewer system nearing operational status, it was essential to designate field personnel to either the water department or the wastewater department. This ensures that the District is adequately staffed and prepared to address all issues arising that affect either the water or the wastewater systems. It allows employees to focus on their individual responsibilities, while also learning the appropriate procedures to follow when it is

necessary for the departments to work together. Presently the water department consists of four full-time employees, and the wastewater department consists of two full-time employees and one part-time employee. Including myself, the administration department consists of five full-time employees.

Exactly how do these modifications affect you? Well, combined, these changes keep our employees more informed about their respective positions, their responsibilities and how their daily work impacts the District, and ultimately, more satisfied. Happy employees are more productive, which in turn, ensures that the highest quality of service is being provided to each of you as customers.