

The Bedford Citizen

THE NEWS YOU NEED TO GUIDE YOUR CITY

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[COUNCIL-APPROVED WATER AND SEWER RATE CHANGES](#)

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OPINIONS AND EDITORIALS

[LETTER TO THE EDITOR: BY CHRIS BROWN](#)

Do the people who sit on the Bedford City Council have a vision for the city? Does their vision include a city that is more than "just a route from Ft. Worth to the airport"?

[LETTER TO THE EDITOR: BY DOROTHY MCWHORTER](#)

This is a response to Dona Wiseman's statements and your editorial in the September 23, 2007 issue.

[EDITORIAL: REMOVAL OF ADVISORY BOARD OR COMMISSION MEMBERS](#)

I want to thank Ms. McWhorter for pointing out the fact that we did not make ourselves clear and giving us the opportunity to rectify the situation.

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FEATURES

COUNCIL-APPROVED WATER AND SEWER RATE CHANGES

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The City Council has approved various Water/Sewer CIP projects and has approved the issuance of debt in the form of Certificates of Obligation to fund the water-related projects. In order to finance the issued debt, it was necessary for the City to raise water rates. Due to the fixed nature of the debt and to ensure sufficient revenue each year over the term of the debt, City staff recommended adjustment of the Base Water Rates rather than adjustment of the more variable and volatile consumption or per-gallon rate.

The rate changes, which were approved unanimously by the City Council at the Sept. 25 meeting, were incorporated into the 2007-2008 city budget and will provide the funds necessary to pay the debt on the water-related infrastructure improvements.

With the exception of multi-family dwellings, the minimum charge for various size meters per month will be:

- ◆ 5/8" meter ... \$11.22
- ◆ 5/8" meter (account holder over 65 years of age) ... \$10.20
- ◆ 1" meter ... \$22.44
- ◆ 1" meter (account holder over 65 years of age) ... \$20.40
- ◆ 1½" meter ... \$44.88
- ◆ 2" meter ... \$71.81

- ◆ All meters in excess of 2" ... Charge to be determined by established method

Inside City limits, all water used per month would be \$2.07/1,000 gallons, with a minimum as indicated in the above list.

Outside the City limits, charges for single-family and commercial, duplex and multi-family would be twice the amount charged to a like resident of the City.

- ◆ Current monthly water/sewer base total: \$318,858
- ◆ Proposed monthly water/sewer base total: \$350,251
- ◆ Monthly water/sewer increase: \$31,394
- ◆ Annual water/sewer increase: \$376,724
- ◆ Annual debt service for \$5,000,000 issue would be \$388,000 (20 years) and \$348,000 (25 years).

Please see the associated tables on the next page.

OPINIONS AND EDITORIALS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: BY CHRIS BROWN

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Economic development is the number one issue that we need to address in Bedford. It is time to stop making the excuse that Bedford is almost completely built out. We don't have the tax revenue luxuries of a mall or of airport car rental businesses, so we have to work smarter. We want to be business friendly, and we need to work with business owners to recruit businesses

Overview of Water Rate Changes

	Count	Current		Proposed		Monthly Change
		Base	Amount	Increase	Amount	
Over 65 5/8" MTR	1,103	\$ 9.00	\$ 9,927	\$ 10.20	\$ 11,251	\$ 1,324
5/8" MTR	12,231	\$ 10.20	\$ 124,756	\$ 11.22	\$ 137,232	\$ 12,476
Over 65 1" MTR	7	\$ 18.00	\$ 126	\$ 20.40	\$ 143	\$ 17
1" MTR	436	\$ 20.40	\$ 8,894	\$ 22.44	\$ 9,784	\$ 889
1½" MTR	151	\$ 40.80	\$ 6,161	\$ 44.88	\$ 6,777	\$ 616
2" MTR	663	\$ 65.28	\$ 43,281	\$ 71.81	\$ 47,609	\$ 4,328
Fire Hydrant	5	\$108.00	\$ 540	\$ 118.80	\$ 594	\$ 54
	15	\$122.40	\$ 1,836	\$ 134.64	\$ 2,020	\$ 184
	1	\$195.84	\$ 196	\$ 215.42	\$ 215	\$ 20
	20	\$204.00	\$ 4,080	\$ 224.40	\$ 4,488	\$ 408
	1	\$734.40	\$ 734	\$ 807.84	\$ 808	\$ 73
	14,633		\$ 200,531		\$ 220,920	\$ 20,388

- ◆ Last water rate increase for seniors was in 1994. CPI increase since 1994: 34.6%
- ◆ Last water rate increase for all others was in 1999. CPI increase since 1999: 20.3%

Overview of Sewer Rate Changes

	Count	Current		Proposed		Monthly Change
		Base	Amount	Increase	Amount	
Over 65	1,103	\$ 7.50	\$ 8,273	\$ 7.50	\$ 8,273	-
	12,110	\$ 7.50	\$ 90,825	\$ 8.25	\$ 99,908	\$ 9,083
Over 65 1" MTR	7	\$ 11.28	\$ 79	\$ 12.41	\$ 87	\$ 8
	283	\$ 11.28	\$ 3,192	\$ 12.41	\$ 3,511	\$ 319
	86	\$ 17.57	\$ 1,511	\$ 19.33	\$ 1,662	\$ 151
	487	\$ 25.12	\$ 12,233	\$ 27.63	\$ 13,457	\$ 1,223
Fire Hydrant	5	-	-	-	-	-
	15	\$ 45.26	\$ 679	\$ 49.79	\$ 747	\$ 68
	1	\$ 45.26	\$ 45	\$ 49.79	\$ 50	\$ 5
	20	\$ 67.92	\$ 1,358	\$ 74.71	\$ 1,494	\$ 136
	1	\$130.86	\$ 131	\$ 143.95	\$ 144	\$ 13
	14,118		\$ 118,327		\$ 129,332	\$ 11,005

- ◆ Sprinkler meters & builders are exempt from sewer charges.
- ◆ There will be no change to the senior (over 65) sewer rate at this time.
- ◆ Last sewer rate increase was in 2004. CPI since 2004 has increased by 6.4%.

to fill vacant properties in Bedford. This will increase the tax base and bring needed revenue to the city. We also have to be forward thinkers. The expansion of highway 183/121 is potentially traumatizing to the Bedford businesses in that locality. The city needs to help businesses prepare for the upcoming expansion right now, before it's too late and we lose even more tax revenue.

I am concerned that there has been too much squabbling about whether or not to outsource the management of the library and not enough attention paid to more pressing economic issues. City staff time and resources that went into the library issue could have been spent doing far more productive things. I applaud the council in their decision to keep the library city operated. Now together we must move on. Let's recapture what has made Bedford great, become innovative in our thinking, and propel Bedford forward to a future of harmony and prosperity.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR:
BY DOROTHY MCWHORTER**

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This is a response to Dona Wiseman's statements and your editorial in the September 23, 2007 issue. Ms. Wiseman's statement:

"The Ethics division of the City Charter states that 'Hearings on complaints shall be closed to the public unless the party charged with a violation of this division requests that the hearing be open.' Why is it, then, that accusations of Board members

are allowed to be made public by a fellow Board member and by members of the Council?"

The above statement only pertains to violations that have been filed with the Ethics Commission. In order for a violation to be filed, it must meet at least one of the criteria listed in Section 8 ½-3. Ethical Guidelines of the Bedford Ethics Ordinance.

The removal of the Library Board members did not meet any of the required criteria in the Bedford Ethics Ordinance; therefore, "open" or "closed" hearings were not applicable in this instance. The "open" and "closed" hearings only apply to complaints that are filed with the Ethics Commission. Parties to these filed complaints may request an "open" or "closed" hearing. Having served as a member of the first Bedford Ethics Commission, I am quite familiar with this ordinance.

The Bedford City Charter is quite clear on the removal of appointed boards and commissions. Section 2.10 - Removal of other appointive officials.

"The council may, upon the affirmative vote of a majority of the full membership of the council, including the mayor as a voting member, remove members of its appointive boards or commissions without notice, unless otherwise provided by State law."

Your editorial stated: " This incident was not handled well by the Council and procedures should be established to avoid this in the future."

The procedures you speak of are already in place. They are found in the Bedford

City Council Code of Conduct, item number three. Council members Turner and Nail either did not know the procedures for handling situations such as this were covered under the Code of Conduct or they chose to ignore them by making this issue public knowledge during a city council meeting.

Editorials are just opinions; however, facts should be the basis for that opinion.

EDITORIAL: REMOVAL OF ADVISORY BOARD OR COMMISSION MEMBERS

By Stu Updike

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I want to thank Ms. McWhorter for pointing out the fact that we did not make ourselves clear and for giving us the opportunity to rectify the situation. With regard to dona weisman's (she chooses not to capitalize her name) statement, she was not saying that anyone was entitled to closed hearings under the City Charter. She was saying that, since the City Charter recognizes the need to treat persons accused of ethics violations in a civil manner, the City Charter should require similar treatment for all of those who serve the City.

With regard to my editorial, my comment was that, "This incident was not handled well by the Council and procedures should be established to avoid this in the future." I was talking not only about the night that Council members Turner and Nail spoke of receiving emails, etc. I was referring, also, to the way in which the relationship between the Council and the Library Advisory Board (LAB) has been handled from the very beginning of the outsourcing

question.

The City Charter does not discuss the mission of the Council Liaisons to the boards and commissions. The mission of the Council Liaison to those groups should be to maintain communications between them and the Council. Since that mission is jeopardized whenever the Liaison is perceived by either party as being biased, it seems logical to remove a Council Liaison whenever his or her actions appear to be at cross purposes with a board or commission's recommendations to the Council.

Therefore, Councilman Orea should have been removed, or should have resigned as Liaison to the LAB, as soon as it became clear that his investigation of outsourcing was at cross purposes with the LAB's recommendations against outsourcing and against developing the related RFP.

This does not mean that the Council can't continue as it chooses; it means that the board or commission has a Liaison who can represent the group to the Council without any question of bias. Several times members of the current Council have insisted that they believe in treating everyone equally. Assuring that every City board and commission has an unbiased Liaison to the Council treats all of them equally.

The Council missed that opportunity but was given a second chance to take action in Jan. 2007, when Ms. weisman wrote a letter to the mayor asking that the LAB Liaison be replaced. The Mayor took no action, and no one on the Council suggested a need to do so.

Again in mid-July the Council was given an opportunity to take action, and again they ignored the requests.

The showdown finally came at the Aug. 14 Council meeting during the reauthorization of the Beautification Committee, the Community Affairs Commission, the Parks and Recreation Board, and the Library Advisory Board. They were being reauthorized due to a recently remembered sunset provision contained in an ordinance passed in 2004. As a result of that ordinance, those four boards and commissions had ceased to exist earlier in the year. After reauthorizing the four groups, the Council reappointed all of the members of all of the boards and commissions, except for the three citizen volunteers who had written letters to some Council members and/or the mayor requesting the replacement of Councilman Orea as the Council Liaison to the Library Advisory Board. Those three citizen volunteers were publicly accused of "plotting, planning and conniv[ing]" and of mounting an "orchestrated campaign." They were then replaced.

This is not the first time that Councilman Orea has participated in the wholesale removal of members of a City board.

In a Dec. 14, 1995 article in the *Mid-Cities News*, Christopher Mosmeyer reported that five members of Bedford's Parks and Recreation Board were replaced by a 4-3 vote during a Dec. 7 work session. Voting in favor of replacing the board members were Council members Charles Orea, Steve Peak, Becky Grein and Danny McDowell. Mayor Rick Hurt, Mayor Pro Tem Blackie Blackwell and Councilman

Leahmon Chambers voted against the motion.

During the Dec. 12, 1995 Council meeting, the Council voted 6-0 to appoint new members to the Parks and Recreation Board. Mayor Pro Tem Blackie Blackwell is quoted in the article as saying, "I vigorously disagree with the wholesale expulsion of the parks board members. I think it is a disgrace that four councilmen listen to one person and carry out her orders." Mayor Rick Hurt said, "I have a real problem with summarily dismissing 20 years of experience from the parks board."

Councilman Orea is quoted as saying the Parks Board members "were no longer in touch with the wishes of the voters."

The message delivered by the 1995 and 2007 events is that, if a member of a board or commission stands up for what he or she believes in, that member can expect to be replaced.

No citizen volunteer deserves to be treated the way that our LAB members were treated, especially for simply sending written requests to some Council members and/or the mayor.

The time for reappointments and new appointments to boards and commissions is just around the corner. How this Council handles that task could determine the City's ability to attract volunteers to those groups in coming years.