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PRESS RELEASE

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City Raises Water Rates to Fund Federal Mandate

The City Council took the hard but necessary step today to raise water and sewer rates in order to fund hundreds of millions of dollars needed to overhaul the city's antiquated water system, ultimately bringing it into compliance with the Clean Water Act.

The much debated measure passed 4-3, with councilmembers Michael Corbin, Oliver Jenkins, Jeff Everson and Ron Webb casting affirmative votes.

Today's action means water rates will rise by 13 percent, beginning Oct. 1, 2013, with sewer rates increasing by 55 percent. Those rates will remain fixed until Jan. 1, 2015. At that point, annual rate increases will occur until January 2020.

The City of Shreveport recently completed an extended negotiation process with the Department of Justice to find the best way to address the negative environmental impact the city's crumbling infrastructure has had for years.

Residents have long complained about sewage backing into their yards or flowing along neighborhood streets. Each time such an overflow happens, the city must report it to the Environmental Protection Agency. Each violation is subject to a fine of about \$37,000.

The price tag for bringing the city's water and sewer system up to federal standards is approximately \$350 million.

"I want to thank the councilmembers who made the difficult decision today to move forward and support this plan to solve a problem that we all acknowledge needs to be addressed now," Mayor Cedric Glover said following the vote. "As I've said before, we're not in this to make money and a lot of planning, discussion and deliberation went into the rate schedule you approved today."

Mayor Glover also praised several members of his staff who worked with federal officials to reach this agreement. Those staffers included Chief Administrative Officer Dale Sibley, City Attorney Terri Scott, Water Department Director Barbara Featherson and consulting attorney Tim Hardy.



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“This is the best plan that’s been put in front of us and if anyone out there has a better solution, then we haven’t seen it,” Councilman Oliver Jenkins said.

The implementation schedule for the staggered rate increases was studied for several weeks by the council’s Infrastructure Committee, headed by Councilman Everson. That group offered essential changes designed to soften the blow that customers will feel in the coming months.

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