

# MARBLEHEAD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION



## THE FLOW N' GO

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### WATER DEPARTMENT RECEIVES MASSDEP AWARD

The Marblehead Water Department was presented with an award for Outstanding Performance and Achievement by Public Water Systems by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) at a May 11 ceremony at the Massachusetts State House in Boston. Marblehead had attained one of the top scores in the Consecutive Community System category.

MassDEP works with drinking water utilities throughout the state to assure that the water delivered to consumers meets all federal and state standards and is clean and abundant. Each of the water systems recognized have demonstrated compliance for five consecutive years and for achieving top scores in 2022.

For 36 years, in observance of National Drinking Water Week each May, MassDEP has recognized and honored exemplary water systems that have reached meritorious service for their work during the previous calendar year.



*(Accepting the Award at the State House on behalf of the Marblehead Water Department is Water and Sewer Commissioner Barton Hyte, Superintendent Amy McHugh, and Assistant Superintendent Bethany Spangler.)*

“I am proud to work with such a dedicated group of employees and commissioners,” said Marblehead Water and Sewer Superintendent Amy McHugh. “It is an honor to receive an award that recognizes the hard work and dedication of the Marblehead Water Department.”

### COMMISSION PRACTICES TRANSPARENCY WHEN SETTING RATES

The Marblehead Water and Sewer Departments are fully funded by revenues generated by water and sewer rates. Many residents and social media postings have the misconception that these departments receive funds through the town's tax rate. They do not.

The process for setting the water and sewer rates begins with the development of department budgets. Budgets are prepared by the Superintendent and staff and are reviewed by the Water and Sewer Commission at an open meeting. Draft budgets are submitted to the town's finance committee for review by their liaisons, who then meet in public session with the Commission to offer comments.

Revised budgets are then reviewed by the full finance committee at their annual public

budget hearing at which time the finance committee votes on a recommendation and sends the budgets to Town Meeting for approval.

At Town Meeting, residents vote on Articles that authorize the expenditure of water and sewer rate revenue for the approved budgets, vehicle purchases, and water and sewer construction Articles, which are funded by rate revenue collected the previous year for the explicit purpose of maintenance and expansion of the water and sewer systems. Approval of these Articles has no effect on the town's tax rate.

Once the budget is set, the next step is a rate study to set water and sewer rates for the next fiscal year.

### Fluoride System Upgrade Completed

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) has successfully completed construction and testing of the fluoride system upgrade at the Carroll Water Treatment Plant as reported in the April/May/June issue of *The Flow N' Go*. The fluoride feed was restarted on June 12.

More information on the system upgrade can be found at [www.mwra.com/04water/html/fluoride.html](http://www.mwra.com/04water/html/fluoride.html)

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**WATER AND SEWER SERVICES ARE FULLY FUNDED BY RATES AND FEES**

*(Continued from Front Page)*

The Water and Sewer Commission and staff puts a lot of consideration into setting the annual water and sewer rates and fees. Past revenues and future operational and construction needs are analyzed and several rate scenarios are presented to the Commission for their consideration.

This rate setting process, in keeping with today’s political buzz word of “transparency,” is fully open for public review. A public Rate Setting Hearing is held every June to set the water and sewer rates and fees that will be in effect for the following July 1 through the next June 30.

A Legal Notice of the Rate Setting Hearing is advertised in the local newspapers as well as on the Town of Marblehead website and is posted in various town buildings. Notification is also read at a Select Board meeting several weeks prior to the Hearing.

The Rate Study looks at a running three-

year average of water consumption and sanitary sewer usage as well as the fees collected for various water and sewer services and estimates what should be expected to be raised the following year. It takes into consideration the next fiscal year’s budget and future capital improvement construction costs and debt services and arrives at several sample water and sewer rate and administrative fee options that meets these needs for the Commission to consider.

The water and sewer rates are based on consumption and are charged per 100 cubic feet of usage. There are two tiers: a conservation rate for the first 1 to 3,000 cubic feet of usage and a second higher rate for usage over 3,000 cubic feet. These tiers apply to both water and sewer.

The Commission also sets an Administrative Fee, the purpose of which is to pay for the fixed costs associated with debt service, metering, billing, and providing fire services. This annual fee is spread over each quarterly bill.

This year’s Rate Study was held June 26. After reviewing and debating the options presented and accepting public comment, the Commission voted at the Hearing to set the water and sewer rates and administrative fees for Fiscal Year 2024, which began July 1, 2023, as shown below:

Water

Administrative Charge .....	\$28.75 per Quarter (\$115.00 Annual Total)
Usage 1 – 3000 Cubic Feet ....	\$ 6.80 per 100 Cubic Feet
Usage Over 3000 Cubic Feet...	\$ 9.75 per 100 Cubic Feet

Sewer

Administrative Charge .....	\$ 27.00 per Quarter (\$108.00 Annual Total)
Usage 1 – 3000 Cubic Feet ....	\$ 11.00 per 100 Cubic Feet
Usage Over 3000 Cubic Feet...	\$ 11.00 per 100 Cubic Feet

It should be noted that there was no increase in the lower usage rate for water and no increase in sewer usage rates over Fiscal 2023 rates.

A copy of the 2024 Rate Study is available at the Water and Sewer office.

**LOCAL YOUTHS LEARN ABOUT WATER, SEWER, AND DRAINS AT LIBRARY PROGRAM**

The Water and Sewer Commission and the Department of Public Works Drain Department made a big splash with Marblehead’s youth at the recent Abbot Public Library’s *Summer Reading Kick-off Celebration* held June 10th. The event took place on the grounds of the former Eveleth School, which is now serving as the library’s interim facility.

A visit to our booth offered various activities to help educate kids on the Water, Sewer, and Drain Departments vital infrastructure; such as the water distribution system, the sanitary sewer collection system, and the stormwater drain system. These activities outlined the need for keeping our water supply safe and clean, which items should enter the sanitary sewer system, and how the stormwater drain system leads to the ocean.



*(Representing the Water and Sewer Commission and Drain Department are (left to right) Public Works Staff Engineer Maggie Wheeler; Water and Sewer Superintendent Amy McHugh; and Assistant Superintendent Bethany Spangler)*

The main activity was a sorting game where item cards were disposed into either the trash, recycling, compost, sewer system, or drainage system. This

activity demonstrated the correct place to dispose of each item.

Some items sorted include: baby wipes, paper towels, and dog poop bags into the trash; plastics, paper, and cardboard into the recycling; food waste and lawn leaves to be composted; only the *Four P’s* of Pee, Poop, Puke, and toilet Paper are the only items to be flushed into the sanitary sewer; and rain, snow, and leaves to go into the stormwater drains and out to the ocean.

Hands-on activities such as this could very well influence how our youths use their voice and help protect our infrastructure. Judging from how often information such as this has had to be repeated in *The Flow N’ Go*, it might be a worth-while activity for adults to do as well.