

EDGEWOOD SEWER HOLDING TANK

The Edgewood subdivision is the only place in Buena Vista that is connected to a shared septic tank system. This arrangement has created ongoing challenges in ensuring that the households using the system are covering the full cost of its operation & maintenance.

The principle we are working toward is straightforward: the households using the sewer system need to be covering the cost of operating and maintaining that system. Just as our water utility needs to be supported by the users of the water systems, the same applies to sewer.

For many years, the cost of operating and maintaining the sewer system has been partially subsidized through the Village's general revenues. In other words, residents who are not connected to the system have been contributing toward its costs.

Council does not believe that is a sustainable or equitable long-term arrangement, and we are continuing to work toward correcting it.

Although some increases have already been made and we have moved closer to having the users cover the costs, we are still not there.

And the issue goes beyond pumping. In 2025, the Village collected approximately \$14,280 in sewer infrastructure fees, while the expenses to operate and maintain the sewer system were approximately \$17,211. That leaves a \$2,931 operating shortfall.

This means that the infrastructure fee is not even currently covering the cost of operating and maintaining the system, leaving nothing available to put toward reserves or future capital costs.

We already know that the lift station requires a new pump before the current old rebuilt one fails (which was our back up pump that needed to be put in when the other one failed last year). This is an estimated cost of \$15,000.

Looking further ahead, the holding tank itself will eventually require replacement, and may also be costs associated with updating or replacing portions of the sewer lines.

The problem is that we currently have no reserve built up for these capital costs.

So the question becomes: Where does that money come from when these expenses arise?

If the sewer system is not financially self-sustaining, the answer has historically been that the general Village has had to make up the difference. That is not a sustainable model.

And as the cost of sewer pumping, maintenance, repairs and equipment continues to increase, the financial pressure will only grow if we do not address it.

Council has some significant decisions to make regarding the future of this system.

One option that may need to be considered in the longer term is decommissioning the shared holding tank system and requiring individual properties to install their own septic systems.

That is not an immediate decision, and there are many factors that would need to be considered before going in that direction.

The more immediate issue, however, is that the sewer rates need to better reflect the actual cost of providing the service.

A further increase to the sewer rates is necessary. We recognize that increases are not ideal but the alternative is to continue having the general Village subsidize the system and that simply isn't financially

sustainable. Our goal is to create a sewer system that is fair, sustainable and properly funded by the people who use it.

Just as we are doing with water, we need to understand the true cost of providing the service, ensure the appropriate users are paying for it and begin planning for the future rather than waiting until a major repair or replacement becomes an emergency.

These aren't easy decisions, but they are necessary.