

UAJA SEWER BILLING PRACTICE NOT REASONABLE OR UNIFORM

My name is Tom Songer and it is a pleasure to be here to talk about the UAJA Sewer Billing Practice. My associates and I have asked the Centre Region COG to mandate within the proposed update to the ACT 537 Sewer Plan that UAJA must adopt a Rate Resolution that charges a uniform rate for sewer service to all UAJA customers based on water meter readings by no later than Jan. 1, 2019. We made a presentation to the COG General Forum on this issue on Sept. 25, 2017.

Most progressive sewer purveyors in Pa. and throughout the United States as well as in other countries bill their customers for sewer service based on water meter readings.

The Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Act states that water and sewer rates are to be "Reasonable and Uniform."

Billing for sewer service based on water meter readings encourages all customers to use less water which in turn generates less sewage which in turn makes both our water and sewer systems sustainable. This means that more people in the future can be served with the same pipes, pumps, storage tanks and treatment facilities while lowering our carbon footprint. In addition this is the fairest way to bill customers for sewer service.

Following are some examples of how UAJA charges Residential customers:

- a. UAJA defines and EDU as an equivalent dwelling unit which is a single-family home that is expected to generate 175gpd of sewage based on water meter readings.
- b. A single-family homeowner in a one-person household that uses 50 gallons of water per day pays the same as a household that uses 250 gallons of water per day or more. All residential customers pay for the water they use based on water meter readings but customers pay the same quarterly charge for sewer service no matter how much water they use.
- c. A 1, 2, 3 and 4 BR housing unit in an apartment building pays 1EDU of sewer service but there could be 1-8 people in these units depending on the number of bedrooms.
- d. An efficiency apartment with one person and no laundry facilities pays ½ an EDU per apartment unit. This unit may use less than 40 gallons of water per day. So, 4 efficiency apartments would generate approximately 160 gpd of sewage which isn't even 1 EDU. Based on water usage and the EDU system of billing a 100 unit efficiency apartment complex should be charged 25 EDUs but they are charged 50 EDUs. The extra 25 EDUs that is charged amounts to \$10,400/yr at the current rates.

Following are some examples of how UAJA charges customers for NONRESIDENTIAL USES:

- a. UAJA charges a bowling alley one EDU per six lanes. What is the relationship between 6 bowling lanes and 1 EDU of sewage?
- b. UAJA charges the owner of an office building one (1) EDU for every business that is in the office building that has 1-10 people employed. If there are 10 businesses with one (1) person each, the building owner pays for 10 EDUs. However, if there is one business with 10 people, the building owner only pays for one (1) EDU. That is a difference of nine (9) EDUs for the same number of people in the office building.
- c. UAJA charges one EDU for every 15 Seats in a restaurant without any regard to how long the restaurant is open; is it full service or paper service?
- d. A laundromat pays 1 EDU per 5 washers without any regard to how much water is used.

- e. A car wash pays 1 EDU of the first 2 bays and ½ EDU for each additional bay.
- f. I couldn't find any classification for convenience stores or movie theaters or fitness centers.
- g. Checkout the UAJA rate resolution for other classifications.
- h. The EDU system of billing used by UAJA has not changes substantially in almost 50 years. It is antiquated and outdated.

All new building construction in Pennsylvania is mandated to use water conservation plumbing fixtures. This has driven down water usage in new homes and nonresidential buildings.

Advancements in plumbing technology include low-flow toilets that use 1.28 gallons per flush, as compared to older toilets that use 5.0 gallons per flush; low-flow showerheads that use 1.5 gallons per minute compared to older showerheads that use more than 2.5 gallons per minute; Energy Star rated washing machines use less than 15 gallons of water per load as compared to washing machines that use 50 gallons of water per load. All the newer fixtures and appliances contribute to reducing our water consumption which is the right thing to do.

Billing for sewer service based on water meter readings is fair to all customers and financially incentivizes all customers to use less water. The State College Borough Sewer Authority has billed all of its customers for sewer service using water meter readings for more than 40 years. Water usage has decreased in the Borough of State College by more than 17% over the last 15 years. Penn State has reduced their water consumption by more than 25% over the last 25 years while building more than 8,000,000 sf of buildings and adding more than 10,000 students. We are willing to work with UAJA and the water purveyors of the area to educate all users on how they can conserve water. We should be looking for ways to make our water and sewer systems sustainable while lowering our carbon footprint.

Customers pay for the quantity of water, electric, natural gas or propane that they use. Why shouldn't customers of UAJA pay for the quantity of sewage they generate based on water meter readings? If customers use water for lawn watering, gardening, swimming pools, or production of a product, etc., these uses can be sub-metered so that the customer will not be charged for sewer service for these uses since this water does not go to the sewer.

In my opinion UAJA sewer rates should not have to be more than the current State College Borough Rates which is \$9.50/1000 gals of water used with a 3000gal. min. charge per quarter

In 1995 a rate study was done for the CHJA, PFJA and UAJA by Gary Shambaugh of AUS consultants. This study was commissioned prior to the retirement of Dave Allison who was the Exec. Dir. of all 3 authorities at the time. Gary recently told me that the authorities wanted to have the study done because they thought that someone might challenge them on the way they were being billed for sewer service. Gary has told me that he recommended volumetric billing at that time but he was not even given the opportunity to present his study to the boards of the three authorities. UAJA could have and should have implemented volumetric billing more than 20 years ago.

We have taken our concerns to UAJA many times over the last 13 years and have presented our concerns in writing. We have asked that a special committee be formed from the UAJA Board to work with us on the issue of volumetric billing but UAJA has not agreed to meet and has not responded to our concerns.

In summary, we are asking the Centre Region COG to mandate within the proposed update to the ACT 537 Sewer Plan that UAJA must adopt a Rate Resolution that charges a uniform rate for sewer service to all UAJA customers based on water meter readings by no later than Jan. 1, 2019. If you haven't done so please consider signing our online petition at UAJAPetition.com and call your township supervisor or council person and encourage them to support volumetric billing.

Isn't it time that all customers of the UAJA sewer system pay for what they use?

If anyone believes that the current EDU system of billing should be maintained then please tell me why.