

Code Modification Summary:

Overview

The City of Columbus Department of Public Utilities recently announced that they are recommending in the 2025 budget to raise Sanitary Sewer Rates by 6% and Water Rates by 7% for all of its customers. Also, the Low-income discount program eligibility will change from 20% to 25%, and be based upon 200% Federal Poverty Level, instead of 150%.

Over the next few years, it's projected that sanitary sewer increases will peak at 7% by 2030 and remain around a 7% annual increase beyond 2030, and water increases will peak around 15% by 2030. These rate increases are a result of many factors - increased prices of materials/chemicals, meeting EPA requirements, and an increase in debt repayment for capital projects. In the early 2000s, the EPA issued a Consent Decree to Columbus, along with many other communities around the Nation. Unlike many of the other communities, Columbus immediately went into action to address the EPA's orders, which allowed them to take gradual debt to make the required improvements. As a result, their rates are increasing gradually, whereas many other communities throughout the State and Nation now have significantly higher rates that include double-digit rate increases.

No rate increase for refuse service is being recommended. A rate increase for 2026 is anticipated.

To cover the City of Columbus rate increases (Water, Sanitary and CCO), refuse services, stormwater, operational expenses and to minimize future rate spikes for enhanced capital expenses (infrastructure projects), we are proposing a 4.5% overall rate increase.

This rate increase equates to a **\$4.97** increase per month based on average consumption (4,000 gallons per month). Even with this proposed increase, Gahanna's 2025 rates will remain competitive and will fall mid-range compared to our surrounding communities.

Recommendations for 2025, also include Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) rates, extra capacity water rate clarification and adjustments to the Water and Sewer Internal Review Board, and Backflow compliance language update.

Below is a summary of the related proposed code changes.

TITLE THREE – PUBLIC UTILITIES

Section 919.01 Organization

- Adjustment of Chairman designation

Section 919.03 Appeal Review Procedure

- Adjustment of Director title
- Clarification of notification days

Section 919.04 Limitations

- Adjustment of Director title
- Clarification of notification days

Section 921.04 Sewerage System Capacity Charge

- No changes

Section 921.05 Sewer Footage Fees

- No changes

Section 921.11 Sewer Rental Rates

- Sanitary Sewer Operational Rate: **\$10.28/1,000 gal** (was \$9.18/1,000 gal in 2024)
 - The City of Columbus continues to offer a pass-thru 20% low-income discount.
- Sanitary Sewer Capital Improvement Rate: **\$1.53/1,000 gal** (was \$1.53/1,000 gal in 2024)
- Columbus Consent Order (CCO): The City of Columbus is under a consent order with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to separate their combined storm and sanitary sewers. Because the satellite communities utilize Columbus' sewer system, we are all responsible to contribute to these projects. The revenue that we collect for this consent order is passed-thru to Columbus, and Gahanna does not keep any of this money. CCO Rate: **\$3.73/ERU/month** (was \$3.55/ERU/month in 2024)
- Clarification on billing schedule

Section 927.17 Classification of Property and ERU Assignment and Rate

- Sanitary Sewer Equivalent Residential Unit Rate: **\$5.14 per ERU** (was \$4.72 per ERU 2024)
- Sanitary Sewer Equivalent Residential Unit: **2,000 square feet per ERU** (was 3064 square feet per ERU 2024)
- Clarification on billing schedule

Section 927.21 Appeals Board

- Removal of appeals language
- Added reference to Chapter 919

Section 929.02 Permit Required; Multiple Use Connections Prohibited

- No changes

Section 929.03 Water Tap Charge

- No changes

Section 929.08 Meter Service Fee

- No changes

Section 929.12 Water Rates

- Water Operational Rate: **\$9.65/1,000 gal** (*was \$9.65/1,000 gal in 2024*)
 - The City of Columbus continues to offer a pass-thru (increase) 25% low-income discount.
- Water Capital Improvement Rate: **\$1.08/1,000 gal** (*was \$1.08/1,000 gal in 2024*)
- *Adding clarification to "supply cost"*
- *Water Rates beyond three (3) million gallons adjustment*
- *Clarification on billing schedule*

Section 929.14 System Capacity Charge

- No changes

Section 929.15 Private Fire Protection Service

- No Changes

Section 929.17 Special Charges

- No Changes

Section 933.06 Where Protection is Required

- Language adjustment for compliance

Section 941.15 Pickup and Disposal Fees

- No changes

Section 941.16 Payment Schedule

- Clarification on billing schedules
- Adjustment of Director title