



SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 995, SPRINGFIELD, MA 01101

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Springfield Water and Sewer Commission Issues Proposed FY 2026 Budget
Virtual Public Hearing Scheduled for Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 6 PM

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission) has issued its proposed FY26 budget and schedule of rates, fees and charges, and revisions to its Rules and Regulations. A virtual public hearing on the proposed changes is scheduled for Wednesday, June 4, 2025, at 6 PM.

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Renewal Program

The Commission is proposing the FY26 budget amid the implementation of its Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Renewal Program (WWIRP), which was launched in 2021 to revitalize the region's water and wastewater systems through 26 critical infrastructure upgrades. The cornerstone of this portfolio includes the new West Parish Water Treatment Plant, which will modernize the region's drinking water treatment technology and resolve regulatory compliance issues with disinfection byproducts. Construction of the plant is now underway, with completion scheduled for 2028. The total cost of engineering, permitting, materials, and construction of the new plant is \$363 million.

In recent years the Commission has delivered on other large infrastructure projects in the WWIRP, including the \$26.5 million Backwash Facility at the existing West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant, which will enable water treatment to continue while the new treatment plant is under construction, and the \$137 million York Street Pump Station and Connecticut River Crossing Project. This year water main upgrades are being made at Riverside Road, Birnie Avenue, and the X (in coordination with MassDOT).

The WWIRP is being financed primarily through federal and state loan programs. This includes a \$250 million low-interest loan from EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program, and low-interest loans from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRF), which is also funded in part through EPA. In recent years the Commission has obtained loan forgiveness through the Infrastructure



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Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law), which is administered through the SRF in the form of loan forgiveness upon project completion. It also obtained a \$4.6 million federal earmark in the FY24 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill for the new West Parish Water Treatment Plant, which will be reflected in future budgets once it is received.

Proposed New Rate Structure

In FY26, water and sewer rates are proposed to remain level (0% increase). A new monthly Infrastructure Renewal Charge (IRC) of \$11.50 is also proposed to be added to accounts with meters less than 1" in size (93% of accounts). Larger meter sizes will incur a larger monthly IRC. Including the IRC, the overall bill change on a typical household bill in FY26 will be 8.9%, or \$11.84 per month.

The new IRC is being introduced in order proactively stabilize rates and support more predictable household budgets amidst several driving trends. The first is the potential reduced availability of state and federal loan programs, which is resulting in ongoing infrastructure upgrades being financed on a different schedule than previously planned. The second is the steady downward trend in water consumption. Over the past decade, water consumption volumes have decreased 9% while sewer volumes are down 11%, and consumption also varies significantly based on precipitation patterns. Currently 89% of the Commission's revenues rely on this variable consumption, while 90% of its costs are fixed. The third is increased volatility in fixed costs such as health insurance, biosolids disposal, and project materials. The IRC will be tied to debt service obligations associated with infrastructure renewal, and is intended to reduce the potential for large, unpredictable spikes in rates.

"Every hour of every day, the Commission's treatment plants, infrastructure, and employees are proudly ready and available to serve our customers, regardless of how much water they use," said Executive Director Josh Schimmel. "In this period of high reinvestment in our community, the Commission is working to ensure not only reliability in water and sewer service but also stability in rates. The proposed FY26 budget reflects a necessary transition to more fixed revenue in order to support more predictable household water and sewer bills amid less predictable market conditions."

Customer Assistance Programs

The Commission offers several assistance programs to help customers manage their water and sewer bills. In FY26 the Commission is proposing to expand its customer assistance programs in the following ways:

- Increase senior, disabled, and disabled Veteran homeowner discount from \$9/month to \$10.50/month to help minimize the impact of the IRC on these customers' bills.



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- Expand eligibility for disabled Veterans from 80% to 10% disabled.
- Increase the low-income Customer Assistance Program maximum credit from \$250 to \$275 (up to a maximum 25% off of annual billing).
- Remove the one-time-only limit for a leak abatement of up to \$500, and expand eligibility to once every 5 years.

Public Hearing

Ratepayers, customers, and members of the public are invited to participate in the following public hearing via telephone or computer:

DATE/TIME: Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 6:00 P.M.

LOCATION: **Telephone:** 413-261-6430, Conference ID: 368 813 62#

Computer (live video conference): <https://tinyurl.com/yc6y9cej>

Relevant documents are available on the Commission's web page at <https://waterandsewer.org/updates/public-notices/> and the Commission encourages interested parties to submit questions and comments in advance of the hearing via info@waterandsewer.org.

About the Commission

Established in 1996, the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission is an independent, public regional utility. The Commission serves 250,000 customers in the lower Pioneer Valley with safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater service. The Commission provides retail drinking water service to Springfield and Ludlow; regional drinking water treatment to Agawam, Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, and Southwick; and emergency/peak service to Westfield, West Springfield, Chicopee, and Wilbraham. The Commission provides retail wastewater service to Springfield and regional wastewater treatment to West Springfield, Agawam, Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, Wilbraham, and Ludlow.

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