

## City utility fees escalate

Written by April Peregoy

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Residents of Holyoke can expect to see their utility bills go up in 2009, thanks to new resolutions establishing higher rate fees for electric, water and sewer usage.

Holyoke City Council held a public hearing for the resolution establishing electrical rates during its regular meeting Tuesday, Dec. 16. The resolution increases the rate fees by eight percent from 2008. Hearing no comments or objections, the resolution was approved.

Moving on to new business, the council then introduced two more resolutions, one setting new water rates, and the other, new rates for sewer system use.

Service charges for water rates will increase from \$5.75 per month to \$5.92 per month. In addition, usage rates will grow from \$.49 per 100 cubic feet to \$.50 per 100 cubic feet. Rates are still doubled for users outside the city limits.

Monthly flat rates for sewer system use will rise from \$15.97 to \$16.40 for each family dwelling inside the city limits. For those outside the limits, the flat rate will jump to \$32.90 from \$31.94.

Commercial rates are determined by basing average monthly water consumption, determined by meter readings from November-February each year. New commercial base rates per cubic feet are listed in their entirety elsewhere in this week's Enterprise.

To get an idea of how the increased utility rates will affect the average consumer's bill, councilman Kevin Scott offered a comparison of his 2008 monthly bills to what they will be in 2009, if his usage amounts remain the same.

For January 2008, Scott's utility fees were as follows:

Electric	\$114.48
Sewer	\$15.97
Water	\$9.42
Trash	\$12.89
Total	\$154.48

Calculated fees for January 2009 are expected to look like this:

Electric	\$123.63
Sewer	\$16.45
Water	\$11.42
Trash	\$14.44
Total	\$165.94

Over the course of the 2009 year, the projected total difference would be \$121.43 over the total amount paid in 2008.

Also on Tuesday night, the city council approved the first reading of Ordinance No. 9, which amends the way SourceGas will calculate its franchise fees for natural gas distribution from now on.

Recently, Colorado Public Utilities Commission authorized SourceGas to bill its customers on a therm basis, rather than a CCF basis. The new city ordinance simply changes the wording to accommodate SourceGas's changes.

As explained by SourceGas, a therm factor will be based on temperature, pressure and heat content of natural gas to convert the metered volume to a thermal equivalency. Previously, customers were billed on a CCF basis, with CCF being a unit of volume equal to 100 cubic feet.

Public hearings for the ordinance, as well as the two resolutions involving water and sewer rate changes, are scheduled for the Tuesday, Jan. 6 Holyoke City Council meeting.

Other business

In other business, city council members:

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- accepted a report from the Holyoke Volunteer Fire Pension Board.
- wrote off bad debts for 2008.
- donated \$1,250 in utilities to the Phillips County Historical Society for the Phillips County Museum.