

## **Budget Input from Garry Gitzen, 3-22-24**

The new 2024-2025 budget process is now being assembled for proposal to Wheeler citizens. With that in mind, *The Wheeler Voice* wants to bring up a couple of points about the water.

“*U.S. Municipal Water & Sewer: Annual Utility Rate Index, 2023*. Across 50 of the largest U.S. metropolitan areas, average monthly household water bills increased to US \$50.61. Two cities demonstrating the largest rate increases from 2022–2023 were El Paso, Texas and San Jose, California. El Paso residents recorded a 17% increase in their water.”

Wheeler’s water rate increased an unreasonable and absurd 108% . The Wheeler tap charge alone of \$58 is higher than the entire average U.S. water rates. Add Wheeler’s average water usage to the water bill, more than doubles the average U.S water bill. And we live in Oregon with 100 inches of rain a year not the Mojave desert.

Why is this happening when Wheeler owns the well on Foley Creek Road that Wheeler shares with Manzanita. The original agreement was to SHARE the water. Wheeler continues pays exactly half of the costs to run the water system with Manzanita. While Manzanita uses more than 110 million gallons a year, Wheeler uses only 21 million gallons.

Manzanita not only makes more than a \$1,000,000 a year of Wheeler well water, they pocket enough money from the 5,000 summertime State Park’s flush toilets and hot showers to buy cars and trucks.

The originally Manzanita agreement was to use the same shared amount with Wheeler. However, they have taken advantage of Wheeler’s lack of asking for what is owed.

The water plant alongside the Big Wave at the corner of Laneda and Hwy 101 was supposed to make up the rest of their water system by taping from Alder Creek, Anderson Creek and Necarney Creek.

None of those Manzanita creeks are being utilized. The Manzanita water plant is used as an office to park their car and truck for the Manzanita Publics Works for Wheeler water purchased.

Have you seen the large cleared lot across from Manzanita Fresh Foods for the new Manzanita City Hall; Wheeler water is purchasing.

*The Voice* believes Wheeler is entitled to SHARE more than \$1,000,000 Manzanita is collecting for 89,000,000 gallons of Wheeler water above the 21 million gallons Wheeler uses.

This money can be budgeted for the following areas include:

1. 50 % reduction of water tap charge and water usage rate. Wheeler needs to be aware of its aquifer without appearing thievish on the backs of its citizens.
2. Building a water holding tank on the north end of town before the water from the well enters the citizens homes. This would allow time to bleed off the chlorine which is

poison. The only reason you put chlorine in water is to *clean the pipes*. Manzanita water does the same thing now and they are planning a new one.

3. Replace or repair existing 35 year old water tanks
4. Repair the open water well above Wheeler.

**Wheeler continues** to collect the \$25.42 **for a Water Debt Service Charge, for a debt never issued**. The State Public Utilities Commission has advised *The Voice* to retain a lawyer to appear in Civil Court for the Wheeler Water Payers. The city may have to pay triple damages for such an illegal collection. We are aware the Revenue Dept opinion was ok to build a surplus but when The Voice presented the issue the money being collected for a debt instrument never issued, their opinion was they never heard of such a thing being collected for such a case.

### **Budget Input from Garry Gitzen, 3-27-24**

It is probably too late for the 2024-2025 budget but nevertheless:

Let Manzanita know we are terminating our agreement. Offer one or the other agreement.

1. We then tell them the original was to share and everything they draw monthly above Wheeler's usage, they owe us 1/2 of what they collect for the water they use above our monthly usage which is about 1,750,000. They are using about 9,166,000. Therefore they owe us about 14.50 per 1000 of  $9,166 / 2 = \$66,458$  month.

2. At the very least, the original usage was 4 to 1 which means 84,000,000 vs 21,000,000. Everything above the 84,000,000 they must pay us  $14.50 \text{ per } 1000 = 17,000 \times 14.50 = 246,500 / 12 \text{ months} = \$20,540$  month.

Tell them they were getting their water from other sources before our sharing arrangement. Tell them to restart their water filtering plant next to the Big Wave Restaurant. IT is dormant now. Wheeler is no longer going to finance Manzanita's water dept. cars and trucks, new water tanks and new city hall.

Lets not be fools any longer.

Offer one of two agreements otherwise we will claim the water piping from the well under *emanate domain* because they have taken advantage of our aquafer far too long.

### **Budget Input from Garry Gitzen, 4-6-24**

It may be too late to adjust the Budget process for 2024-2025 but I ran some numbers and this is my suggestion:

Wheeler's minimum water bill is \$89.50. Wheeler's median household income is \$45,227, individual income is 26,261. The water bill is **2.37 percent of Wheeler annual household income.**

Average monthly water bill for U.S. households is about \$70.39. The US median household income is \$74,580, individual income \$37,585. The water bill is **1.14 percent of US annual household income.**

Wheeler is paying more than 2 times the US average water bill. Household income for Wheeler vs U.S. is only 60% of U.S. household income. This equates to Wheeler's water bill being 40% higher than the average bill to  $\$89.50 \times 1.40 = \$125.30$  Wheeler's VS U.S water bill.

Wheeler % of annual income for water bill is 2.76 % vs U.S. 1.14% of annual income. Wheeler is paying 2.4 times the average U.S. water bill.

Clearly Wheeler's water bill is much too high and needs reduced by at least half. Actually that nearer the 2022-2023 budget of  $\$39.95 + (3.4 \times \$4.70 \text{ per } 1000 = \$16.45) = \$56.40$  monthly bill vs. proposed  $\$89.50/2 = \$44.75$  month.

At the 2022-2023 budget of \$56.40 average bill still makes Wheeler water bill 1.25 % of Wheeler's annual household income. Still 10% higher than U.S. monthly water bill.

Better yet, at \$44.75 the bill would .98% which is much closer to the U.S. 1.14 percent of annual household income. And when you factor in the 60% of Wheeler annual income vs US the bill the Wheeler bill becomes \$62.65 in real terms which is 1.82% of the annual U,S. income. 50% higher then than the U.S annual water bill in real terms.

I ANTICIPATE ALL THIS HAPPENING WHEN WE START TO GET PAID FOR OUR WHEELER WATER.

P.S. In case it hasn't been thought of already, and i hope it has, we need a monthly report from City of Nehalem as to the water running from the Manzanita pipe into their system.. They need a meter on their connection.