

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT APPROVED WATER & SEWER RATE INCREASES

When will the rates increase and by how much? When was the last rate increase? Water & Sewer rate increases went into effect on April 1, 2024 and will be used beginning with the second quarter bill. Quarterly bills for the average residential user will increase from \$212 to \$239 (a 12.6% increase). Water rates are \$8.88/1000 gallons (less than 1 cent/gallon) and sewer rates are \$159 per quarter. Water rates previously increased in 2022 when the Verona wells were taken out of service and the Township began purchasing water. Sewer rates last increased in 2019.

Why is Verona increasing the water rates now? The Township conducted a comprehensive Rate Study that determined that the Township's 2023 rates were not sufficient to maintain the financial and operational health of the Township Water & Sewer Fund over the next five years. Visit www.VeronaNJ.org/WaterRpt to view the detailed report. The new rates are based upon current conditions and future needs of the utilities. The rates will allow Verona to address existing issues and fund ongoing maintenance in a systematic and deliberate manner. Today's investments improve the future strength and stability of the utilities.

What was the process for approving these increases? The Township had a professional consultant conduct a Water and Sewer Rate Study. The findings were presented by the consultant at the February 5, 2024 meeting. The public was encouraged to attend and was offered an opportunity to comment after the presentation. The new rates were then introduced by the Mayor and Council on February 26, 2024. The new rates were advertised for a public hearing on March 11, 2024. Following public comment, the Council Members voted to pass an ordinance to amend the Township Water & Sewer rates. The full rate study is available at www.VeronaNJ.org/WaterRpt.

How do Verona's rates compare to neighboring towns? The Rate Study (www.VeronaNJ.org/WaterRpt) determined that Verona's 2023 combined water and sewer rates were lower than several surrounding townships. Given overall utility industry trends, it is highly likely that all surrounding towns will need to implement rate increases over the next several years. Therefore, it is likely that the average Verona customer bill will remain in the middle range of that same customer in surrounding towns.

What is the Township of Verona doing to control costs associated with Water & Sewer Services? The Township continues to smartly invest in our infrastructure with utility improvements that will bring greater efficiencies. For example, the drinking well rehabilitation projects will allow Verona to generate our own water rather than purchasing much more expensive water from wholesalers. The Linn Drive Well Rehabilitation has already received \$2M in grant money from the State of New Jersey, reducing our local burden. (Read more here: <https://www.veronanj.org/news/post/18835/>) The Township is busily planning a variety of projects which aim to strengthen the serviceability of the utilities and achieve greater efficiencies.

Is the water in Verona safe to use? Verona currently purchases all of our drinking water from Passaic Valley Water Commission (PVWC) and the test results from the 1st quarter of 2024 confirm that the water currently meets New Jersey's drinking water standard for PFOA and TTHM and satisfies all other state and federal water quality requirements. The Township conducts annual reviews of the water quality in Verona and those reports are available at www.VeronaNJ.org/WaterRpt. Over the years we have dedicated ourselves to producing drinking water that meets all state and federal standards. We continually strive to adopt new methods for delivering the best-quality drinking water. As new

challenges to drinking water safety emerge, we remain vigilant in meeting the goals of source water protection, water conservation, and community education while continuing to serve the needs of all our water users.

Where does the money I pay for Water & Sewer go? The revenue from Water & Sewer payments goes to the supply of high-quality drinking water, supplies and energy needed to treat and distribute water to customers, the personnel required to support our service to the community, and expenses related to maintaining our plant, equipment, and infrastructure.

What can I do to lower my bill? We always recommend conserving water to help the environment, but it is also a good way to lower your water bills. We suggest visiting <https://dep.nj.gov/conserves-water/> for water conservation tips. Also, be sure to check your home for leaks, especially toilets and outdoor faucets. Our Water & Sewer billing and maintenance staff will continue to work with residents and businesses to identify unusual usage that may indicate a leak on the property. You may also want to consider purchasing a rain barrel to collect water for use in your yard or garden.

Does the Township anticipate that there will be additional increases to my Water & Sewer charges in the future? The Township set rates for a 5-year period for both water and sewer with the largest increase taking place in 2024 as detailed above. For 2025-2028, the Council has authorized an average of a 4% increase to water rates and sewer rates in each year. (Specific rates can be found here: <https://www.veronanj.org/media/Council%20Docs/2024/ORDINANCES-PH-Adoption/O2408%20Water-Sewer%20Rates%20through%202028.pdf>). In addition, beginning in 2025, a PFAS surcharge will be applied to each account based on the size of the water meter, with most single-family homes charged \$18 per quarter. More information on this charge will be available at the beginning of 2025.