

The Main Stream

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a quarterly newsletter dedicated to enhancing water and wastewater services brought to you by the Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority

Thinking Spring at YCUA

Spring is upon us as new initiatives and planning are taking hold at YCUA. Design work for the Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion continues, and a number of construction projects are planned for 2001. There will also be a focus on our water system, as YCUA faces a water rate increase from the Detroit Water & Sewerage Department (DWSD), as well as maintaining its own water distribution system.

We received notification from DWSD that our water rate will increase this year due to extensive capital improvements in the system which purifies and transports water to us. This has prompted us to reevaluate our water distribution operation's capital programs to help minimize the impact of the rate increase for our customers. You can learn more about the reasons behind DWSD's rate increase in an article on the back of this issue of The Main Stream.

Within our own distribution system, the need for improvements is mounting. Our system is routinely stressed during periods of high usage. One way to correct this is to install a second connection into the DWSD system. Not only would this provide additional water flows for peak demands, it would provide security and reliability for the YCUA community in the event that our existing connection fails.

This second connection to the DWSD system had been planned to proceed during 2001. However, the project has been scaled back to decrease costs, and minimize the impact of the rate increase proposed by DWSD. Since complete reliability for our community's water supply is necessary to our livelihood, we hope to move forward with this project in the near future, and will keep you posted.

Sincerely,

Larry R. Thomas
Director



Did you know . . .

That the www.ycua.org website was launched nearly two years ago? It has undergone many improvements and updates since then, and we invite you to stop by if you haven't seen us lately. You will find information on YCUA's activities, history, policies, finances, personalities, announcements, applications for employment, photos, plus more.

Biosolids Plan



On February 27, 2001, the YCUA Board selected a biosolids management method for the Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion. The Board authorized Tetra Tech MPS to begin the design of facilities using "fluidized bed incineration"

to reduce solids. These improvements will upgrade the existing multi-hearth incineration process. This important decision was based on the results of the following unique approach:

1) A team of more than 20 people from both YCUA and WTUA joined forces to evaluate proposed biosolids disposal methods. YCUA had 16 team members, representing Maintenance, Operation, Laboratory, and Administration Departments.

2) The team developed a list of the 10 criteria that would make this project a success. They were cost, quality/reliability, expandability, ease of operation and maintenance, environmental benefits, efficient use of land, potential for odor, future regulatory requirements, employee and public health and safety, and long-term economic stability.

3) The team took four field trips to other biosolids disposal installations to inspect alternatives in person. The plants visited were Leamington, Ontario, for N-Viro.; Windsor, Ontario, for pelletization; Warren, Ohio, for lime pasteurization; and Cincinnati, Ohio, for fluidized bed incineration. (see above photo of the team visiting the Cincinnati site)

4) The team sought input from the YCUA employees responsible for operating and maintaining the system. Over 50 employees attended two informational/input meetings.

Based on this four-step, open process, the Team achieved consensus in support of upgrading the incinerator. The new fluidized bed incinerator will reduce regulated pollutants by 80% or more from the current system, will operate at lower temperatures, will perform more efficient combustion, and generate less carbon monoxide and particulates than the current method of incineration. Fluidized bed technology requires less fuel and does not have moving parts within the furnace, thereby lowering operation and maintenance costs. The construction cost of the new biosolids handling portion of the expansion (dewatering facility, incinerator upgrade, and other appurtenances) is expected to be \$45 million.

The YCUA Board is planning a public information session to discuss this project. Watch for such announcements on our website, www.ycua.org, and in local newspapers.





Detroit Water Rate Increase

Early this year, the Detroit Water & Sewerage Department (DWSD) proposed a water rate increase for YCUA of 12.5% beginning on July 1, 2001. YCUA purchases all the water distributed in our system from DWSD, and does not have control over these water rate increases. This raise in the rates is much higher than in recent years, and YCUA will not be able to absorb the costs without increasing its own rates.

Part of DWSD's increase was justified as operating and maintenance cost increases of 3-4%, while most will go toward financing several water system capital improvements. DWSD's capital improvement plan calls for \$240,000,000 in improvements and replacements to their water purification and transportation system during 2001. This will help keep their water system reliable and in compliance with current standards.

Larry Thomas, the Director of YCUA, has asked DWSD to spread out these improvements over a longer timeframe, which would allow the water rate to be increased gradually, rather than in one large hike. This would help ease the financial burden for those on fixed or low incomes. We promise to keep you notified of any proposed or confirmed rate increases.

Water Quality Awareness - Michigan Week

On May 19, for Water Quality Awareness Week and Michigan Week, YCUA is opening its facilities for tours. Here is the schedule of events:

10 am - 12 noon - YCUA will open its Historic Stone Tower located at the corner of Washtenaw and Cross Streets. There is quite a view from the top of the tower! Some water and sewer line maintenance equipment will also be on display.

12 noon - 2 pm - YCUA will conduct tours of its 29-million-gallon-a-day Wastewater Treatment Plant. The tour takes nearly an hour and shows exactly how the wastewater is treated from the time it enters the plant, until it returns to the environment.



We look forward to seeing you there!



Annual Report On-Line at www.YCUA.org

YCUA has just published its Annual Report for 2000. The report talks about YCUA's plans for the next year, the Wastewater Plant expansion, biosolids planning, capital improvements, finances, human resource initiatives, and history.

This annual report is formatted like a corporate stockholder report, and contains graphical information and vital statistics. The last "annual report" was produced by YCUA's predecessors in 1890! We have come a long way since that time, and are able to share our second Annual Report with you on-line at www.ycua.org.

For those of you interested in local history, the 1890 report published by the Ypsilanti Board of Water Commissioners is available for \$7.00 through YCUA. Copies will also be on file in Ypsilanti-area libraries.

YCUA Earns Safety Award

Recently, the Michigan Water Environment Association (MWEA) announced that YCUA was selected to receive the prestigious "George W. Burke" award for 2001. This is a national award given by the Water Environment Federation. The award will be presented to Thomas Kmet, Health & Safety Supervisor at YCUA, in June at the MWEA annual conference on Mackinaw Island.

The criteria for selection include having a well-developed Health & Safety Program with regular health and safety meetings. The American Federation of State and Municipal Employees and Teamster Union members actively participate in YCUA's meetings, making suggestions, reviewing accidents, and trying to improve overall safety conditions at YCUA. Training on safety procedures, use of safety equipment, working with local public safety agencies, and enforcing safety practices are the other criteria for the award.

By focusing on safety, YCUA is able to reduce injuries and overall operating costs. We are proud of Tom Kmet, our employees, and our safety program. Congratulations on earning this award!

Questions? Comments? Concerns? Kudos?

ALL WELCOME! - Contact YCUA at 734.484.4600 or www.ycua.org

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