

## 2022 Village of Genoa Water Rate Increase

Generally speaking, the utility rates of Genoa residents and/or customers are a mixed bag.

We have one of the lowest, if not the lowest, **sewer rates** in the area, even when we account for the millions of dollars of sewer work taking place between 2020-2023. Our **electric rates** are actually below the market average for NW Ohio, per our annual meeting with American Municipal Power representatives this spring. This was welcome news to me, as I had been under the impression that our electric rates are actually higher than average. Our **garbage rates** are a fraction of the cost of unincorporated areas, and are very competitive compared to other municipal rates.

Our **water rates**, on the other hand, are a sore subject for all. For various reasons, our water rates are among the highest in the area. One of these reasons is that the Village of Genoa sources its water from Oregon and Village customers pay a 50% surcharge on top of Oregon residents' rate, which has been in the contract since its origin in the 1970s. Recently, Oregon upgraded its water treatment facility, adding infrastructure cost increases to customers.

In 2019, the Village outsourced its billing processes to Munibilling. To be upfront, we have reason to believe Munibilling software issues have led to a systematic underbilling of customers. This is one of the reasons for the emergency levy which increased water rates by 35%. This may also mean that an individual customer isn't actually paying more than they were in 2019. Council has ordered our engineering consultants, CT Consultants, to conduct a rate study and identify the problem. I am optimistic that this rate increase is temporary and will be reduced by some amount, hopefully in 2023.

The Village Council also intends to consider hiring a different billing firm. I was not involved with the Munibilling contract (2019 was before my time), but I will be involved in this contract and I intend to see to it that the Village be allowed to place communications in our utility billing just as we did before our Munibilling contract. This has been a personal frustration of mine.

Additionally, and as a sign of how serious the Village takes our water rate dilemma, we intend to conduct a feasibility study of running a water line to Elmore to join Ottawa County Regional Water someday in the future. Ottawa County and Elmore are extending a water line from Materion to Elmore in the next year or two, and we will be analyzing our hypothetical construction costs and investigating potential savings for our customers. This project would be years down the road but it is worth it to investigate now.

Please know that we take these cost increases personally and are doing everything we can to reduce and even reverse these increases.

Thomas Bergman  
Mayor, Village of Genoa