

Franklin Township to see Sewer Rate Increase

By Bob Niedbala, Staff writer niedbala@observer-reporter.com

WAYNESBURG — Customers of the Franklin Township Sewer Authority will see an increase in their monthly sewer bill under a budget approved Monday by the Franklin Township supervisors.

The supervisors approved an authority budget that calls for increasing the monthly rate, which is based on water consumption, from \$4.90 to \$6 for each 1,000 gallons consumed.

The \$1.10 rate increase, which equates to a jump of 22.5 percent, may seem high, authority manager George Scott said, but the authority has not had a rate increase in its 30-year history and, in fact, twice reduced rates.

Scott noted customers in the Bonar and West Waynesburg additions did see increases when those systems became part of the authority and their rates were adjusted to be uniform with authority rates.

The authority's fiscal year runs from Oct. 1, 2010, to Sept. 30, 2011. The rate increase will take effect Oct. 1 but will not be reflected in customers' bills until mid-November.

Scott said the rate increase is needed to cover the authority's increased costs, to update existing facilities and pay for an expansion of the treatment plant.

The authority's costs, electricity for example, have increased during the years and existing authority facilities now need to be updated, Scott said. The roofs on authority buildings and sewage pumps are at a point they need to be replaced, he said.

The authority's plant also is reaching its treatment capacity and the authority is planning an expansion, he said. The authority plans to increase plant capacity from 1.25 million to 2 million gallons a day.

The authority is now in a pilot program with the state to test a new treatment system being considered for the expansion. Work on any expansion would not start until at least 2012, Scott said.

Scott said the authority board, which already has approved the budget, was concerned about the impact of the rate increase on elderly customers. However, most elderly customers use only about 1,000 gallons of water a month, which would mean an increase in their monthly sewer bill of \$1.10.

The rate jump also will allow the authority to increase the rate it charges the state Correctional Institution at Greene. The state gave the authority about \$5.5 million in 1993 to expand the system to serve the prison under an agreement that required rates be set at \$2.75 for each 1,000 gallons consumed.

The agreement allows the authority to raise the rates to the prison but only at the same percentage included in any system-wide rate increase, Scott said.

The authority budget also includes an increase in the rate for well water users from \$19 a month to \$23 a month.

The authority at one time charged customers \$10 for the first 1,000 gallons consumed and \$5 for each 1,000 gallons consumed thereafter, Scott said. Two rate reductions, made possible partly by growth in the system, brought that to the current \$4.90 for each 1,000 gallons consumed.

In other business, the supervisors granted conditional approval to plans by Rohanna Iron and Metal to construct a 3,000 square foot building at the corner of Route 21 and Curry Road. The building will be used for storage and include a small space for offices.

Before receiving a building permit, the developer must, among other things, receive approval of an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan and a stormwater management plan.

The supervisors also reminded residents the township will hold its annual fall cleanup day Saturday, Oct. 16.

The cleanup will be held from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the municipal building parking lot. The township will have dumpsters at the site to accept residents' unwanted household items.

Certain items cannot be accepted at the cleanup. They include tires, microwaves and oil. Air-conditioning units and refrigerators must be tagged with the Freon removed, and no combustible liquids such as paint can be accepted. Batteries will be accepted.