



Waterlines

FEBRUARY 2021
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF MEDFORD WATER COMMISSION

2020

WAS ROUGH.

Need a helping hand in 2021?

The events of 2020 left many people struggling to make ends meet. To ensure that everyone has access to resources they need to stay healthy, we temporarily suspended water service disconnections for non-payment as well as late fees in March of 2020.

We also provide annual grants to several agencies for water bill payment assistance to qualifying families. If you are having difficulty paying your water bill, give any one of these agencies a call; they may be able to help you.

- **ACCESS, (541) 779-6691**
- **St. Vincent de Paul, (541) 772-3828**
- **The Salvation Army, (541) 772-8149**

Applicant screening and disbursement of funds are handled by each agency. Call us for more information and payment options: (541) 774-2430.

We're here for you:

Our office is currently closed to the public due to COVID-19 precautions and to protect the health and safety of our essential employees, but we're still here to help! Contact us:

(541) 774-2430
customerservice@medfordwater.org

medfordwater.org

8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday - Friday

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NEW COORDINATOR TO ENHANCE RESOURCE PLANNING AND CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Medford Water Commission's new Water Resources Coordinator Julie Smitherman has taken on a wide variety of water management-oriented tasks since she started in January, with an emphasis on water demand forecasting, long-term water supply planning, water conservation, and water rights management.



Julie Smitherman, CLIA

Smitherman steps in following Conservation Coordinator David Searcy's retirement, and actually worked for the Commission many

years ago before moving on to City of Ashland and spearheading their conservation program.

"I am very excited to join the Medford Water Commission team and I look forward to working with our community and Partner Cities to preserve and protect our valuable water resources," said Smitherman.

We welcome her back and thank David for his many years of service; their passion for conservation is a great asset to our organization.

TALKING CENTS: WHAT'S A PENNY WORTH?

Water may be one of the few remaining commodities you can buy and still get value for just a penny's worth.

Following creation of the Medford Water Commission in 1922, Medford citizens voted to approve the sale of \$975,000 in bonds to finance development of our primary water source, Big Butte Springs, in 1925. With a population of only around 10,000 residents, this debt was a tremendous commitment.

The drinking water we now enjoy is a tribute to those former Medford residents who ensured that our community would continue to have a reliable and high-quality water supply at an excellent value.

We carry on this tradition by conducting annual studies to determine the revenue necessary to prudently fund replacement of aging

infrastructure, construction of resilient facilities, and improvements in the facilities that store, treat and transport water to our 140,000 customers.

Our recent study has shown that rate changes are required to meet these revenue needs. While this is not ideal, our strategy is to spread any increases out over time to reduce the impact on our customers.

Modifications to rates for all customer groups served by the Commission take effect March 1, and average 6.4% for single-family residential customers in Medford with a 3/4" meter, or approximately \$2.08 per billing.

A penny may not have as much buying power as it did in 1922, but it's still a great deal. Even after the rate modifications, you can still get 12 gallons of clean, high-quality drinking water delivered straight to your tap for just one penny!

We challenge you to purchase 12 gallons of any other liquid *plus* delivery to you for that price!



COMMISSION SELECTED BY EPA TO APPLY FOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

In January, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that they have selected Medford Water Commission as one of 55 prospective projects from entities across the country to submit formal applications for Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loans.

WIFIA is a federal program that provides low-cost supplemental loans to accelerate investment in the nation's water infrastructure. The 55 projects that are being invited to apply will result in over \$12 billion in clean water and drinking water infrastructure improvements in communities across the United States.

Our project is one of only three selected in Oregon, and the largest of the three, at \$113 million. It includes expansion of the Robert A. Duff Water Treatment Plant to treat 65 million gallons of water per day, conveyance improvements to deliver that water into our system, the Water Quality

Improvement Project (pH adjustment at the water treatment plant and Big Butte Springs), a new reduced pressure reservoir, and rebuilding existing storage, all of which will improve the risk and resiliency of our system.

This does not mean that we have been selected to receive funding at this time, but that we have been selected to move into the next round of eligibility and invited to formally apply.

As the Rogue Valley's trusted municipal water provider, receiving this funding would help support our entire region, benefitting not just Medford, but our Partner Cities of Ashland, Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, and Talent, and the two Water Districts we serve.

This is a great opportunity for our utility and is part of a larger financial strategy to fund long-term projects that will allow us to serve our customers for the next 100 years.



FAMILIAR FACE RETURNS TO BOARD

With the end of Commissioner Greg Jones' term in January, a familiar face has returned to the Board of Water Commissioners: former Commissioner Bob Strosser.

Strosser was elected to the Jackson County Board of Commissioners in November of 2016, and stepped down from our board at the end of January 2018 to fully transition to the new role.

Prior to his three years on our board, he also served on Medford City Council for sixteen years (and as the Council's liaison to the Board of Water Commissioners during this time), the City's Budget Committee, in addition to numerous local, state, and regional committees.

His wide range of public service and volunteer experience will provide valuable insight as we enter our second century of operation.

We are grateful to Greg for the guidance he has provided during his time on the Board, and wish him well as he returns to retirement.

PROTECTING WATER QUALITY AFTER WILDFIRE

The wildfires of September 2020 not only decimated homes and impacted the lives of thousands in the communities we serve, but they also bring many risks to water quality.

To safeguard drinking water and protect public health after the fires,

we are mitigating these risks through increased monitoring and restoration efforts. Working with our many local and regional partners helps us to ensure our customers receive high quality water all the way to their tap.

Find out more about our source water monitoring plan, watershed restoration, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), as well as VOC testing results by going to our website and clicking on the "After the Fire" banner, or scanning the QR code to the left.



Find out more on our website or by scanning this QR code!

Medford Water Commission

Established in 1922 by the City of Medford and governed by the Board of Water Commissioners.

Commissioners

Daniel Bunn • John Dailey • Jason Anderson

Michael Smith • Bob Strosser

General Manager

Brad Taylor

Serving Medford and Partner Cities:

Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Talent and Ashland*

Also serving:

White City area and the Elk City and Charlotte Ann Water Districts

*Emergency intertie only

