

TheTribune

Evans works for wastewater plant consolidation

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EVANS — Evans residents should prepare for rising wastewater rates starting this summer.

Starting in July, residential rates will increase by about \$4 every six months until 2019 to help revamp the city's aging and damaged sewer treatment systems.

The Evans City Council on Tuesday approved the increases, which will rise to \$25.48 a month in July from \$21.23 rates now.

The rate will reach \$41.35 per month by 2019. Commercial rates would increase incrementally, as well, proportionate to the residential rate increase.

Though the increase is a hefty sum, Mayor John Morris said it's the best option for the city after the 2013 floods damaged the city's wastewater treatment facility.

For eight days in 2013, 12,000 Evans residents went without sewage services because of flood damage to the Evans Wastewater Treatment Facility.

The flood only highlighted the issues of the facility, which was built in the early 1960s. Though the facility was repaired, it still sits in the 100-year flood plain, and flooded. West of the facility, the Hill-N-Park facility, sits outside the flood plain. Still, both the Evans facility and the Hill-N-Park facility are treating the city's sewage at capacity.

To address these problems, the city will consolidate the two facilities at the Hill-N-Park site. The new facility will increase Evans' wastewater treatment capacity for more than 10,000 families. But a revamped plant comes at no small cost.

Overall, the plant is budgeted at more than \$43 million. It is the largest infrastructure project the city ever has taken on. Grants will pay for the design and partially pay for project and construction management. At Tuesday's council meeting, Deputy City Manager Jessica

Gonifas detailed a loan the city will get from the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority to pay for the rest.

The loan is set for about \$41 million. Mayor Pro-Tem Jay Schaffer said the new plant and the loan are more than just the best option.

“There doesn’t seem to be any solution to the problem other than expanding the plant where it is right now,” Schaffer said.

Starting this year, the city would only pay interest on the loan. When the plant is set to go online in 2019, the city will make payments of about \$2.6 million annually until 2038.

The council approved the loan on first reading, but the loan won’t be finalized until the next meeting April 19. The loan will be paid entirely by the wastewater rates.

Morris said if the city doesn’t do something soon, rates could skyrocket beyond the rates being proposed to pay off the loan.