

# The Drain Report

## We Are Truly Blessed! By: Ken Kase

We may fail to realize it sometimes, but I recommend you take a moment and think about how fortunate we are. We take for granted that when we turn on the faucet clean, safe drinking water flows out of the tap. It is there day and night, all year long. After we use the water to clean our dishes, clothes, or rinse our toilet out, the water just magically disappears. We usually don't even give it a second thought. It is our expectation that this is the way it will always be. The cost of this water privilege comes at a relatively low price.



Not everyone in the rest of the world enjoys this tremendous advantage of having an ample supply of safe water and sanitation facilities. According to the website <http://www.unwater.org/water-cooperation-2013/water-cooperation/facts-and-figures/en/> 783 million people do not have access to clean water and almost 2.5 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation. 6 to 8 million people die annually from the consequences of disasters and water-related diseases. Another way to think about these numbers can be found at the website <http://water.org/water-crisis/water-sanitation-facts/>. 1 in 10 people lack access to safe water. Twice the population of the United States live without access to safe water. 1/3 of the global population live without access to a toilet. More people on this planet have a mobile phone than a toilet. If you had to choose between having sanitation facilities or having a mobile phone what would you choose?



How did we end up being so fortunate? One of the reasons is that our predecessors, the generations before us, built much of the infrastructure that is still in place today. It provides us with untold and often unappreciated benefits. Of course the infrastructure gets repaired, upgraded and replaced as required. This infrastructure is getting older and we all need to keep in mind that we need to take care of the systems that take care of us! A great society needs to have great infrastructure to support it.

### For some people this is their Source of drinking water.

One example of important infrastructure that is showing signs of problems is our transportation system, specifically our roads and highways. If you travel this region you will notice that our roads reach their capacity about twice a day (rush hour, which lasts about 3 to 4 hours) 5 or more days a week. How would you feel if your sewer system backed up twice a day and could not convey the sewage safely away from your home to be cleaned up at a treatment plant? I anticipate that your answer is you would be upset.

If we want our sewer system to serve us well, we need to take care of it. The sewer system operators need to fix, maintain and improve the system. The users of the sewer system need to avoid abusing the system. By abuse I mean using the sewer system as a garbage dump. Putting trash, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, grease, wipes, storm water or ground water into the sanitary sewer system are all forms of abuse to the sewer. We will do our part to operate and maintain the system that serves our customers. Please do your part and use the sewer system properly. If we all do our part we can continue to enjoy the blessings that come with properly working sanitation facilities.

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### Special points of interest:

- Midway Sewer District has one of the lowest monthly rates in the state.
- The Board meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. Please contact the office for the meeting time.
- Midway serves the Cities of Des Moines, SeaTac, Kent, Federal Way, Normandy Park, Burien, and the Port of Seattle's SeaTac Airport.
- We have been part of this community since 1946.
- You can expect fast personal service when you need it.
- Our employees care about their customers.
- We have a single focus of providing quality sanitary sewer service.

# UNBALANCED GOVERNMENT BUDGETS CAN BE EXPENSIVE TO UTILITY CUSTOMERS!

By: Jim Bailey



It seems to be a recurring problem. A City or County government has trouble balancing its budget. Often their hands are tied by laws restricting the source of revenue or new sources of revenue. They are then forced to make some choices. They can either make some tough cuts to their expense side of the budget or they can find new sources of revenue.

Most recently, King County needed more money for their budget. They quickly passed Ordinance 2016-0521. This ordinance provides for the establishment of fees, fines and most creatively "rent" for the use of King County public right-of-ways by utilities. The County currently has 6.9 million linear feet of ROW. This equates to roughly 460 million square feet of space or 10,500 acres. They plan on using the land value of right-of-way within the utility's service area and the approximate amount of area within the right-of-way that will be needed to accommodate the utility's use, among other factors. The County has estimated the amount of revenue they expect to generate in 2018.

Utility	2018 Est
Electricity	5,070,000
Gas	1,570,000
Water	1,570,000
<u>Sewer</u>	<u>1,570,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,780,000</b>

Type	#of Customer	Est. Revenue	Per Year	Per Month
Electric	1,900,000	\$5,070,000	\$2.67	\$0.22
Gas	800,000	\$1,570,000	\$1.96	\$0.16
<b>Water/Sewer</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>\$3,140,000</b>	<b>\$34.89</b>	<b>\$2.90</b>
Total Costs			\$39.52	\$3.29

The County has estimated the revenue they expect to generate from each type of utility in 2018. The burden of this right of way "rent" appears to be somewhat unbalanced. The highest per customer "rent" will be paid by water and sewer customers.

Luckily for Midway Sewer District customers, this district does not have any facilities within any King County public right-of-way. This new King County Ordinance will not affect Midway Sewer District customer billings. Midway is entirely within the cities of Des Moines, SeaTac, Normandy Park, Kent, Burien, and Federal Way.

It's a disturbing trend by governments to balance their budgets by imposing new fees and other expenses on utilities. It's likely to continue and I don't expect it to stop with King County's most recent attempt. It is even more unnerving to see that they put the biggest burden on sewer and water utilities. These are often smaller utilities that have a more difficult time defending themselves against these larger government entities. The new added cost of a utility operating in the public right of way gets passed on to their customers in the form of more costly rates. I suspect this King County Ordinance will be challenged in court. In the end I would speculate that only the attorneys will win.

## ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE OUR NEWEST STAFF ADDITIONS

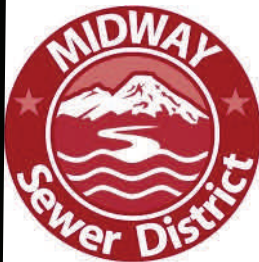
By: Ken Kase

It has been a while since I last introduced any new staff members. Richie has been here for about 1.33 years, Tyler about 1.25 years, Leebue about .34 years, and Julien just started last December. We have undergone a major staff change over the last couple of years, primarily due to retirements. These new guys are the future of the District.



From Left to Right: Richie Chapple, Tyler Thomas, Julien Tate, and Leebue Madesil

## Board of Commissioners



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