
Northampton city council to set water and sewer rates



The Northampton City Council will set water and sewer rates from now on. (Fred Contrada)



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NORTHAMPTON - For the first time in recent memory, the **City Council** will set the water and sewer rates for the coming fiscal year. As in the past, however, it will take its cue from the people in Public Works.

The Board of Public Works had set the rates in recent years, but Mayor David J. Narkewicz dissolved the board last year and recreated it as the Public Works Committee, an advisory board with no authority to approve contracts or set rates. Some taxpayers were upset that the erstwhile board, none of whom were elected by the public, established a stormwater fee similar to those for water and sewer and devised a formula to calculate the cost for individual properties.

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The board was made up in great part by people with professional experience in various aspects of public works related to its charge. The new committee likewise has a lot of expertise. It will hold a public hearing on April 9 at 5 p.m. in the hearing room at City Hall to solicit input from property owners on the water and sewer rates.

After taking the information in, the Public Works Committee will recommend a rate to the City Council, which has the option of accepting or adjusting it. Narkewicz, who must come up with a fiscal 2016 budget soon, has already recommended a water rate of \$5.74 per 100 cubic feet and a sewer rate of \$6.27 per 100 cubic feet. The mayor is scheduled to be at next Thursday's meeting and could take what he hears into account in his recommendation. The council, which has the final say, could also adjust the rates. Councilors Paul Spector, Jesse Adams and Alisa Klein will be at the Public Works Committee hearing.

Narkewicz' reordering of city government was required by the new city charter, which voters approved by ballot in 2013. The mayor usually releases his budget about a month before the end of the current fiscal year, which is June 30. The council must approve it by that date.

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