

Councillor Blog



Welcome back for the third edition of the White City Councillor Blog. This month will focus on Municipal Water.

Municipalities across Canada are facing mounting financial pressures between customer expectations and water system revenues to fully recover costs – White City is no different. We've had two independent utility rate reviews and renegotiated the town's contract with SaskWater, resulting in a plan to have future water and sewer budgets that operate on a full cost-recovery, user-pay basis. That means that all the money collected for water and sewer is used to pay for the services provided and the water and wastewater systems that bring water to homes and take wastewater away – there is no support from municipal taxes and no money collected by the utility are used to deliver other town services.

Following the new rates set for 2021, White City is on the way to a financially sound and stable utility service that doesn't require subsidization from municipal taxes and is prepared for future infrastructure expansion and renewal to ensure safe drinking water for all our residents.

As residents of White City, council pays the same utility rates and receives the same treated water, we understand the desire for affordable utility rates and high-quality treated water, but it is our responsibility as your elected officials to make sure those services are sustainable, and we are being financially responsible. These past few months council has really dug into what the town can do to improve the quality of water in our community as we've heard, and experienced, the issues with 'hard' water and quality issues. Working with our partners at SaskWater we continue to investigate options to remove hardness in the town's treated water that won't result in any rate increases.

The town's water supply comes from three wells located in the Zehner aquifer Northwest of White City. Well water is traditionally much 'harder' than surface water from lakes or rivers as it flows between different materials and minerals which contribute to the 'hardness' of the water. Some of the options we've looked at to address water 'hardness' include a reverse osmosis treatment system, finding a source of water with less minerals or blending the water from wells located in the aquifer. In addition to the cost of options to reduce water 'hardness', we need to take into consideration environmental impacts. Water is a valuable commodity across the world, and we need to be environmentally responsible when looking at options to provide our residents with access to safe drinking water.

To avoid any significant rate increases council is committed to moving forward with the most cost-effective solution to treat and improve the water quality to residents in a financially and environmentally responsible way. The town is making plans to move forward with upgrading and blending the untreated water supply while continuing to monitor the water quality and 'hardness' of the water and identifying new opportunities with SaskWater to improve water quality in our community.

Reverse Osmosis System

While installation of a reverse osmosis system would help reduce the 'hardness' of the town's water it would also require over \$9.0 million to renovate the town's water treatment plant to a reverse osmosis system – this would result in a significant spike in utility rates to pay for the upgrades to the water treatment plant and a higher ongoing cost to operate the plant. Additionally, we would need to construct additional wastewater capacity which would also increase the sewer rates for residents.

Locate Another Source of Water

Similar to the Reverse Osmosis option this would require a significant amount of money to renovate the equipment in the water treatment plant and construction and maintenance of a water pipeline to the source of surface water. Surface water and ground water require different treatment processes to address different concerns to ensure safe drinking water. This would result in significant costs to renovate the water treatment plant and a significant spike in utility rates to pay for the upgrades.

Blend Water from Zehner Aquifer

The town, in partnership with SaskWater, has been investigating the untreated water supply from the Zehner aquifer. The untreated water supply pipeline will have to be expanded in the next one- to two-years to meet the water demand in White City. As part of this project the water from the town's three wells would be blended resulting in reducing the average 'hardness' of the water and providing a more consistent product for residents.

As technology improves, we are also starting to learn about new point-of-use technologies that residents may install to reduce water 'hardness' directly at their homes. Traditional water softeners, ion exchange systems, citrus filtration systems and other options for residents to install directly in their homes that may reduce water 'hardness'.

To get more information on water, visit whitecity.ca for rate information and frequently asked questions and monthly water reports from SaskWater.

If you have any questions, have a comment, want more information or want to suggest a topic for a future blog please email townoffice@whitecity.ca or call 306-781-2355 – we look forward to hearing from you!

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