

PassaicValleyToday

PVSC 2013 budget 'welcome news' for Passaic Valley towns

MONDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2013, 9:19 AM

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The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission announced that its \$159 million budget for this year reflects stable user fees for their 48 member communities, which include those in the Passaic Valley.

Totowa paid \$1,397,189 to the agency in 2012, which is up \$215,176 from \$1,182,013 in the prior year. That borough absorbs sewer fees for those who use less than \$400,000 in gallons of water per year, Mayor John Coiro said.

"It's included in our expenditures each year," he said of the sewer fees. "So if they're not going to increase, our feeling is that's welcome news." That will help to lower the municipal tax rate, he said.

Woodland Park does not charge its residents sewer fees and paid \$818,543 to the PVSC in 2012, which is up \$16,183 from \$802,360 the prior year. That town's borough administrator spoke well of prospect of sewer charges remaining the same this year as last year.

"Anytime you hold charges flat, it's good news for the taxpayer," he said. "It would be nice if they were reduced, but you have to be realistic."

Little Falls paid \$862,930 to the PVSC in 2012 which is down \$5,030 from \$867,960 in the prior year.

Mayor Darlene Post said in an email that the township incorporates sewer fees into the taxes that residents pay. The township does charge Montclair State University sewer fees as the university does not pay taxes, she said. Little Falls also charges residents in

Cedar Grove and North Caldwell, fees for homes that are tied into their sewer system, she said.

Post would not answer further questions, did not return calls last week and had instructed the township administrator not to speak to the media.

Although user fees are not increasing, municipalities bills may differ between this year and last year, because they are charged by the amount of sewage they discharge.

"Some municipalities that had increased flow will actually see an increase in their bill and those municipalities that had decreased flow will see a reduction," said Hollie Gilroy, spokeswoman for the PVSC, in an email.

In 2012, the PSVC budget increased .89 percent because of an increased debt service from loans issued in 2010 to finance capital improvements to the facility, Michael DeFrancisci, the agency's executive director, said in a statement.

Gilroy said the improvements include electrical upgrades to the sewage and wet weather pump stations and plant wide boiler upgrades.

They are also making planned improvements that include security system upgrades, HVAC system replacements, roof replacements, concrete repairs, and sludge storage conveyor system repairs, she said.

In addition, the facility must replace a fleet of vehicles that were submerged due to flooding from Hurricane Sandy. They are applying to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to recoup some of the money.

"Hurricane Sandy caused approximately \$250 million in damages and we are working with representatives of FEMA to document and request reimbursements," she said.

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