



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MSD SEWER RATE

Cincinnati, OH – What price should be placed on protecting public health? That is the difficult question faced each year by the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD) as operating and capital improvement budgets are prepared.

“Impact to our ratepayers is a critical consideration as we weigh the cost of providing an essential service with the affordability for our community,” said MSD Executive Director Tony Parrott. “We are constantly evaluating ways to continue protecting the health of our friends and family in a cost-efficient manner.”

MSD’s efficiencies and innovative approaches are working - the MSD proposed budget for 2015 is less than its actual expenditures in 2011. In fact, MSD is recognized in the forefront of best practices for the rest of the nation with regard to the issue of affordability in large part because of its use of an integrated planning model approach. MSD will present its proposed budget and recommended 5.5% revenue increase during a hearing on Wednesday, December 3rd to the Board of County of Commissioners.

But MSD emphasizes that budget reductions must be deliberate in order to protect against reductions in levels of service and more costly emergency repairs from deferred maintenance. MSD provides critical services that support the communities served through wastewater collection and treatment, focusing on protecting the public health while effectively functioning in a highly technical and regulated environment.

“While we are proud of the strides we’ve made,” said Parrott, “it is critical to recognize that continued budget cuts can impact our ability to meet state and federal regulations for water quality protection as well as providing customer service.”

The sinkhole that opened up in July on Shields Street is a vivid illustration. The sinkhole resulted when a sewer line that was constructed in 1913 collapsed. The impact of the repair went well beyond the cost to make the repair. The street closure and noisy equipment directly affected nearby residents and businesses for more than 2 months. Operating and maintaining a wastewater system that in many areas is more than a century old requires continual investment to prevent critical failures, and in 2014 MSD budgeted more than \$14 million to address emergency situations. Dedicating resources to react to sewer line breaks, sewer spills, and sewer

backups in basements all lead to higher costs to operate the system. The burden for these higher costs falls to ratepayers.

Operating the system with a “band-aid approach” is not sustainable according to Parrott. MSD is currently obligated under a federal Consent Decree to invest more than \$300 million in 2015 to prevent combined sewer overflows and other water quality issues. Federal and state operating permits require water quality standards that must be met to avoid penalties. Daily operations require safe working conditions for staff, reliable customer service for ratepayers, and a full range of technical expertise such as laboratory personnel necessary to protect the community’s public health.

“MSD and its staff will not waver in our commitment to operate efficiently and effectively,” said Parrott. “We believe the County Commissioners share our desire to protect public health and operate at the highest level possible to serve our community.”

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