

West Des Moines Water Works New Building Finishes 25% Under Budget; Allows for Additional Campus Improvements

In slightly more than a year, West Des Moines Water Works vacated and sold its former offices in City Hall, demolished an existing building, constructed a new building for its administrative and customer service offices and saved enough money to perform some much-needed upgrades to the A.C. Ward Municipal Plant offices and facility.

WDMWW staff will move into the new building, next door to A.C. Ward, in January 2020. Board meetings will be held in the new administration building until spring 2020 when they will return to A.C. Ward.

The estimated budget for the new building totaled \$3 million. Thanks

to value engineering and effective cost management, the project came in at \$2.4 million, allowing for some much-needed repairs, maintenance and updating to the plant.



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2020 Rates Reflect Increased Cost of Purchased Water

West Des Moines Water Works residential customers will pay 33 cents more per 1,000 gallons of water they use in 2020 for non-irrigation purposes. This 6.5 percent increase along with a basic service charge of \$4.34 means the typical customer who uses 4,000 gallons per rate period will see an increase of \$1.54 per month. Irrigation rates will increase to \$6.57 per 1,000 gallons.

All rate changes are effective Jan. 1, 2020. See WDMWW.com for more information.

"Over the course of the past 10 years, our rates have remained steady with an average increase of about 2 percent," said Christina Murphy, general manager of WDMWW. "In the late fall, we were advised that Des Moines Water Works would be increasing the water we buy by 10 percent, which significantly affects our costs."

LOWEST RATES IN THE METRO

In addition to treating 10 million gallons of water per day from a combination of deep and shallow wells, WDMWW purchases 30 to 35 percent of its total water from Des Moines to secure additional capacity and peak redundancy in the summer months.

"Even with the increase for 2020, we found West Des Moines Water Works rates remain among the lowest in the metro area and the lowest among the suburbs and surrounding cities," Murphy added.

"Our rates for 2020 will generate sufficient revenues to cover our costs and allow us to prepare for the future," explained **Brian Rickert**, chairman of the board of trustees.

PREPARING FOR FUTURE WATER NEEDS

"It is not a matter of if but when the growth of West Des Moines and our western neighbors will outstrip current water treatment capacity. We are building reserves now to plan for and help cover that eventuality rather than being forced into significant rate increases down the road," he added.

This forward-looking preparation reflects policies instituted by the board three decades ago to maintain affordable rates while ensuring that West Des Moines customers have the water they need. For example, Water Works systematically replaces a portion of its aging infrastructure with new mains. The result is that WDMWW is well ahead of other utilities in minimizing costly infrastructure problems such as main breaks.

WDMWW Admin Prepares to Move into New Home

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Built in 1992, the plant offices have not been updated in a dozen years and most of the furniture and fixtures are more than 25 years old. Moreover, the normal wear and tear on paint and carpet has been exacerbated over the past 15 months with the

administrative and business staff crowding into the facility while the new building was finished.

"We've been using the boardroom for makeshift offices, doubling up in existing offices and using every square inch of space in the plant during the construction of the new building," noted Christina Murphy, general manager. "That heightened level of use has been hard on the facility and it is really showing its age. We are reinvesting a portion of the savings to improve the plant office space and return it to its intended operations."

In addition to new carpet, paint and minor electrical updates, the plant project includes repairs and finishes to ensure the restrooms are ADA compliant, upgrades to the break room and kitchenette and restoration of the boardroom with some additional features to enhance meetings and work sessions.

The board approved \$125,000 for these improvements to the A.C. Ward offices, which means the expanded project is still \$475,000 under budget and capital allocations.

"This project involves more than constructing a building," Murphy added. "We now have a cohesive Water Works campus where staff can better collaborate and better serve the community with enhanced security and safety."

The customer service area in the new administrative offices.



In 2020, Resolve to Use Fewer Plastic Water Bottles

New Year's resolutions increasingly are about doing something meaningful, something that benefits the planet. Among the Top 10 on these lists from *Forbes* to *Huffington Post* is "stop buying water in single use plastic bottles."

It is true that plastic water bottles once hailed as a great convenience are now the scourge of the oceans.

With sustainability in mind, NYU announced it will stop purchasing single-use plastic water bottles Jan. 1, 2020. The university expects to reduce campus waste by 330,000 bottles a year.



The NYU campus has a population of approximately 22,000—about a third the number of people living in West Des Moines.

"At Water Works, we support reducing plastic bottle waste. Looking at the decrease NYU expects; imagine what West Des Moines could achieve with a modest per person reduction," GM Christina Murphy noted. "In our new building, we have a bottle-filling station that actually counts the number of water bottles saved with each refill."

MONTHLY TRUSTEE MEETINGS CHANGED

West Des Moines Water Works is moving its monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees to the third Wednesday of each month effective in January 2020. Meetings will still commence at 4 p.m.

NOTE:

The Water Works drop box payment will relocate from in front of the A.C. Ward Plant to the new administration building in January.

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