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## Hiawatha Commission Approves Sewer Rate Increase

( KNZA )-Hiawatha residents will see an about 45-percent sewer rate increase.

The Hiawatha City Commission Tuesday evening approved an ordinance increasing rates, effective with the March 1st billing.

The minimum charge per month for sewer service will increase about \$7 to \$22.03. In addition, the user charge will increase about \$8 to \$29.84 per 1,000 cubic feet of water. Sewer rates are based on water usage. Sewer customers outside the city limits will also see a rate increase.

A consultant recommended the rate increase after analyzing the city's existing water and sewer rates. Carl Brown with Carl Brown Consulting of Jefferson City, Missouri told commissioners last week the current rates aren't generating enough revenue to cover the existing sewer system debt and needed capital improvements.

The city is under an executive order from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to reduce the amount of excess water entering the system.

Mayor Crosby Gernon noted the rate increase is also needed to be eligible for grant and loan funding for the sewer system improvements being required by KDHE... ( play audio )

Gernon said Hiawatha is not alone in having to make improvements to it's sanitary sewer system... ( continue audio )

The city last year was awarded a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce and just under one million loan from USDA Rural Development to help fund improvements to the city's sewer system.

The commission Tuesday voted to hire Governmental Assistance Services of Lawrence to write another Community Development Block Grant application for the project at a fee of \$7,250.

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