



## New Library Contract

The City of West Richland has successfully negotiated a new library contract with Mid-Columbia Libraries (MCL) that provides additional services to West Richland residents at no additional cost.

The city contracts with MCL to provide library services. The contract only includes library service costs and does not include maintenance and capital costs for the city-owned library facility. These costs are paid by the city in addition to the contract costs for library services.

The new library contract with MCL keeps the pricing model the same however it provides additional services including expanded hours of service at the West Richland branch. MCL has agreed to increase open hours from 40 to 49 hours per week, adding hours on Sunday afternoon. Furthermore, MCL has agreed to provide a MLIS-degreed manager to oversee the day to day activities of the West Richland branch.

The new library contract goes into effect January 1, 2016 and runs for three years. Why only three years? The revenue collected from a voter approved 2.5% telephone utility tax, which helps fund library services, has been significantly declining since 2011 by nearly 30% as more telephone customers eliminate their land line and the expansion of non-taxable data services by cellular phone service providers. The city anticipates this decline in telephone utility tax revenue to continue. To balance the library fund budget, the city has had to make cuts to maintenance and capital expenses for the library facility and utilize reserves.

Over the next several months, the city will be working in partnership with MCL to examine revenue generating options including an increase in the electric utility tax to maintain current library services in West Richland. If a solution can be found to plug the gap left by declining telephone utility tax revenue, the library contract will automatically be extended another three years and MCL has agreed to pay for a remodel of the West Richland branch. The remodel would be similar to the remodel of the Prosser branch which has been well received by their community, and it will and have design elements similar to the West Pasco branch.

For questions regarding the new library contract with MCL, please contact Jessica Platt, Finance Director by email at [jplatt@westrichland.org](mailto:jplatt@westrichland.org) or by phone 967-7134.

### Meetings

- Dec 1 City Council meeting  
Library - 7:00 p.m.
  - Dec 7 West Richland Chamber meeting  
Sandberg Event Center - Noon
  - Dec 8 Planning Commission meeting  
Library - 6:00 p.m.
  - Dec 15 City Council meeting  
Library - 7:00 p.m.
  - Dec. 30 Canceled - Park Board meeting
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- Dec 25 Merry Christmas
  - Jan 1 Happy New Year!

### Carols & Cocoa December 5th - 5:00 p.m.

Bring the family to Carols & Cocoa at Flat Top Park sponsored by Red Mountain Lions Club. The annual pavilion lighting ceremony will kick-off the event.

Get a cup of hot cocoa and great music for \$1.00 or free in exchange for donations of canned food or an unwrapped toy to benefit area families.

## Sewer Rates Decreasing

The Mayor, Council and city staff are pleased to announce that beginning December 22, 2015, West Richland residents and commercial utility customers will see their monthly sewer rate **DECREASE** approximately 5 percent or \$2/month. This represents an annual savings of \$24.00 per resident and or business owner. The city uses a sophisticated sanitary sewer utility rate model to determine the appropriate charges for services. The model considers numerous variables that are comprised of various influences in an effort to sufficiently fund the operation, maintenance, and capital improvements within the City's wastewater collection and treatment system. When updating the model, the City uses several key goals including 1) maintaining or lowering current monthly sanitary sewer rates while meeting the requirements of the City's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit issued by Ecology; 2) at a minimum, establish a sanitary sewer operations and maintenance reserve equal to a minimum of 2 months of operation and maintenance; 3) if rate increases are needed, spread out over several years to mitigate financial impacts; 4) maintain the low-income senior discount program; and 5) ensure the sanitary sewer utility is financially secure. The utility rate model is updated at least annually and reviewed by the City's Utility Committee members, Councilmembers Benegas, Brown and Perkes.



**What is the City doing to keep rates down?** The City conducts operation and maintenance functions using best management practices while constantly reviewing the way we maintain our utility systems, provides excellent customer service, and looks for efficiency savings whenever possible. The City's sewer utility was recently awarded the 2014 Outstanding Performance Award from Ecology for perfect compliance with our NPDES permit. The City has also been very successful in applying for and receiving competitive grants and low-interest loans for sewer capital projects. West Richland's growth related activity, governance and disciplined fiscal decisions have put the City's utilities in a positive financial position.

### What about rates for water, stormwater, and garbage?

**Water Rate** - There is no base rate increase for water which is currently \$34.00 per month for a 3/4" and 1" meter. The water base rate has not increased in 6 years.

**Stormwater Rate** - There is no increase in the stormwater rate in 2016.

**Garbage Rate** - The City is currently negotiating a new franchise agreement with Ed's Disposal. Customers will be notified of any increases to garbage service rates.

## Boards and Commissions Vacancies

Volunteers are needed to serve on the Planning Commission, Parks & Recreation Board and Economic Development Board.

The Planning Commission reviews and makes final recommendations to the City Council on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the land use (zoning) code.

The Economic Development Board makes recommendations to the City Council regarding development of strategies for economic development and the ongoing monitoring, assessing, and strengthening of economic development strategies in the city.

The Park Board makes recommendations to the City Council regarding the beautification, improvement, development, planning, maintenance, and management of all city parks and associated facilities. This includes parks, green belts, trails, parkways, boulevard landscaping, recreation areas, and all park and recreation buildings, equipment, and facilities.

For more information on boards and commissions and how to apply, go to:

[www.westrichland.org/governance/boards-and-commissions/](http://www.westrichland.org/governance/boards-and-commissions/)