



MINUTES

**Business Meeting of the
Niagara Falls Water Board
October 27, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.**

**Water Treatment Plant Conference Room
5815 Buffalo Avenue, Niagara Falls New York 14304**

Meeting could be attended in person or via videoconference. Minutes do not represent a complete summary of all matters discussed. Complete video recordings of meetings are posted online at: <https://tinyurl.com/nfwbMedia>.

1. Preliminary Matters

a. Call To Order

Chairman Sirianni called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

b. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America

c. Attendance:

Cole Present, Dean Present, Kimble Present (Zoom), Larkin Present, Sirianni Present.

d. Presentations

e. Public Comments (All speakers must register with the meeting clerk prior to roll call and are limited to three minutes per person – total time for all speakers may not exceed one hour).

f. Letters and Communications

g. Prior Meeting Minutes

i. Draft September 25, 2025 Business Meeting Minutes

Motion by Board Member Dean and seconded by Board Member Larkin to accept the September 25, 2025 business meeting minutes.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

2. Executive Director & General Counsel – Sean Costello

a. Proposed 2026 Budget

Mr. Costello presented the information contained in the slides attached to these minutes and responded to Board members' questions. The proposed budget includes relatively stable expenses, lower revenue estimates, and would require rates to increase by 5.9%.

Motion by Board Member Larkin and seconded by Board Member Kimble to schedule a public hearing on November 17, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. regarding the proposed fees, rates, and other charges for all persons and users served by the NFWB water, wastewater, and stormwater facilities to be effective January 1, 2026.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

3. Engineering – Douglas Williamson

Mr. Williamson informed the Board that the team working on the WWTP Preliminary Engineering Report would be meeting the next morning and is preparing for a meeting with the NYSDEC on October 31. The chemical bid recently was opened at City Hall, and next month there will be bid openings for the West Rivershore water main replacement project and for supply and removal of granular activated carbon.

4. Information Technology (IT) – Elton Mensah-Selby

Mr. Mensah-Selby reported that recent cybersecurity scans have had positive results. Migration from VMWare to Scale Hypervisor is complete. We are waiting for quotes from vendors for UPS replacements at the WWTP.

5. Finance – Michael Smith

- a. Bank Account Balance Report**
- b. Invested Funds Balance Report**
- c. Wilmington Trust Account Report**

Mr. Smith is looking forward to Deborah Ziolkowski joining the team and is lining up training and work for her.

6. Administrative Services – Caleb Holman

a. October 27, 2025 Personnel Actions

Motion by Board Member Larkin and seconded by Board Member Dean to approve Item No. 1 on the Personnel Actions sheet (authorization to hire a Control Maintenance Mechanic to fill a vacancy at the WWTP).

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

Motion by Board Member Kimble and seconded by Board Member Larkin to table Item No. 2 on the Personnel Actions sheet (permanent appointment of Erin Macri to Sr. Administrative Assistant).

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __N__

Motion carried, 4-1.

7. Outside Infrastructure Updates – Michael Eagler, Sr.

Mr. Eagler presented on the infrastructure work completed by the Collection and Distribution Team which facilitated the WTP sending its residuals from the existing freeze-thaw beds directly to the WWTP. This project has been successful and now has been operational for two years.

Mr. Eagler also discussed water main breaks; there have been a very high number already in 2025. Drought conditions like have been experienced this summer are as damaging to water mains as freezing conditions because dry soils contract, which can cause stress on mains.

Mr. Eagler noted that City Engineering is assisting with a bid to repair a sewer main collapse that is too deep for NFWB crews. The bid award for that project, at 78th and Lindbergh, is anticipated to be an item for the November Board meeting agenda.

8. Questions Regarding September 2025 Operations and Maintenance Report

9. Resolutions

2025-10-001 - WATER TREATMENT PLANT INTAKE INSPECTION, REPAIR, AND CLEANING

- a. 2025-09-19 - BIDCO Marine Group, Inc., Invoice for WTP Intake Inspection and Cleaning

Motion by Board Member Kimble and seconded by Board Member Dean to approve.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

2025-10-002 - LIFT STATION SCADA UPGRADE

- a. 2025-10-07 - Xylem Vue Lift Station SCADA Proposal

Motion by Board Member Dean and seconded by Board Member Kimble to approve.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

2025-10-003 - SETTLE BILLINGSLEY PERSONAL INJURY LAWSUIT

Motion by Board Member Kimble and seconded by Board Member Dean to approve.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

2025-10-004 - PROCUREMENT OF WATER METERS

- a. 2025-10-08 - TiSales Quotation for Water Meters

Motion by Board Member Dean and seconded by Board Member Larkin to approve.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

2025-10-005 - EXERCISING OPTION FOR EFPR TO COMPLETE 2025 AUDIT

Motion by Board Member Kimble and seconded by Board Member Dean to approve.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

2025-10-006 - AUTHORIZING CREDIT CARD AND OTHER PAYMENTS THROUGH NEW WORLD PAYMENTS

- a. Tyler Technologies Quote No. 2025-549806-R5P2T5 for Payments Service
- b. New World Payments Enterprise Portal Module Information Sheet

Motion by Board Member Larkin and seconded by Board Member Dean to approve.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

2025-10-007 - APPOINTMENT OF DEBORAH ZIOLKOWSKI AS DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

Motion by Board Member Kimble and seconded by Board Member Larkin to approve.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

10. Unfinished/Old Business

11. New Business & Additional Items for Discussion

12. Executive Session (if needed)

13. Adjournment of Meeting

Motion by Board Member Larkin and seconded by Board Member Kimble to adjourn the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Cole __Y__ Dean __Y__ Kimble __Y__ Larkin __Y__ Sirianni __Y__

Motion carried, 5-0.

2026 Proposed Budget



October 27, 2025



The
MISSION
of the **NIAGARA FALLS WATER BOARD** is to
provide **safe** and **reliable** water and wastewater
management services to our community in an
economical and **efficient** manner.

Executive Summary

Costs are Under Control, but Revenue is Declining

Closure of Cascades' Norampac plant further impacts projected revenue

Recommended Rate Increase of 5.9%

Maintains services and NFWB rates will be lower than comparable utilities

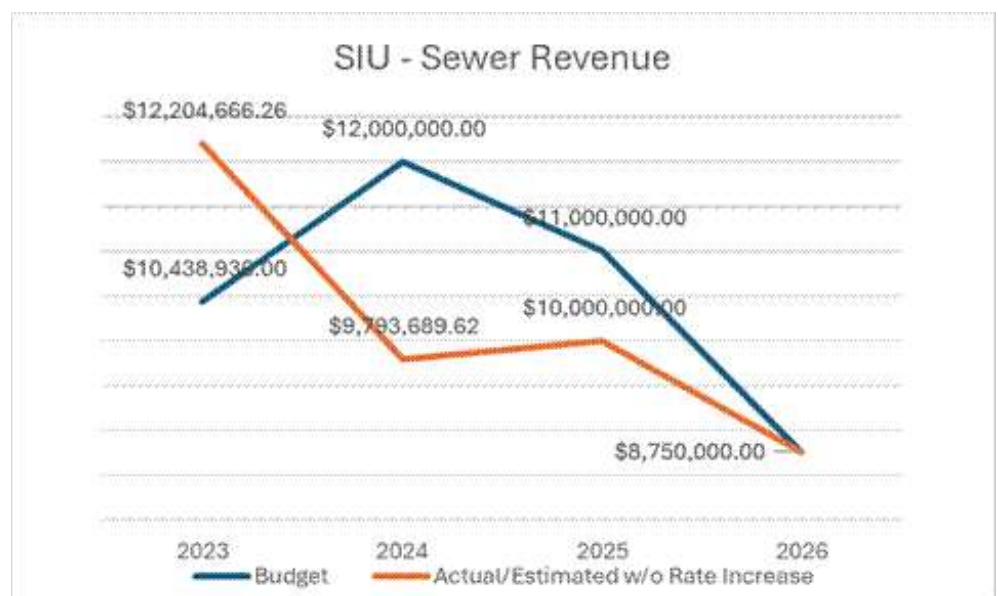
Public Hearing and Board Vote

Recommend scheduling public hearing for November 17 Board meeting

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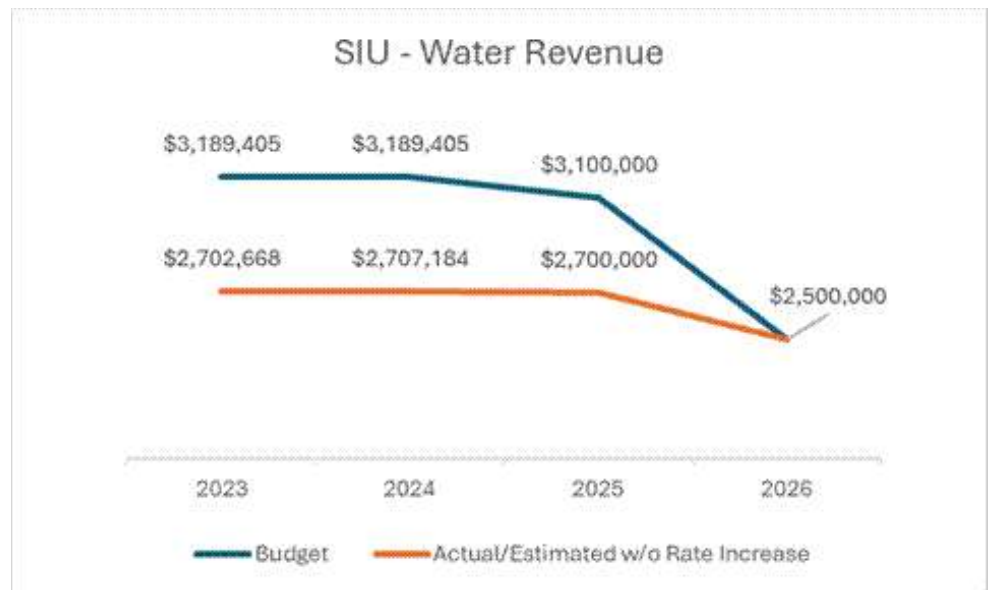
Sewer Revenue

- 2026 sewer revenues projected approx. \$1.3 million below 2025 budget without rate increase
- SIU sewer revenues have declined substantially since 2023
- 2026 revenue projection anticipates reduction in revenue from Cascades



Water Revenue

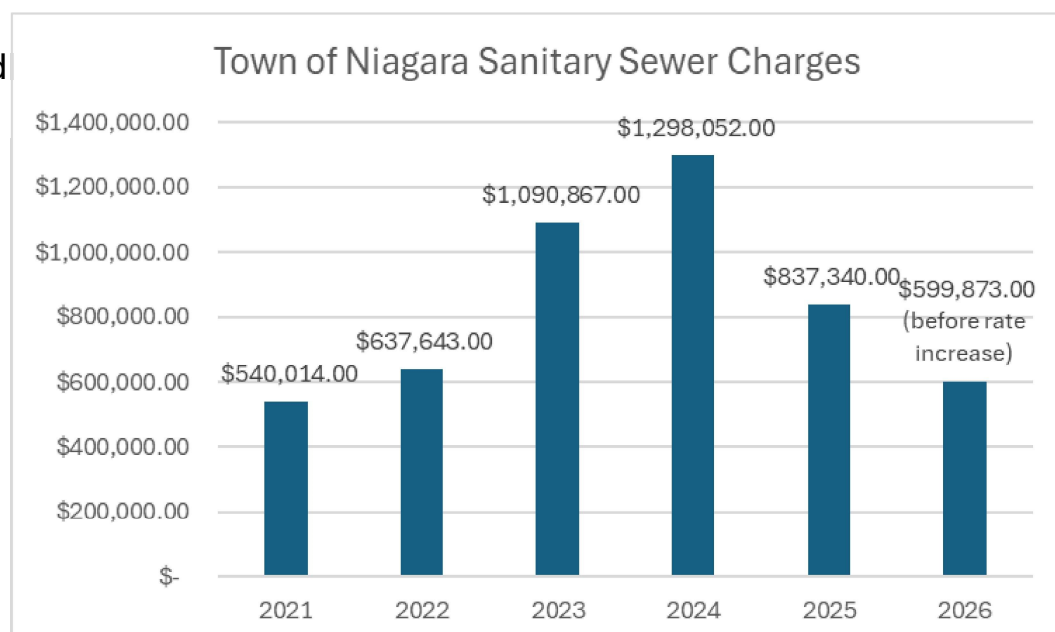
- Water revenues have been overestimated in recent budgets
- Cascades closure has less impact
- 2026 budget projects \$600,000 less water revenue versus 2025 budget without rate increase



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Town of Niagara Revenue

- Town of Niagara bill based on flows during prior year flow monitoring periods
- Dry conditions in 2025 will result in a lower bill for 2026



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Ten Largest Water and Wastewater Customers

- Ten customers account for over 35% of annual billings
- Most NFWB expenses are fixed, so lost revenue from large customers has a direct impact on rates required to fund operations

	<u>Name</u>	<u>12/31/2024</u> <u>Revenue</u>	<u>% of</u> <u>Total</u>	<u>6/30/2025</u> <u>YTD</u>
1	Cascades Holding US Inc.	\$ 5,302,876	38.29%	\$ 2,419,038
2	Niacet Corporation	1,827,046	13.19%	1,787,321
3	Town of Niagara	1,246,256	9.00%	649,026
4	Seneca NF Gaming - Hotel	1,181,906	8.53%	536,166
5	Olin Corporation (#23)	949,076	6.85%	432,364
6	Occidental Petroleum Corporation	917,021	6.62%	160,953
7	Reworld Niagara I, LLC	764,428	5.52%	461,093
8	Olin Corporation (#5)	600,682	4.34%	355,152
9	Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.	537,567	3.88%	267,119
10	Seneca NF Gaming	522,986	3.78%	217,545
		<u>\$ 13,849,844</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>\$ 7,285,777</u>

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Expenses

- Overall, cuts offset increases in certain areas
- Debt service and chemicals are the two largest areas of expense
- Largest cost increase in sludge disposal; bid price increased 37% from prior contract

2026 EXPENSES



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Debt Service Expense

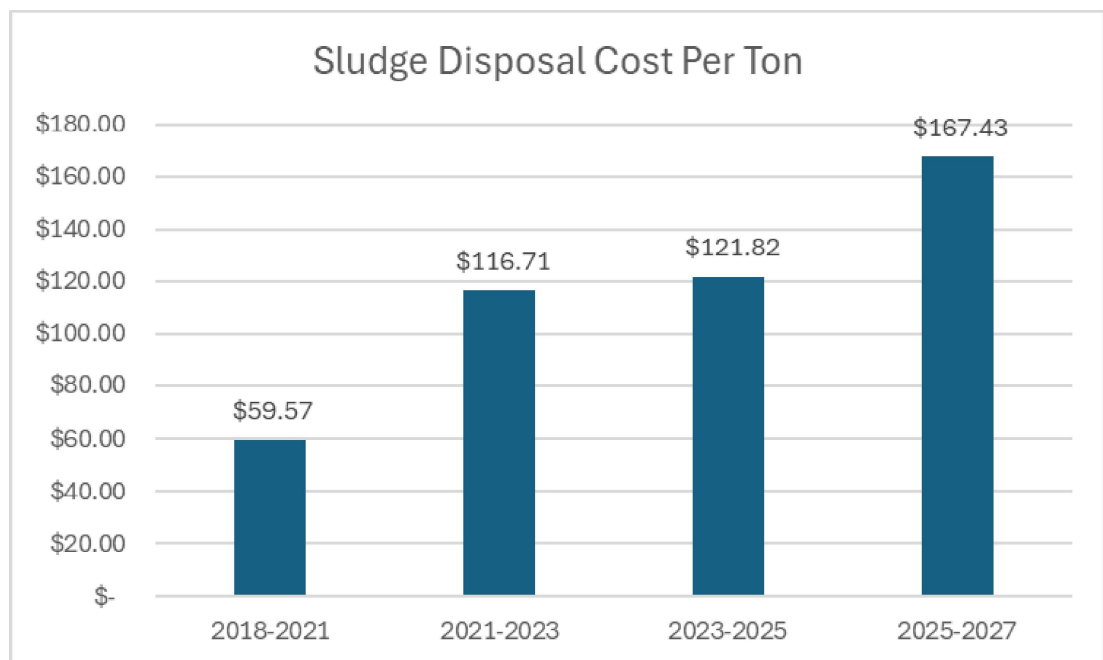
- NFWB inherited \$110,000,000 in debt when created in 2003
- As of 12/31/2024, \$68,194,673 remains outstanding
- 2025 net debt service is \$7,980,132



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Sludge Disposal Expense

- 2025-2027 Cost Increased 37%
- Long term, we are evaluating the payback period for improvements such as a sludge dryer



Retiree Benefits and NYSLRS

- 2026 Retiree Benefits: \$2,814,110
 - Benefits for newer retirees (hired after 12/31/2007) will cost less
- New York State and Local Retirement System Contribution has increased from \$739,416 to \$839,177 (a 13% increase)
 - Set by NYS based on factors including investment performance, inflation, and actuarial assumptions

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Chemical Expenses

- Chemical budget mixed
 - Sodium hypochlorite budget reduced by \$1 million, modestly lower bid price and trend of reduced utilization
 - But the reduced utilization may correlate to lower SIU sewer revenues
 - Carbon, Ferric Chloride, and Lime bids increased a total of \$120,000
 - Primary and Sludge polymer budget reduced a total of \$35,000

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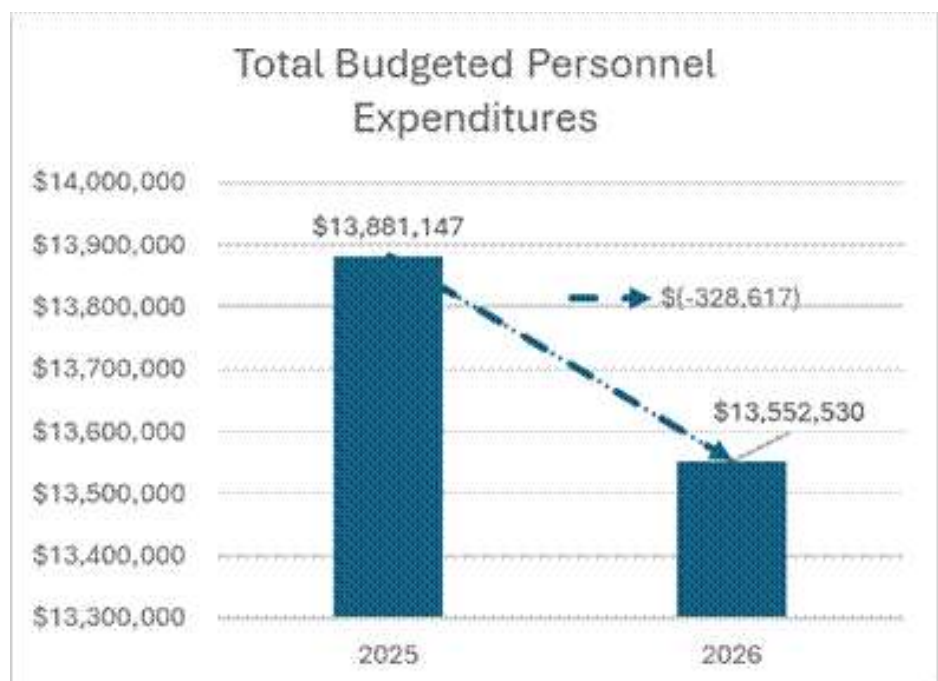
Other Notable Expense Changes

- Light and Power budget lines increased by \$105,000
- WTP sludge now routed to WWTP for treatment, reduces WTP sludge budget line by \$100,000 (sludge disposal cost shifts to WWTP)
- \$89,000 decrease in Workers Compensation premium
- \$82,000 increase in Property & Liability insurance premium

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Personnel Cost Control

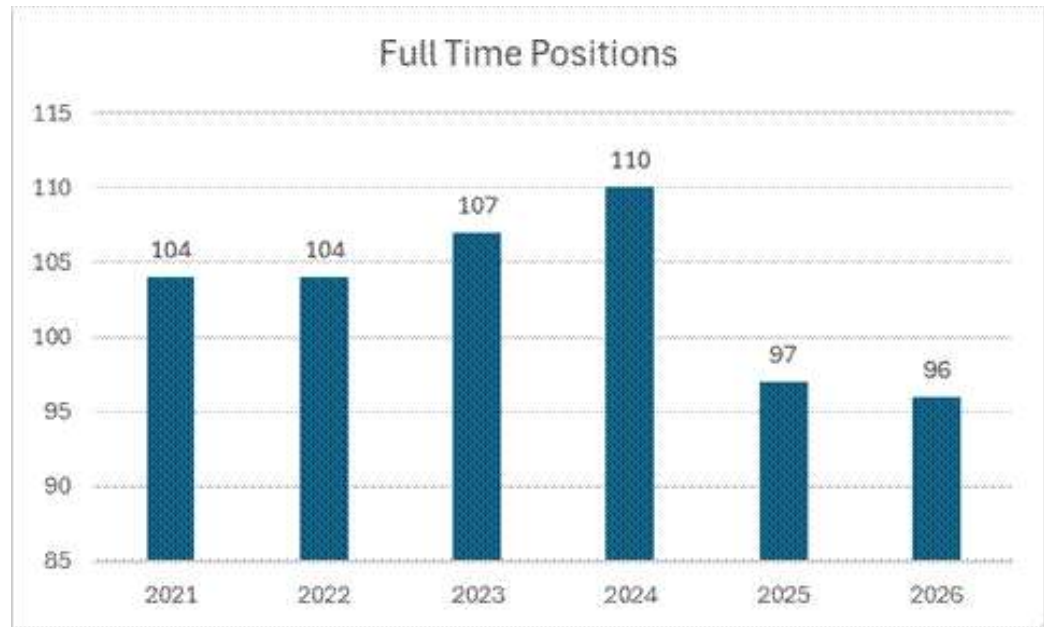
- Personnel cost for 2026, including payroll, benefits, overtime, etc., represents a decrease in overall personnel cost versus the 2025 adopted budget.



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Personnel Cost Control

- 2026 contractual wage increases total \$240,330
- Represents 0.7% of estimated 2026 revenues prior to rate increase
- Personnel costs offset by personnel reductions



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Funding the 2026 Proposed Budget

- Even with reductions to personnel costs and tight budgeting, revenue decline and some increased expenses mean a ~\$2 million shortfall between estimated revenues and expenses
- Revenues subject to a rate increase are \$34,754,853
- Therefore, a 1% increase nets \$347,548
- Proposed 2026 rate increase of 5.9%

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Rates

- Last rate increase was effective January 1, 2023
- No rate increase (0%) for 2024 or 2025

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Impact on Minimum Bill

- About half of users receive a minimum bill in any given quarter (9,725 gallons)
- Impact on minimum bill as follows:

	2023, 2024, & 2025	Proposed 2026
Water Charge	\$58.24	\$61.68
Sewer Charge	\$77.09	\$81.64
Service Fee	\$3.70	\$3.70
Total	\$139.03	\$147.04

- Increase would equal: \$2.67/month, \$8.01/quarter, \$32.04/yr.
- Users with higher consumption will see a larger increase

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Benchmarking NFWB Rates

- A study found the price of monthly residential water and sewer service for the average US utility in 2023 was \$95.02 - or \$285.06/quarter

Teodoro, M.P. and Thiele, R. (2024), Water and Sewer Price and Affordability Trends in the United States, 2017–2023. J AWWA, 116: 14-24. <https://doi.org/10.1002/awwa.2315>

➡ This is **94% higher** than the proposed 2026 NFWB minimum bill

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Benchmarking NFWB Rates

- It is challenging to compare NFWB rates with many towns/cities
 - User fees may not represent full cost of service
 - Capital or other costs often are recovered through "special district" or "improvement" charges on property tax bill
- Similar local utilities (ECWA, BSA, Buffalo Water) rates are higher than the proposed 2026 NFWB rates

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Benchmarking NFWB Rates

- A quarterly minimum water-only bill for Erie County Water Authority (ECWA) with a usage allowance of 9,000 gallons is \$77.13
 - Approx. **25% higher** than NFWB
 - ECWA Rate Increases:

2023	2024	2025
12%	9%	11%

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Benchmarking NFWB Rates

- Buffalo Water Board's 2025 quarterly bill for 9,700 gallons of water (no sewer included) is \$116.18
 - Approx. **88% higher** than NFWB
 - Buffalo Water Board Rate Increases:

2023	2024	2025
10%	7%	7.5%

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Benchmarking NFWB Rates

- Buffalo Sewer Authority charges both user fees and sewer rents (tax) which combined reflect the total cost of sewer service.
- For 2025-2026, an example bill would be approx. \$99.62 per quarter, calculated as follows:
 - Drainage Connection Charge: \$6.37
 - Quarterly Minimum: \$51.24
 - Sewer Rent, \$1.29 per \$1,000 assessed valuation, on a \$150,000 assessed home: \$193 annually, or \$48.25 quarterly
- Approx. **20% higher** than NFWB

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What is on the Horizon

- Increase of approx. \$700,000 to annual debt service
- Payroll increases by approximately \$202,000 in 2027
- Lead and Copper Rule Improvement costs
- Order on Consent and Draft WWTP SPDES permit requirements

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Strategies

- Continue careful cost containment
- Leverage grant funding for capital projects whenever possible
- Use technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness

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Next Steps

- Recommended:

"Motion to schedule a public hearing on November 17, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. regarding the proposed fees, rates, and other charges for all persons and users served by the NFWB water, wastewater, and stormwater facilities to be effective January 1, 2026."

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