



Dear Biddeford sewer customer:

In an effort to strengthen our billing process, the City of Biddeford transitioned sewer billing services to Maine Water in 2025, introducing specialized utility billing expertise and additional oversight into our existing process. However, during a routine audit conducted after the transition, the auditor identified an error in the way sewer charges were calculated for certain customers prior to Maine Water's involvement.

The City uses a tiered sewer rate structure designed to promote conservation. Under this system, customers pay different rates based on their level of water use, with higher rates applying only to their usage within higher tiers. However, instead of applying each tiered rate only to the appropriate portion of usage, the billing system applied the higher usage rate to *all* water used during the billing period. As a result, some customers were charged more than the approved sewer rates.

This error affected sewer bills beginning in 2019. Although the City's last five annual audits reviewed the sewer fund, the billing issue was not identified until the completion of the most recent audit with a new firm.

The City of Biddeford is committed to addressing this billing error transparently and ensuring that affected customers are made whole as soon as possible. We are working closely with our sewer billing provider, Maine Water, to provide the information necessary to issue credits of the full overpaid balance to the accounts of all affected customers as quickly as possible. If you were overcharged, you will not have to take any action to receive your refund.

We are committed to being transparent about both what happened in the past and what to expect from your sewer bill going forward. The refund process addresses the past billing error. Separately, the City must also implement sewer rate increases that were previously approved by the City Council to ensure that we have the funding needed to operate this essential service.

In 2025, the City Council approved a 20% sewer rate increase that was not implemented as approved. The City Council subsequently approved an additional 11.2% increase in 2026.

Both approved increases will take effect together in September 2026, resulting in a 31.2% increase compared with current sewer rates.

We recognize that this increase is significant, particularly as some customers are also receiving notice that they were overcharged in the past. These matters are separate: refunds are being issued because of a billing error, while the rate increase reflects prior decisions by the City Council and the need to adequately fund the operation and maintenance of the sewer system.

We understand that residents will have questions after receiving this letter. The City has prepared an “FAQ” document to answer anticipated questions. For individualized billing questions or details about your refund, please contact the City of Biddeford at 207-286-9387.

When we took office, we told you that we are committed to being transparent and straightforward with you. We’re not sugar coating the real issues we inherited, and we’re taking actions to prevent these types of errors from reoccurring and restoring the City’s finances.

Sincerely,

Mayor Liam LaFountain & the Biddeford City Council