



**Ravenna City Council
Utilities Committee Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2025**

The public meeting was held in Ravenna City Council Chambers.

Council present: Council President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Paul Moskun, Cheryl Wood, Matt Harper, Tyler Marovich, Tim Calfee, Christina West

Also attending the meeting: Mayor Frank Seman; Police Chief, Jake Smallfield; Fire Chief, Mark Chapple; Service Director, Tim Contant; City Engineer; Bob Finney; Finance Director, Tami Lorence; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Larry Silenius, Cliff Soudil, Greg Francis, Eve Francis, Cynthia Miller, Carmen Laudato, Peter Martin, Matt Ferrell, Mike Reynolds, Alan Frygier, Julie Herold

Utility Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Chairperson, Paul Moskun.

The first item was a Water/Wastewater Rate Study Presentation from Verdantas.

Mr. Moskun introduced a wastewater rate study presentation by Verdantas.

Alan Frygier thanked attendees and explained that he and Julie Herold were representing Verdantas to discuss the City's water and sewer rate study. He emphasized that Ravenna had done an unusually strong job at maintaining its rates, making this one of the easiest studies their firm had conducted. Mr. Frygier outlined key goals of the rate review, including maintaining a six-month carryover balance, covering fixed expenses, planning proactively, and mitigating risk. He compared Ravenna's rates with those of similar communities and explained the difference between fixed and variable costs. Mr. Frygier said the aim was for 70–75% of fixed costs to be met by the minimum utility bill. After summarizing these points, he turned the presentation over to Julie Herold for more detailed financial information.

Ms. Herold reviewed current water rates, describing how they are tied to the Consumer Price Index. She summarized the fund's performance since 2019, noting that the water fund generally maintained the desired carryover balance except for a projected dip in 2026 due to planned capital improvements. Ms. Herold highlighted that municipal income tax contributes significantly to the fund and recommended continuing CPI-based increases, performing tri-annual rate reviews, and exploring additional indices to better match utility-related expenses. She also suggested considering a gradual shift away from relying on income tax revenues. Ms. Herold then reviewed the sewer fund, noting similar CPI-based rate structures. She pointed out a declining carryover balance beginning in 2027 and explained that upcoming wastewater treatment plant upgrades—presumed to be shared 50/50 with Portage County—would require long-term financing. To stabilize the fund, Ms. Herold recommended adding a \$1.50 annual

increase to the minimum utility bill from 2026–2030, in addition to normal CPI adjustments. This, she said, would help restore the carryover balance and better cover fixed expenses. Mr. Calfee asked about the percentage equivalent of the proposed \$1.50 yearly increase, and Ms. Herold said she would follow up. A rough calculation estimated the increase at about 7.6% annually.

Mr. Frygier reiterated that the focus was on strengthening the minimum bill to match fixed expenses rather than targeting a specific percentage. He and Ms. Herold explained that staff would receive the full-rate book and training on how to use it and added that the City had been a responsible steward of its utilities.

Mr. Kairis asked about the Water Fund's reliance on municipal income tax.

Mr. Frygier clarified that Verdantas was not recommending removing it and that the recommendations assumed that revenue stream would continue.

Mr. Kairis also asked about financing wastewater plant upgrades, and Mr. Frygier explained that long-term loans through the state's Water Pollution Control Loan Fund were anticipated.

- The item was for discussion only.

The second item was an Evaluation and Design of the City Park Water Tank.

Mr. Moskun stated that the next item was for the City Park water tank and explained that the project involves inspection of the tank's interior. He noted that funding has already been fully appropriated through a long-established line item and emphasized that the interior requires regular review approximately every five years to determine whether recoating or other work is needed.

Mr. Finney clarified that the item involves hiring a consulting firm to inspect the interior, provide recommendations, and prepare construction documents for bidding. He added that the work is anticipated to occur once the new water tank is placed into service.

- The item was moved forward.

The third item was an Industrial Pretreatment Contract.

Mr. Moskun stated that the industrial pretreatment contract covers chemicals used for water and wastewater treatment. He explained that this is a routine and necessary contract, as the chemicals are required by the EPA.

- The item was moved forward.

Management

Mayor Seman commented on the presentation, noting it was well done and emphasizing that businesses closely evaluate the reliability and sustainability of water supplies. He shared an example involving an international business that questioned Ravenna's low water rates, underscoring that maintaining stable and sustainable practices can be a competitive advantage for economic development.

Mr. Calfee raised a procedural question regarding the projected water rate increase, asking whether it was merely a discussion item or something moving forward.

Mr. Kairis responded that the rate proposal was part of a presentation and that any formal action would need to include updates to codified ordinances.

Mr. Moskun added that the recommendations were intended to help the City stay ahead of future needs.

Mr. Calfee expressed concerns about the potential impact of a proposed 10% annual increase over five years, particularly how rising rates and continued income tax support could affect the balance of fixed costs.

Mr. Frygier clarified that municipal income tax revenue supports only the water fund, not the wastewater fund, which relies solely on enterprise funding. He explained that projected wastewater improvements could reduce reserve levels, and the recommended rate increases were intended to restore healthy balances.

It was further clarified that the proposed increases would apply for five years and then level off. Mr. Finney reminded Council that the water plant has not undergone major improvements since the early 1980s and noted that significant upgrades are typically required every 20 to 25 years. While no immediate water plant project is planned, he cautioned that such needs could arise within the next few years, particularly in coordination with EPA requirements. He also highlighted that the City's quarter-percent income tax has been instrumental in supporting the water fund and was made permanent by voter approval.

Mr. Kairis remarked that residents ultimately contribute through one mechanism or another.

Mr. Finney added that Ravenna still maintains some of the lowest water rates in the area and benefits from controlling its own water and sewer systems.

Mr. Frygier concluded by noting that neighboring communities purchase water from outside sources, whereas Ravenna's ability to produce and treat its own water and wastewater is a significant factor in keeping rates comparatively low.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 6:49 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Paul Moskun, Chairperson
Utility Committee