On Tuesday, April 25, 2023, the Utility Committee for the Village of Monroeville held a meeting at 6:04 PM in Council Chambers, to discuss a utility rate review.

Present were: Mayor Melissa Fries-Seip; Council Members: Chris Raftery, Sue Rogers, Craig Franklin, Joe Galea, Sam Wiley and Bob Whitacre; Administrator Tom Gray; Administrative Specialist Heather Alicea; Administrative Assistant Ann Beck; and Chief Gary Lyons.

Chris Raftery opened the meeting. Chris asked Tom to address the recommendations that John Courtney made at a previous meeting. Tom advised the rates remain stable on the electric side of things. In both water and wastewater, it’s recommended that increases be established starting in 2023 and continuing. Water is approximately 12.42% in 2023, 12.81% in 2024, and 16.06% in 2025. On the sewer side, it’s slightly less revenue and projected to be down 9.38% in 2023, 9.06% in 2024, and 5.92% in 2025. It’s unfortunate, but it’s a supply and demand issue. The cost of doing business in the water side reflects increases in chemicals, as well as maintenance and repair across the board, indicative of today’s real-world environment with inflation. The plant remains relatively stable in its operation. There are two projects that impact the sewer side. Monroe Street into Broad Street sanitary sewer projects are multi-million-dollar projects that are now in the debt service schedule. Even though those interest rates are small, they have a debt service principal payment. Same as the water side, there is debt service across the board, whether it’s reservoir, the water meter replacement program, and the waterline program. Sam said on the sewer side, Tom had previously said he was identifying a large source of stormwater and asked if there has been any progress on that. Tom said the sanitary line at Great Lakes Construction had a camera placed, and it went for 500 ft. and still was going. Tom said that during the time of the waterline construction that’s going to come from US 20 in front of Great Lakes, a tie-in will be put across the street during the US 20 project. When they go that distance of some 500 ft. towards Wilhelm Construction, and it turns and goes behind 7/Eleven and up to Hilltop, they are going to excavate at the 500-hundred-foot point, where the waterline and sanitary cross. They are then going to do another camera shot and see how far the sanitary line might go up into the field. That strikes them as being a stormwater line that’s been tied into the sanitary sewer system for years and years. It’s the same as Mowry’s. Adkins Sanitation put a camera in and they only got so far and hit debris, which couldn’t be penetrated far enough to get in behind the Mowry property, and behind Dollar General on the corner of Great Lakes. All of this has to be addressed. Craig asked for clarification on the water increase. Tom and Ann explained it’s 5% each year, for three years. Ann said she did a mockup of the rates from the last Ordinance, for the water rates for year 1, 2, and 3, as well as the one and only 10% increase in the sewer. John had also indicated to Council that it was up to them if they wanted to increase the sanitary sewer rehab (SSR), by a little bit. Ann said we are looking for this to be effective with the 6/1/23 utility invoices. Chris asked how much the SSR impacts the cost. Ann said as John explained, we try to get $50,000 a year, but we haven’t quite gotten there. Sam asked for the current rate. Ann said most of the residentials are around $5.72 for the first 5000 units and a $1.00 for anything over that. Commercial are $11.44, and $2.08 for anything over that. We originally started at $5.50 and then in 2015, it went to $5.72. Sue asked if it’s possible to only raise the sewer 1% for the next five years. Tom and Ann advised no, as it wouldn’t meet the requirements. Ann said the current minimum for water inside is $37.17, it will now be $39.02. There is no way to do less than what John Courtney is recommending. Sam Wiley made a recommendation, seconded by Joe Galea, to address this via a motion at the next regular Council meeting. Heather asked Council if the customers have a concerns or issues with Council’s decision regarding the utility rates, are the Council members comfortable with their email address being provided to customers. Chris asked that the Administrative Office take the customer’s concern and email it directly to the Council members, rather than their email being provided to the customer. Chris advised Council will prepare a statement for the customers in regards to the increase.

There being no other business to come before them, the meeting adjourned at 6:15 PM.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Heather Alicea, Administrative Specialist