



Proposed Joint Water and Sanitary Authority Formation Frequently Asked Questions

Over the last few years, several customers have suggested Roberts Creek Water District and Green Sanitary District should consolidate. In looking at options for consolidation, the Boards for the two Districts found that forming a new joint water and sanitary authority will achieve all of the advantages of consolidation and provide additional benefits for the Districts' current and future customers. During the next year, the Districts will be working through a process that may result in forming a new joint water and sanitary authority.

The following Frequently Asked Questions provide additional background and details about the proposal to form a new joint authority.

1. Who will be served by the proposed joint authority?

The proposed new joint authority will provide water and sewer service within the existing boundary of Roberts Creek Water District.

2. Why is the proposal to form a new authority being presented at this time?

The idea of consolidating the Districts has been considered for some time. The Districts have learned of several retirements of personnel in the near future, including a District Manager, so timing for consolidation is ideal to take advantage of these retirements and achieve additional efficiencies.

3. Why did the Boards of Directors/Commissioners decide to propose a joint authority?

The Board members are customers of the districts and are elected by you, the Districts' customers, to represent your interests. The Board members always consider options to improve the water and sewer services if they benefit customers and are feasible. In evaluating options over the past year, the Boards found a new joint authority would provide additional benefits beyond what would be achieved through consolidation.

4. Why is formation of a new joint water and sanitary authority in the customers' best interests?

It is anticipated a new joint authority would enhance the efficiency and reliability of service to existing customers and provide additional certainty needed to plan for the future. Some benefits may include:

- Improved efficiency by combining staffs, co-locating, and consolidating functions.
- Reduced number of staff positions by taking advantage of consolidation and impending retirements.
- Enhanced effectiveness through greater depth of staff coverage and shared expertise.
- Greater consistency by establishing a shared policy for shutoff of delinquent accounts.
- More effective and comprehensive financial planning for both water and sewer services.
- Greater certainty of our service area and customer base, resulting in more effective long-term planning to meet the current and future needs of our customers.

5. What happens to the existing water and sewer districts?

The existing water and sewer districts would be dissolved at the same time the new authority is formed. The new authority would assume all rights, benefits and obligations that are currently held by the existing districts.

6. How would forming a new joint water and sanitary authority affect existing customers?

- Combined water and sewer billing: customers of both districts who currently receive separate water and sewer bills would receive one monthly statement for water and sewer service, cutting down the number of utility payments you have to make each month.
- Long-term savings in water and sewer rates: consolidation of resources would lead to financial savings and help keep future water and sewer rate increases smaller or less frequent than if the districts remain separate.
- Electronic payment options for sewer customers: the online account portal, e-billing, and auto-payment options currently available to Roberts Creek Water District customers would also be available to sewer customers.
- One central office for customer support: bill payments, questions, and new service connections for water and sewer accounts would all be administered through one office for the new authority.
- Greater financial certainty: under Oregon statutes, the new authority would have certain protections from annexation by nearby cities. This helps preserve the customer base and protect the investments existing customers have made in the water and sewer system.

7. What is the process to form a new authority? Does the public have a voice?

Forming a new joint authority includes petition, public hearing and election processes. The Districts will be navigating these processes during the next year. First, an order initiating the formation process must be passed by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners. Then, two public hearings will be held by the County Board of Commissioners to consider referring this proposal to the voters in a future public election. These steps are all part of the public process allowing customers to express their preference in forming a new joint authority. In addition, the Districts will continue to hold monthly Board meetings that are open to the public – see the Districts’ websites for more information about attending and providing public comments at regularly scheduled Board meetings.

8. Will the new authority result in bigger government?

No, in fact, a joint water and sanitary authority will actually be smaller and more efficient than the existing districts. The joint water and sanitary authority would provide the same services to customers in a more efficient manner by combining existing functions and staffs that currently provide similar functions. An authority would not result in increases of government regulation and/or oversight, and no taxes would be levied on customers.

9. What is a joint water and sanitary authority?

A joint authority is another type of special-purpose local government, much like the existing districts, that would provide water and sewer services to existing customers. A great example of an authority is the Roseburg Urban Sanitary Authority (RUSA). Unlike the existing water and sanitary districts, a new joint authority would have additional protection from withdrawal (i.e., taking) of customers and infrastructure by cities through annexation.

10. Would my water and sewer rates go down?

No, however, the efficiencies from consolidation would help limit future increases in rates. Formation of a joint authority would result in significant savings in administrative and personnel costs, directly benefitting customers by way of fewer and smaller water and sewer rate increases in the future.

11. I only have water service. Does this proposal mean I will start paying for sewer service too?

No, customers who currently receive only water service will continue to only pay for water service. All of the authority's costs will be managed and tracked so that water costs and sewer costs are allocated separately to water and sewer services and to help ensure accountability of water and sewer rates.

12. When would the authority be formed?

Subject to a successful petition process and approval by the County Board of Commissioners, the formation would be put on the ballot to be voted on by the Districts' electors in an upcoming election – most likely the May 2021 election. Upon passing of the ballot measure, the authority would be formed, and the water and sewer districts would be dissolved. Elections for Board Directors of a new authority would also be held if the authority measure passes.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the District managers:

- David Campos, Roberts Creek Water District, 541-679-6451, david@rcwaterdistrict.com
- Kay Huff, Green Sanitary District, 541-679-7191, huff.gsd@gmail.com