

January 30, 2025

Greetings Holmes Harbor Estates Neighbors!

2024 was a year of changes for the Holmes Harbor Water Co, some anticipated and some not.

Shortly after the 2024 Annual Meeting, the new owners of King Water Co, Northwest Natural Water Services (NWNWS), came out with their updated fee structure. Hourly rates for staff and costs for specific services increased significantly, and a 10% surcharge was added to contracted services. For 2025 NWNWS has increased all hourly rates and added a 20% surcharge on most services. This will be addressed at the annual meeting by Nancy Sharp, HHWC treasurer.

These cost increases did not improve the quality or timeliness of service, so the board began a search for a replacement certified water system management company. After inquiries to many companies (most of whom were not taking new clients or were even more expensive) we found someone willing to take us on as he started his own company, after several years of experience managing another Whidbey Island water system. The owner is interested in managing our water system, but needs additional training on our arsenic treatment filtration plant. While we wait for him to get the training he needs, we signed on with NWNWS for 2025, as we are required by state law to have a certified operator managing our water system.

To help reduce costs in 2025, we have reduced the services managed by NWNWS to regular water testing and overseeing the day to day operation of our system. We continue to monitor operations closely and to complete annual maintenance on our fire hydrants with a small crew of volunteers and Central Whidbey Fire & Rescue. We moved billing and bookkeeping to a different company in 2024. This has proved to be less of a cost savings than we anticipated, and that company is raising fees by 20% in 2025. We will be moving to a new bookkeeping and billing service in March 2025, and hope this will be a long-term relationship.

After months of searching, we hired a certified BAT (Backflow Assembly Tester), Mike Anderson of GCF Backflow, to test all of the DCVAs in the neighborhood. These *double check valve assemblies* prevent water in a home's piping from back-flowing into our water mains in the event of a system drop in pressure. About 10% of the DCVAs failed. Mike repaired several in October, and will repair the rest in March.

Speaking of water quality issues, our required water testing produced acceptable results. We had one instance of a positive coliform test (a bacteria that exists in soil). As required, we did additional tests which all came back negative

2024 was also the year of the Lead Service Line Inventory. The EPA required every water system in the nation to fill out a survey of all water piping in their service area, identifying where there might be lead, by October 16, 2024. Nancy was able to download the inventory template and we were able to complete it using old records, asking folks about repairs to their water pipes, and crawling under a few houses. Any home built in 1986 or later was exempt, as a ban on lead used in potable water lines went into effect that year. When we turned in the inventory, we only had 8 (of 78) homes whose lead status was still unknown.

In 2025, we will look into updating our water service policy to have more flexibility to respond to the few accounts in arrears. We will also continue to research the replacement of our water meters, discussed last year. David has done a ton of research already, and the board is considering the direction to take.

I will provide more details at the Annual Meeting, February 15, 10:00 am at the Greenbank Progressive Club.

And finally, please **please please** consider volunteering to join the HHWC board. Many of us have served for years, and we need fresh minds to help keep our water system going strong into the future. Help keep our water supply safe!

See you at the Annual Meeting!

Sincerely,
Cyndy King
President HHWC