



**Village of Lombard  
Communications Plan  
2020 Water Billing Changes**

**Purpose of this Communications Plan**

The Village of Lombard provides water and sewage management to all of its residents and businesses. On January 1, 2020, there will be multiple changes to the water billing and the water bills that are received by Village residents and businesses. These changes include: a \$.40 increase per 1,000 gallons of water used, a fixed \$5 fee per bill, a transition from bi-monthly (every other month) to monthly billing, and a redesigned water bill. Following Board approval in September 2019, there will be open and frequent communication between the Village and the public. This communications plan will provide a history, reasoning, and talking points related to these water billing changes.

**Goals:**

The goals of this plan are to increase public understanding that:

- There are multiple fee changes regarding all water billing statements
- The billing schedule and bill itself are being changed to better accommodate Lombard residents and businesses
- Lombard's ongoing efforts at above board transparency

**Objectives:**

- Educate Lombard residents and businesses about the changes coming to their water bills and the reasons for those changes
- Provide easy to understand comments that can be disseminated among social media resources by residents

**Audiences**

The audience this communications plan is directed toward includes:

**Public:**

1. All residents
2. All businesses

Internal/Village of Lombard:

1. Mayor/Board of Trustees
2. Front desk staff/customer service
3. Public Works staff
4. Finance staff

### **Key Messages**

Beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, all water bills will be changed in the following ways:

- A rate increase of \$.40 per 1,000 gallons used
- A fixed \$5 capital fee shall be added to all bills
- Billing statements will transition from bi-monthly to monthly
- Billing statements will look different with an emphasis on ease of readability being implemented

### **Action Plan**

In an effort to keep residents, business, community leaders and the media informed of the water billing changes, the Village of Lombard has/will execute an ongoing and comprehensive communications plan containing the following:

1. Include a flyer in each water bill to start upon Board approval of these changes
2. Use social media to share information and respond to questions
3. Include article in upcoming issue (Lilac Time/January) of Lombard Pride
4. Include information in employee E-News, sent to all employees
5. Update website at [www.villageoflombard.org/waterrateincrease](http://www.villageoflombard.org/waterrateincrease)
6. Create FAQ sheet for employees and for resident access (see below)
7. Create post on WaterSmart portal in the Notifications section
8. Send out group messages to WaterSmart subscribers
9. Post Water/Sewer rate study on Village website.

### **Water Billing FAQs**

#### **Why is the water/sewer rate increasing by \$.40 per 1,000 gallons used?**

These increases in fees were calculated from a water and sewage rate study. The information gathered from this study provided the Village with data to effectively align future revenues and expenses based on planned infrastructure upgrades. The study concluded that for the Village to maintain its high level of service, this \$.40 increase per 1,000 gallons was necessary. The average Lombard resident uses 5,000 gallons a month meaning only a \$2.00 monthly increase in billing for most residents.

#### **Why is there a \$5 capital fee increase on all bills?**

This charge is based upon a 5 year ordinance rate percentage-based increase to cover fixed costs associated with water provision. Lombard's aging infrastructure needs updates. With this

increased capital, Lombard's Utility Division will be able to avoid some of the problems other municipalities have been affected by.

### **Why is billing changing from a bi-monthly to a monthly schedule?**

The transition from bi-monthly to monthly billing was made to allow for easier budgeting for water bills. Additionally, it will now be easier for residents to know when bills are issued and when they are due. Furthermore, technology now allows for the Village to read meters without having to visit your property. Having to visit each property to read meters was a main reason for bi-monthly billing.

### **What are the changes to the bill structure?**

The new bill structure will change from the original in the following ways:

- The reminder and past due notices are now in a highlighted box displayed on the bill
- If additional charges are applied, such as a late fee, they will be clearly identifiable
- Streamlined information and data

### **Why are we changing the water bill layout?**

The addressed changes were made in an attempt to make the bill easier to read and understand for all residents and businesses. This hope is in tandem with the change from bi-monthly to monthly billing to make understanding and paying your water bill simpler. Information regarding how to read the new bill will be available on our website.

### **What can I do to lower my water bill?**

The privilege of access to Lake Michigan water is one not forgotten by the Village. Residents can both help maintain this finite natural resource while simultaneously lowering their water bill by following some of these simple, at home steps:

- With your new smart water meter, you have access to the WaterSmart portal where you can view your water usage metrics, set leak alerts, and get water saving tips. Go to <https://lombard.watersmart.com>.
- Rain Barrel Reimbursement Program: The Village offers a Rain Barrel Reimbursement Program that was created to encourage residents to conserve water. Through this program the Village will reimburse residents up to \$40.00 for the purchase of a rain barrel. Rain barrels are excellent for outdoor watering use and at the same time allow residents to save on their water bill!
- Use a broom instead of a hose to clear debris from driveways, sidewalks, and patios.
- Wash a car with a bucket and sponge. Use a shut-off nozzle on your hose so water doesn't run while you are washing the car. A free-flowing hose uses up to 300 gallons of water each hour.
- Check for leaks. Look at pipes, hoses, faucets and couplings. Leaks waste a lot of water. Even a small leak in a garden hose may waste as much as 700 gallons per day
- Save 3 gallons of water per minute by turning off the water when brushing your teeth, shaving, etc. National averages indicate that indoors, about 70 percent of our water is used in the bathroom.
- Check your toilet for leaks. Put a few drops of food coloring in your toilet tank. If the coloring appears in the toilet bowl without flushing, you have a wasteful leak that should be repaired at once. Even a small leak can waste thousands of gallons a month.

- Use your automatic washing machine for full loads only. It uses up to 60 gallons per load.
- Consider changing to water saving plumbing. Low flush toilets and low flow showerheads seem to be the biggest water savers.

**What can I do to make paying my bill easier?**

Residents have the option to sign up for automatic direct bank account withdrawal for their water bills! If you visit the Village's website at <http://www.villageoflombard.org/autopay>, you may sign up for automatic monthly billing.

**Where can I learn more?**

For more information on water and sewer billing visit <http://www.villageoflombard.org/193/Water-Sewer-Billing>.

**I'd like to hear more from the Village. Where can I find out about Village news?**

Connect with the Village on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and sign up for a weekly E-Pride Newsletter at [www.villageoflombard.org/epride](http://www.villageoflombard.org/epride).

WATER & SEWER O&M	FYE 2018	FYE 2019	FYE 2020*	FYE 2021	FYE 2022	FYE 2023	FYE 2024
	Actual	YE Est	Budget	Projection	Projection	Projection	Projection
PERCENT FUND BALANCE	33.7%	34.1%	34.1%	32.9%	30.6%	27.2%	22.6%

SUMMARY							
TOTAL REVENUES	\$16,222,974	\$16,856,268	\$17,314,066	\$17,666,296	\$18,018,576	\$18,370,916	\$18,723,316
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$16,235,018	\$16,653,120	\$17,151,220	\$17,693,910	\$18,255,410	\$18,836,460	\$19,437,780
AMT. REV OVER/(UNDER) EXP.	(\$12,044)	\$203,148	\$162,846	(\$27,614)	(\$236,834)	(\$465,544)	(\$714,464)

Projected Annual Water & Sewer Rate Increases							
	for Operations		for Capital		Amount/1000 gallons		
<b>Variable Rates</b>							
Water O&M	\$7.84	\$7.84	\$8.04	\$8.24	\$8.44	\$8.64	\$8.84
Sewer O&M	\$5.86	\$5.86	\$5.96	\$6.06	\$6.16	\$6.26	\$6.36
Capital	\$1.20	\$1.20	\$1.30	\$1.40	\$1.50	\$1.60	\$1.70
Total Water & Sewer Variable Rate	\$14.90	\$14.90	\$15.30	\$15.70	\$16.10	\$16.50	\$16.90
Percentage Increase	2.05%	0.00%	2.68%	2.61%	2.55%	2.48%	2.42%
<b>Fixed Rates</b>							
Service Charge (per bill)*	\$10.10	\$10.10	\$5.05	\$5.05	\$5.05	\$5.05	\$5.05
Capital Charge (per bill)*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5.00	\$5.25	\$5.50	\$5.75	\$6.00
Total Water & Sewer Fixed Rate	\$10.10	\$10.10	\$10.05	\$10.30	\$10.55	\$10.80	\$11.05
Percentage Increase	3.59%	0.00%	2.49%	2.43%	2.37%	2.31%	2.31%
Cross Connection Charge (per bill)*	\$8.70	\$8.70	\$4.50	\$4.65	\$4.80	\$4.95	\$5.10
Percentage Increase	3.57%	0.00%	3.33%	3.23%	3.13%	3.03%	3.03%

\*FY 2020 monthly billing; prior to 2020 bi-monthly