



INTERNAL MEMO – Water Rate Changes: Staff Talk Points

Purpose: Set a calm tone and provide consistent, factual responses during customer conversations.

New Rates Not Yet Adopted. City Commissioners will vote during the February 9, 2026, regular meeting. Current rates and examples of changes are available on our website at <https://www.abilenehall.com/770/Water-Department>

Opening Line

I know rate changes can be frustrating, and I'm happy to help explain what's changing and why.

If a customer escalates:

I understand. My role is to help explain the changes and point you to the information the City Commission reviewed. Involve a supervisor if needed.

Why are water rates changing?

- The changes are based on a Water Rate and Cost of Service Study.
- The study showed water rates were no longer covering the cost of providing service.
- Water systems are funded only by water rates.
- Property taxes, sales tax, or other revenue sources cannot be used to pay for water service.

Is this paying for something else?

- No. Water rates are restricted to water system expenses only.
 - Base fee: Covers system maintenance, meters, and billing.
 - Usage charges: Cover water treatment, pumping, and delivery.

Additional notes for staff

- Changes are phased over multiple years. Proposed 45% first year, 9% annually through 2030.
- Actual bills vary based on water use.
- Sewer rates are separate and not included in this discussion.

How much more will I pay? Can I lower my bill?

- That depends on usage. Using less water does reduce the usage portion of your bill. We can also point you to conservation tips on our website. The increases are phased over multiple years to help reduce the impact on monthly bills.

Internal reminder:

First time for them. 100th time for us. *Answer with patience.*

Tables on page 2 can be shared with customers to help explain the breakdown.

Example: How Water Rate Changes Affect a Typical Residential Bill

(Based on a real Abilene household with basic residential use)

Current Monthly Charges (Before Rate Changes)

Line Item	Current Monthly Amount
Water – Residential Usage	\$35.85
Water – Protection Fee	\$0.12
Total Water Charges	\$35.97
Sewer, Storm Drainage, Recycling	\$50.02
Total Utility Bill	\$85.99



How the Water Portion Changes Over Time

(Year-to-year changes shown; estimates for illustration only)

This table reflects **only the water portion** of the bill. Other utility charges are not included.

Year	Rate Adjustment	Estimated Water Charges	Change From Prior Year
Current	—	\$35.97	—
2026	+45%	~\$52.15	+~\$16.18
2027	+9%	~\$56.85	+~\$4.70
2028	+9%	~\$61.97	+~\$5.12
2029	+9%	~\$67.55	+~\$5.58
2030	+9%	~\$73.63	+~\$6.08

Estimates rounded for clarity. Actual bills vary based on water use.