

Water authority fees rise by 400%

Payments for disconnects, restorations may total \$87,000 for fiscal year

BY RICH CHOLODOFSKY

The Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County board voted on Wednesday to increase a service fee by 400 percent.

The authority will charge \$50 to shut off water service to third-

party customers who are delinquent paying their sewage bills to other municipal utilities. It will cost \$50 to restore service, too.

Last year, the authority shut off water to about 870 delinquent sewer customers, which generated more than \$17,000. The increase means revenue from the fee could reach \$87,000 in the next fiscal year.

For years, the authority charged \$10 to shut off water at the request of other sewage authorities and \$10 to turn the

water back on for a delinquent customer who paid a bill in full.

"That was the amount we originally put in there, and we never changed it," said Chris Kerr, manager of the Westmoreland authority.

Officials said the county authority is required to shut off water at the request of a local sewer utility. The shut-off fees are collected by the local sewage authorities and paid to the Westmoreland authority.

"We have to do it because it's the law," Kerr said.

Kerr said the increased shut-off fee for third-party customers is identical to the amount the authority charges its own customers to discontinue service for delinquent water bills.

That amount has been \$50 for a number of years, Kerr said.

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