



# Hamilton County

Chris Monzel  
President  
Phone (513) 946-4409  
Fax (513) 946-4407

Dennis Deters  
Vice President  
Phone (513) 946-4405  
Fax (513) 946-4404

Todd Portune  
Phone (513) 946-4401  
Fax (513) 946-4446

## Board of County Commissioners

Room 603  
County Administration Building  
138 East Court Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

[www.hamilton-co.org](http://www.hamilton-co.org)

Jeff Aluotto  
Interim Administrator  
Phone (513) 946-4420  
Fax (513) 946-4444

Jacqueline Panioto  
Clerk of the Board  
Phone (513) 946-4414  
Fax (513) 946-4444

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### CONTACT:

Gena Bell, Office of Commissioner Chris Monzel (513) 946-4410  
Kellie Wise, Office of Commissioner Dennis Deters (513) 946-4405  
Kathy Binns, Office of Commissioner Todd Portune (513) 946-4402

## Commissioners Freeze MSD Rates for 2016

Cincinnati – The Hamilton County Board of Commissioners today announced a freeze on Metropolitan Sewer District rates for the remainder of 2016. Commissioners based their decision on three factors:

First, commissioners are still studying the data and rate options presented in the “MSD Rate Options Analysis Report” dated May 16, 2016.

Second, Commissioners are still studying the need to further explore and analyze recommendations of the MSD Rate Affordability Task Force. The county-appointed task force conducted an extensive analysis of MSD rate structures with a strong focus on bringing more equity and fairness to sewer rates.

And third, Commissioners hope to get a better handle on the probability of Congress adopting the DRAFT legislation the Board jointly developed with the County led Perfect Storm Coalition of Consent Decree Communities and Congressional Representatives Steve Chabot and Marcia Fudge; and Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown, by the end of the year.

“The Rate Affordability Task Force provided us with solid options for enhancing the affordability and equity of our MSD rate structures,” said Commission President Chris Monzel. “It is only prudent that we hold the line on any new rate increases for the rest of 2016 while we explore the implications of this report.”

“We know enough already from the work that has been completed by County Staff; by the Task Force and by our Congressional delegation, to know that rates will definitely not increase at all in 2016,” said Commissioner Todd Portune. “And I remain hopeful that we will also be able to implement one or more of the Task Force’s recommendations by Labor Day and to reduce rates before year’s end.”

"The rate freeze is just the first step in implementing the task force's recommendations, and we'll be evaluating additional ways to protect ratepayers in the weeks to come," said Commissioner Dennis Deters. "While the court-ordered consent decree presents massive challenges to our ratepayers, the Board of Commissioners is committed to innovative, cost-effective solutions at MSD."

Other factors supporting the decision to pause rate increases include:

- Potential modifications to current rate structures, spurred by the work of the Task Force, which may incorporate into 2017 rate recommendations;
- Pending information from the city and MSD on the potential scope and timing of Phase Two of Consent Decree projects;
- Pending information from the city and MSD on the calculation of proposed MSD pension liability to the Cincinnati Retirement System; and
- Slowed pace of capital project delivery, spurred by the 2014 procurement dispute, which temporarily lowered the sewer district’s need for additional capital financing and debt service.
- The probability of Congress adopting the DRAFT legislation the Board jointly developed with the County led Perfect Storm Coalition of Consent Decree Communities and Congressional Representatives Steve Chabot and Marcia Fudge; and Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown

Rates for 2017 will be informed by the audit findings, implemented reforms and the MSD 2017 revenue requirement analysis.

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