

# Water rates will change for FC RV park

State law regarding recreational vehicles prompts city to review how Green Haven RV Park residents pay for service

**By Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — Residents of Green Haven RV Park may soon see an increase in what they pay for water.

In November, the Falls City City Council requested a review of water usage at the park, which has 30 recreational vehicle spaces served by water, a restroom, an office and a manufactured home onsite.

The city has considered the residents in the park as temporary and were required by the city to move every six months, but state law states otherwise.

The law (ORS 197.493) says “local governments may not prohibit the placement or occupancy of a recreational vehicle, impose any limit on the length of occupancy of a recreational vehicle” if it is in a mobile home or RV park and served by water, sewer and electricity. All three of those utilities are available at Green Haven, 200 Church St.

Mayor Terry Ungricht labeled the status as “non-temporary.”

“It’s weird,” Ungricht said. “If you have a site that has a permanent water, sewer and electric hook up, they are no longer considered temporary under state law. They don’t designate them as permanent, but they are saying that we cannot require them to move. They basically become permanent residents.”

Currently, the park is on one meter and billed for a 2-inch water line at the commercial rate, averaging about \$243.54 per month in 2015. The city used the 2015 number for comparison because the park has a water leak in 2016 that significantly



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

The city of Falls City may negotiate a new way of charging residents of Green Haven RV Park in Falls City for water service. City councilors at the Dec. 8 expressed support for charging the residential rate in the park.

ly increased usage. In 2016, the average monthly bill was \$551.59.

Ungricht said other multi-unit complexes in town with one meter are typically charged with a “multiplier,” meaning each unit is charged a base rate for service and overage fees for any usage more than 5,000 gallons per month.

“They are getting a real big break on their water,” Ungricht said. “It’s a tough one. I think that they are definitely taking advantage of other customers on the system.”

During a discussion on Dec. 8, the council directed Ungricht to begin negotia-

	Total usage	Monthly average	Total Charges	Monthly charges
<b>2015</b>	578,000	48,167	\$2992.48	\$243.54
<b>2014</b>	646,000	53,833	\$3,059.46	\$254.96
<b>2013</b>	409,000	34,083	\$2,208.65	\$184.05

tions with the park to change the way it is billed to match what other users on the system pay.

He proposed several possible solutions, but the council chose to propose charging each unit served

with water the residential base rate. That rate is \$41.96 per month plus any overage costs for usage of more than 5,000 gallons. That would mean a \$1,258.80 base rate if all 30 spots were full.

“I’ve talked to a lot of peo-

ple, and everybody that I’ve talked to feels the same,” Councilor Tony Meier said. “If you move one of those trailers out of there and you put it on a lot out here, they would pay the basic bill no matter what they use. Being that he

now has 30 permanent spots, he (park owner Richard Bowman) should be (paying) the equivalent for that.”

Councilor Dennis Sickles wanted to make sure the city notified Bowman, before changing the rates.

“I agree it needs to be fair and equitable to everyone else in this community,” Sickles said.

Councilor Jenn Drill suggested that the city could phase in the increase, charging the park for just half the sites for six months and begin charging for all of them after that.

“That way it is not such a shocker,” she said.

Green Haven resident Tamara Herren works part-time in the park office. She said there may be no way to avoid sticker shock for some residents.

“I can understand that water rates need to be raised,” she said. “As a member of the park, I know this is going to be a problem for the owner.”

She said Bowman has tried to keep rents as low as possible and hasn’t raised them in years.

“He’s going to have to now,” she said.

Bowman said a preliminary meeting with city staff indicated water rates could double or triple. With residents moving in and out of the park frequently, it would be difficult to track how many spots to charge each month, he added.

Bowman said he couldn’t comment further as he plans to fight the increase legally.

Ungricht said once a new rate structure for the park has been established, he will bring it before the council for final approval.

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