



David Samson / Forum file photo

The city of West Fargo logo is seen illuminated on a water tower in the city.

## West Fargo utility fees going up once again

BY WENDY REUER  
The Forum

WEST FARGO — Utility rates in West Fargo will go up once again in 2026 as part of a five-year Public Works plan to “catch up” on fees.

West Fargo city commissioners recently approved new garbage, recycling, sewer and water rates for 2026 ahead of the city’s annual budget process.

The rate changes mean the bill for an average residential utility customer who uses about 6,000 gallons of water and has a 64-gallon garbage bin will go from \$128.81 per month to \$142.88 per month.

Water rates will increase from \$54.23 per month to \$55.86. Sewer rates will increase from \$47.03 to \$56.62; sanitation will increase from \$23.55 per month to \$25.90 per month; forestry will increase from \$3 to \$3.50 and the monthly vector fee will stay flat at \$1 per month.

Public Works Director Matt Andvik said the 2026 utility rate increases are the second part of a three-year plan to increase rates in the city following a period without increases between 2020 and 2024.

“This is year two of a catch-up,” Andvik said. “We had zero increases since 2020. ... From here on out, the increases will be a lot less.”

In 2025, the city increased water, sewer and garbage fees after Andvik requested the rate increases to ensure the department had sufficient reserves to cover unexpected costs.

Andvik said the increases will help strengthen the Public Works sanitary reserve funds and modernize collection operations. It will also help keep up with the rates the city of Fargo charges for garbage disposal and water.

West Fargo buys its

water from the city of Fargo and also sends its wastewater to Fargo as it works to decommission the West Fargo lagoon system. Andvik said Fargo is expected to raise its water rates in 2027 and 2029.

“Bringing it back every year, we are able to see what is going on and can adjust,” Andvik said. “I think it works going forward, especially when we are getting these increases from Fargo. If the increases come in less than we are expecting, we will be able to lower those increases. If that is higher, we may have to adjust for that, as well.”

He noted the increases also help West Fargo prepare for continued expansion that is expected to gain traction on the north side of the city after the completion of the F-M Area Diversion.

The Public Works Department hopes to develop a long-term waste disposal strategy for the next 10 to 15 years. West Fargo pays to take its garbage to the Fargo landfill, where rates for West Fargo are expected to increase by about \$6 per ton in 2026, Andvik said.

West Fargo’s utility rate hikes will also help the forestry department build its reserve funds and plan for long-term projects, he said.

Andvik said the department is responsible for 21,000 boulevard trees in the city of West Fargo. The forestry department also works to eliminate and protect the city’s trees from the invasive and tree-killing emerald ash borer.

West Fargo commissioners approved the rate increases at their July 21 meeting with Commissioner Roben Anderson voting against the increases.

The 2026 utility rates will go into effect Jan. 1. Readers can reach Forum reporter Wendy Reuer at wreuer@forumcomm.com or 701-241-5530.

## Father-daughter duo bring inspiration



Chris Flynn / The Forum

Tom Whitehead and his daughter, Emily Whitehead, finished their TEDx talk at Brewhalla on Wednesday, July 23, 2025. Emily was 6 years old when she became the first child ever to receive CAR T-cell therapy, an experimental treatment for her leukemia. Emily has remained cancer-free. TEDxFargo continues today with WDAY Chief Meteorologist Jesse Ritka, North Dakota State University President David Cook and more.

### LOCAL BRIEFS

#### Sentencing hearing set for Sen. Nicole Mitchell after burglary conviction

DETROIT LAKES — A sentencing date for a Minnesota senator convicted of burglary has been set.

The sentencing hearing for Sen. Nicole Mitchell is scheduled for 10 a.m. Sept. 10 at the Detroit Lakes Courthouse, according to court documents.

Mitchell, a DFL senator from Woodbury, was convicted of two felony burglary counts by a Becker County jury on Friday, July 18. She was charged with first-degree burglary and possession of burglary or theft tools after she was arrested in her stepmother’s home in April 2024.

During the trial, Mitchell said she entered the house to check on her stepmother, who has Alzheimer’s.

The felony burglary charge carries a mandatory minimum sentence of at least six months in jail or a county workhouse, and a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$35,000 fine. Felony possession of burglary tools carries a maximum sentence of three years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Mitchell’s legal team announced Monday, July 21, that Mitchell will resign from the Minnesota Senate no later than 5 p.m. Monday, Aug. 4.

#### Canadian wildfires to bring smoky air to Minnesota

ST. PAUL — Another round of smoky air will cover the vast majority of Minnesota through Friday, the state Pollution Control Agency warned in an alert issued Wednesday afternoon.

The alert, which covers virtually all of the state excluding the Rochester

area, is in effect until 11 p.m. Friday, July 25. The agency attributed the smoke to wildfires in the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

According to the alert, air quality will be unhealthy for all people in northern Minnesota, including East Grand Forks, Moorhead, Bemidji, Detroit Lakes, Alexandria, Brainerd and Duluth.

Air quality will be unhealthy for sensitive groups in the southern part of the state, including the Twin Cities, St. Cloud, Willmar and Worthington.

According to the agency, those at greatest risk for negative health effects are people with breathing conditions, heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes, pregnant women, children, older adults, and people who have increased exposure to the outdoors. The agency advised reducing or eliminating activities that contribute to air pollution, like outdoor burning or using residential wood-burning devices. The agency also suggested reducing vehicle trips and idling.

Winds are expected to push the smoke back north on Friday, at which point air quality should gradually improve from south to north, the agency said.

#### Fargo Public Schools hires new elementary school assistant principal

FARGO — Fargo Public Schools has hired a new assistant principal at Jefferson Elementary School.

Jason Mielke assumes the position for the 2025-26 school year after Shalyn Fontana left for an administrative position in another district, an FPS news release said.



Mielke

District in Avon, Minn., since 2022.

He has also worked as an elementary principal at public schools in Sartell, Foley and Rush City, Minn.

Mielke holds a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education K-8 from Saint Cloud State University, a master’s degree in Educational Leadership from Minnesota State University Moorhead and a superintendent license from Saint Cloud State.

He is seeking a doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of South Carolina, the release said.

#### Woman injured in Clay County crash

FLOWING TOWNSHIP, Minn. — A Twin Cities-area woman was injured in a crash with a semi-truck at 7:15 a.m. Wednesday in rural Clay County.

According to a report from the Minnesota State Patrol, Jeffery Lynn Collins, 69, of Moorhead, was driving a 2018 Peterbilt semi eastbound on 90th Avenue North while Ashley Anne Evers, 24, of Champlin, was driving a 2015 Nissan Altima southbound on Highway 9. The semi and Nissan collided at the intersection of the two roads.

Evers suffered injuries that are not considered life-threatening, according to the patrol. She was taken to Sanford in Fargo. Collins was uninjured. Both were wearing seat belts, and alcohol was not a factor in the crash, the report said.

The Clay County

Sheriff’s Office and Sanford Ambulance also responded to the crash.

Flowing Township is roughly 25 miles northeast of Moorhead by road.

#### Hog roast in Pelican Rapids to raise money for HIA Hospice

PELICAN RAPIDS, Minn. — An event in Pelican Rapids early next month will raise money for a Fargo hospice facility.

The 10th annual JJ’s Hog Roast for Hospice will generate funds for HIA Hospice, formerly Hospice of the Red River Valley.

The fundraiser takes place at 51943 County Highway 9 in Pelican Rapids, a quarter mile north of Zorbaz on Pelican Lake, on Saturday, Aug. 2, according to a news release.

A free-will donation is encouraged for the event, which begins with a hog roast dinner at 11 a.m.

The Show & Shine car show runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. There is a \$15 donation as the entrance fee for the car show.

Side x Side UTV/ATV mud races start at 12:30 p.m.

Throughout the day, a kids bounce house, hole-in-one golf challenge, mobile escape room and silent auction are available.

Entertainment begins at 7 p.m., including a DJ service and laser light show.

Free, overnight primitive camper and tent spots are available for those who don’t want to drive home after the event, the release said.

Since its first year, the event has raised more than \$106,000 for the hospice organization, the release said.

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