The Town of Paonia must make major repairs to the water and sewer system in the next three years to ensure the continued delivery of clean, healthy drinking water. These are very expensive upgrades and much of it will be paid for with Federal and State grants and loans that town staff is securing. However, money will need to be provided by the Town in the form of matching funds for those grants and to make loan payments. Due to the restrictions on TABOR, our water, sewer, and trash services are structured as independent businesses, which means they must rely only on the fees received to provide services. Grants can be used for improvements, not services, and all grants need matching funds which come from fees. It is a catch-22 that places the Town in a very hard position.

As such, the Town needs to raise its water, sewer, and trash rates to a minimum of $130 a month.

This is breathtaking, especially for those living at the lower edges of the wage scale and those on a fixed income. The Town Board has agonized over this difficult decision but realized that without the increases, we cannot continue to provide clean drinking water to Paonia, nor meet State standards on sewage treatment or pay for trash fees.

Help with utility Bills if You Qualify for LEAP

There is assistance for households that qualify for the LEAP program. LEAP assistance is offered by the State to help pay energy bills for low-income households. The Town offers a 20% reduction on the base water rate for anyone who brings in a notification that they qualify for the LEAP program. Please call 1-866-HEAT-HELP (1-866-432-8435) FORM MORE INFORMATION ABOUT QUALIFYING FOR leap. You can also apply for past due bill assistance through the LEAP program.

<https://cdhs.colorado.gov/leap>