

City Page

NEWS & INFORMATION FROM THE CITY OF CHARLOTTE

Protect Water - Be Grease Free!

There are many things we can do to protect water quality. One of the easiest is to **NEVER** dump cooking fats, oils and grease down the drain or kitchen disposal. Grease clogs create blockages in pipe (either your plumbing, or the public system). Eventually sewage will back up in the clogged pipe and flow out through your plumbing fixtures (yechhh!), or out of manholes. When it overflows from the public sewer main, sewage can seep through and across ground surfaces into creeks and lakes! Most overflows are relatively small and can be stopped and cleaned up quickly. But if ignored, overflows impair water quality and can result in property damage, foul odors and fish kills. In a severe situation, they can create public health and safety hazards.

Grease is a culprit in more than half of all sewer overflows in our community. Overflows mean nuisance, cleanup time and cost to everyone. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities works day in, day out to maintain the public system and keep wastewater pipes flowing freely. But pipe clogs are unavoidable unless customers keep their drains free of grease in the first place!

Here's how you can help. After cooking with any kind of fat, oil or grease:

- Allow it to cool, then drain the fat into a disposable can. Freeze it or give it more time to harden fully before throwing the can in the trash.
- Use a lidded, disposable container to mix liquid vegetable fats and an absorbent material – cat litter, newspaper or coffee grounds, perhaps – then put the container in the trash.

You also can dispose of grease at one of Mecklenburg County's four full-service recycling centers. To find the one nearest you, call **704.336.2673**. Thanks for helping keep pipes clear and our community waters safe and clean. If you'd like a speaker or more information about this topic, visit www.cmutilites.com or call **704.399.2221**.



Speak Your Mind

Want a voice in planning for Charlotte's future? Sign up for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission's public forum.



Speak for **3** minutes.

Sessions will be held quarterly beginning Monday, July 11. Up to 10 speakers can address the Commission on any planning related issues or policies. The forum is not intended for comments on pending rezoning petitions.

Participants will have up to three minutes to speak and can register by calling 704-336-2205. The deadline for registering to speak at the July 11 public forum is 5 p.m. on Friday, July 8, 2005.

Budget Maintains Tax Rate, Essential Services

On Monday, June 20, City Council approved an operating budget for FY2006 and 2007 that maintains the current property tax rate and essential City services. Charlotte's property tax will remain 42 cents per \$100 valuation, which amounts to \$840 on a \$200,000 home.

The budget came to the full Council as a recommendation from the Budget Committee. The budget is balanced by several reductions in the General Fund and one time transfers from the Risk and Debt Service Fund reserves. The reductions include:

- \$400,000 from the City's Recruitment and Retention Fund
- \$300,000 from Training and Employee Development
- \$300,000 from Corporate Communications and
- \$130,000 from Neighborhood Development annexation positions and
- Elimination of 19 filled positions
- \$160,000 from funding allocated for the City's contribution to Advantage Carolina and the Charlotte Regional Partnership.

The Council also approved service expansions in several areas, including:

- 62 new police officers (31 positions on July 1, 17 on January 1, 2006 and 14 shifted from the DARE program to patrol duties)
- 6 new code enforcement positions
- The purchase of land for a new fire station in the Arboretum area and
- Funding for additional road planning and design.

These service expansions will be financed by reductions in the General Fund and the following measures:

- \$1 million transfer from the City's Risk Fund
- Increasing the cost recovery rate for regulatory fees from 60 to 100 percent
- Approximately \$65,000 from the City Council discretionary fund and
- \$975,000 from the City's Debt Service Fund Balance.

The budget also reallocated resources from the Neighborhood Matching Grant, Innovative Housing and Housing Revitalization programs to fund the City's After School programs. The



The budget's service expansions include 62 new police officers and six new positions in code enforcement.

The 411 on CharMeck 311

What's in a number? Great customer service when you call **CharMeck 311**, bringing greater access to City and County governments through the new customer service line, which begins operating 24/7 on Tuesday, July 5. Here's the "411" on CharMeck 311...

Big emergency? Call 911. Small annoyance? Dial 311. 311 reduces the burden of calls going to 911. You can request an officer for a non life-threatening emergency such as noise complaints, graffiti, truancy, or loitering.

We're all about animals...and 311 can help you find a lost pet or report a dangerous animal to Animal Control.

Sometimes it's taxing...to understand your vehicle tax or personal property tax bills. Call 311 to access that information and speak with a tax specialist.

If that pothole has you seeing red...call 311 to report a pothole or request an improvement to roads, street signs or traffic lights.

Don't "junk it"...call 311 to request a service from Solid Waste Services.

It's a walk in the park...to dial 311 and reserve a City or County park facility, register for programs, report problems related to facility or request a permit or map.

Water bill too high? Water pressure too low? Call 311 to access your account or get information about Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities.

Is it a code violation or just bad taste? Call 311 to report a potential code enforcement violation within the Charlotte city limits.

We can take a flood of calls...about storm water. Call 311 regarding storm water erosion or storm drain blockage.

And if 311 can't handle your request...we'll direct you to the right person and right place for City and County services.

And if that's not enough, 311 also can provide directory assistance to City and County offices, schedules for meetings, and information about City and County services.

CharMeck 311. 24/7. Those numbers add up to great customer service.

