



Cavs prep for season amid injury concerns

SPORTS, 1B

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City sewer rates to rise 5.3% annually

Council OKs 4-year plan set to begin in 2026

Derek Kreider
Akron Beacon Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Rising sewer rates are coming to Akron in 2026.

In an 11-1 vote, City Council approved a four-year plan at its Oct. 20 meeting that will raise rates 5.3% each year starting next year. Ward 7 Councilman Donnie Kammer voted no, and at-large Councilman Eric Garrett was absent. Typical residents can expect to see their water bills rise by at least \$22 a month above what they now pay once all of these increases have been implemented.

And monthly bills could increase by yet another \$15 starting in 2028 if Akron is ordered to build a new water treatment plant as part of the consent decree; the city is challenging that requirement.

Typical residents can expect to see their water bills rise by at least \$22 a month above what they now pay.

For the average Akron customer using four Hcf (hundred cubic feet) per month, the plan approved by City Council would increase monthly bills from the current \$46.39 to \$53.63 in 2026, \$55.99 in 2027, \$63.51 in 2028 and \$68.65 in 2029, according to a chart provided by the city.

The city's proposal also expands the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to include renters alongside homeowners — a move that will provide 40% in savings for eligible ratepayers — and to residents with a Homestead exemption.

Without factoring in the proposed water treatment plant, tenants in the program would see 2026 bills \$12.70 less than what they're paying in 2025. Those with a Homestead Exemption will shave \$3.63 off their bills in 2026 compared to 2025. Average bills will increase \$1.43 in 2027, \$4.50 in 2028 and \$3.08 in 2029.

See SEWER RATES, Page 3A

DEATH DELAYED

Critics say death penalty not applied evenly in OH



Hamilton County Prosecutor Connie Pillich decided to pursue the death penalty against Rodney Hinton Jr., who is accused of intentionally driving a car into a sheriff's deputy. PHIL DIDION/THE ENQUIRER

Prosecutors defend decisions to seek capital charges

Haley BeMiller, Kevin Grasha and Stephanie Warsmith State Bureau | USA TODAY NETWORK

When she took office in January, Hamilton County Prosecutor Connie Pillich became the first Democrat in nearly a century to serve as the county's elected prosecutor. ● Pillich is also Catholic. And like many Catholics, she has moral misgivings about the death penalty. ● "If it is sought, it will be because I allow it to be sought," Pillich said in a recent interview. ● In May, Pillich was confronted with a case in which the law seemed clear.

Prosecutors say Rodney Hinton Jr. intentionally drove a car into a sheriff's deputy and killed him because he was distraught after watching video footage of Cincinnati police fatally shooting his son. The deputy, Larry Henderson, was working traffic control for a University of Cincinnati graduation.

Pillich consulted with her legal mentors, a spiritual adviser and her husband,

who also is Catholic. To her, the choice was obvious. Ohio specifically allows the death penalty in cases where law enforcement are targeted or killed on duty.

Hinton's attorneys contend he has a serious mental illness and shouldn't be executed. Still, Pillich's decision underscored a belief shared by many prosecutors.

See DEATH PENALTY, Page 7A

"It's a lot to ask elected officials to handle cases like this without political influences."

Don Malarcik
Akron defense attorney



Smoke Smugglers shop in Akron is seen July 22. Akron City Council has approved new smoke and vape shop rules. LISA SCALFARO/AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

Council passes smoke, vape shop rules

Derek Kreider
Akron Beacon Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Akron City Council Council unanimously approved two measures crafted to halt the wildfire spread of smoke and vape shops in the city.

The first requires new smoke and vape shops to be licensed before opening. According to the ordinance, proprietors failing to obtain a license will be fined \$1,000.

"This is a good step, a great step in the right direction, having them li-

censed," at-large Councilman Jeff Fusco said.

He criticized the advertising tactics used by vape product manufacturers, saying they target children.

The legislation, passed at council's Oct. 20 regular meeting, creates a tiered response to businesses violating the city's laws governing smoke shops. The first offense will cost \$200, the second is \$1,000, and the third and any subsequent offense will be \$2,000. If the business or proprietor is found to be a nuisance under the provisions outlined in the Akron Municipal Code, the city can

revoke the shop's license.

Any business classified as a smoke shop will be required to get a vape products license before selling any smoke shop product, including accessories.

The second ordinance removes vape shops from the list of allowed conditional uses, defines smoke shops and outlines development requirements for smoke shops.

The ordinance defines smoke shops as a retail business utilizing 10% or more of its floor, shelf, storage or display areas

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