



Finance Manager/Treasurer Profile Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District

The Organization

While headquartered in the city of Bellingham, Washington, the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District's service area surrounds Lake Whatcom to the east and includes the communities of Geneva, Sudden Valley, and the North Shore of Lake Whatcom.

Founded in 1968, the District operates as a special purpose district authorized under Title 57 Revised Code of Washington. The District provides water and/or sewer service to a population of approximately 11,000 customers within an 18 square mile area located wholly within the environmentally sensitive Lake Whatcom watershed. The District is operated by 13 full time staff represented by AFSCME and five full time non-represented staff, a five-member board of commissioners, and has an annual budget of approximately \$8 million, which includes approximately \$2 million for capital improvement program projects. Aside from its utility operating and capital improvement funds, the District maintains fully-funded operating and contingency reserves for each utility. The District has approximately \$8.5 million in outstanding debt, which is divided into \$5.6 million in revenue bonds and \$2.9 million in state revolving fund loans.

The natural terrain, proximity to Lake Whatcom, and various residential communities make operating water and sewer utilities unique and challenging. The District operates a water treatment plant that provides water to Sudden Valley and Geneva residents via five reservoirs, five pump stations, and 70 miles of transmission and distribution lines. On the north shore near Agate Bay, the District provides water service by a well and water treatment plant, one pump station, and two reservoirs. The District also distributes water purchased from the city of Bellingham to its Eagleridge neighborhood customers. All water distributed by the District meets or surpasses regulatory standards—the District has consistently received the Washington State Department of Health's TOP Platinum Award for 19 consecutive years of regulatory compliance at its Sudden Valley treatment plant.

The District owns and operates 28 sewer lift stations and over 75 miles of sewage collection and conveyance lines located on both the north and south shores of Lake Whatcom. The District does not treat the sewage it collects, instead delivering its wastewater to the city of Bellingham's treatment plant for treatment and disposal under the terms of an interlocal agreement that expires in 2034. The District pays for treatment on a negotiated volumetric basis, and is responsible for funding nearly 5% of the cost of capital improvements to the plant, which equates to the percentage of plant capacity required by the District.

The Position

Under the direction of the General Manager, the Finance Manager/Treasurer serves as a member of the management team and is responsible for the leadership and management of all financial operations of the District, including planning, organizing, and controlling financial resources and expenditures processes. The Finance Manager/Treasurer manages the Finance Department, which is comprised of four full time professionals, and is responsible for financial policy development, planning, investments, assessments, and debt service obligations. The Finance Manager/Treasurer

also leads the development of annual capital and operating budgets, preparation of comprehensive financial statements, and directs the District's accounting, utility billing and reporting systems.

Other responsibilities include:

- Interprets and administers District policy, including weighing risks to the District and proceeding with the best solution or action;
- Develops business practices and procedures, and creates financial standards for determining success/progress;
- Ensures the maintenance of a high level of customer service;
- Promotes high-performance teamwork to ensure timeliness and quality of deliverables;
- Provides and ensures communication with and between District management in the completion of department activities; and
- Seeks means of improving District services and programs through maintaining relationships with industry peers.

Opportunities and Challenges

1. With a regional desire to limit development within the watershed, the rate of new connections to the District's facilities is relatively low. As a result, District revenues are predominantly comprised of water and sewer rates, which must fund ongoing operations, as well as replacement of infrastructure, much of which is approaching 50 years in age.
2. Recognizing the significant importance of reliable operation of its 28 sewer lift stations, many of which are located immediately adjacent to Lake Whatcom, the District typically self-finances the renovation of one station per year at a cost of \$500,000-\$1,000,000 per station.
3. The last major renovation to the District's Sudden Valley water treatment plant was completed nearly 30 years ago. As a result, the District is currently completing a master planning process that defines a phased and strategic approach to renovating the plant over the 20-year planning horizon.
4. The city of Bellingham will likely be undertaking two significant improvements to its Post Point wastewater treatment plant over the next 5-10 years: construction of a new solids handling facility (District share currently estimated at \$10 million), and incorporation of nutrient removal processes to meet new regulatory requirements (District share may be upwards of \$15 million).
5. The District currently offers customer assistance through rate reduction to qualifying senior or disabled low-income customers, and administration of payment plans to those with significant account balances. The Board has also indicated a desire to develop an additional customer assistance program that would be integrated with the District's billing systems and administered through partnership with a local non-profit.

Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate will possess a thorough knowledge of the principles and practices of governmental accounting, including Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP); budgetary control; auditing, including Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS); financial standards; and public administration theory and best practices. The ideal candidate will also have experience in working in a financial management capacity for another similarly-sized local government in Washington State. Other desired attributes include:

- Good interpersonal skills and habits;
- Strong work ethic with the ability to consistently lead by example;

- The ability to provide excellent customer service and interact tactfully, professionally, and courteously with customers, other members of the public, and District staff;
- Experience and ability in supervising, evaluating, training, and motivating staff;
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills with the ability to confidently provide presentations in public meetings and write detail-oriented and accurate reports;
- Ability to analyze and solve a variety of complex fiscal problems; and
- Be forward thinking.

Education and Experience

A Bachelor's degree in accounting, business administration, public administration, finance or a related field with a minimum of five years of progressively responsible professional level accounting experience, including three years in a supervisory role.

Compensation and Benefits

- \$99,500-126,000 per year, DOQ
- medical, dental and vision insurance
- Washington Public Employees Retirement System (PERS)
- VEBA contribution
- 11 paid holidays
- sick leave
- paid vacation

The Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified candidates are strongly encouraged to apply by March 25, 2021 (first review, open until filled). Applications, supplemental questions, resumes and cover letters will only be accepted electronically in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format. Please submit applications to jobs@lwwsd.org. All required application-related documents, as well as additional information regarding the District and this position, are available on the District's website at: <https://lwwsd.org/about-us/careers/>.



Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District
1220 Lakeway Drive
Bellingham, Washington 98229