



CITY OF WATERVLIET

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City Nearly Complete with Installation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI); Water/Sewer Bills Sent to Customers

City extends due date to water/sewer bills, providing additional time for payment to all customers.

Watervliet, MI – Over the course of the past eight months, city staff and contractors have worked to install advanced water metering technology on nearly 80% of all city water meters. The technology upgrade will allow the City to provide more value for customers through improved service. It will also help increase the efficiency of the public works department, saving costs to both the City and customer.

Currently, City water reads are conducted on a quarterly basis, requiring City staff to read meters individually. As such, water bills do not reflect real time water use as this is a timely process that does not allow all meters to be read simultaneously. Additionally, this process doesn't include data uploads, the calculation of water/sewer fees, and any issues that may arise during these steps. City staff also double checks water/sewer bills before they are mailed and works to ensure that each bill is calculated accurately and appropriately. Equally, the City's current method of reading meters relies on customers calling the City to address service interruptions and leaks, this can delay addressing various issues that occur and is common within most municipal water/sewer systems.

In the coming months, the City will formally launch the new AMI technology and allow for real-time water usage to be calculated. This will give customers the ability to have more control over their water use and direct access to their water use/bill. It will also make it possible to detect unusual changes in water use that may be a sign of an otherwise undetectable leak in the home or unit. AMI, once formally launched, will give the City's public works team an increased ability to detect, potentially locate, and repair service issues before they become service interruptions.

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The timeline and installation of this new technology has been impacted in part, by the COVID-19 pandemic, an understaffed public works department, and the ability to enter customer's homes who have a meter located within their residence. "Two of the biggest hurdles we had to overcome was working with residents to allow us to change out the meter heads located within their homes, and having an understaffed public works department who assisted our contractors (PMI). This really delayed our projected timelines" said City Manager Tyler Dotson. "Some folks were hesitant; others just wouldn't cooperate. We understand having people enter your home isn't ideal and can be unsettling, but we worked through it and for the most part the large majority of our customers were really helpful and willing. The last 40 or so homes were tough to get into, but in the end, we were able to get it done and avoid shutting off services, something we take very seriously and try to avoid whenever possible" he went on to say.

In addition to the new meter heads being installed, the City installed a long range radio base station on top of the City's water tower. This will allow remote access and connectivity to the water meters, allowing for real-time usage and remote metering. While not all of the water meters used by residents are currently compatible with this new technology, the plan is to continue to integrate them into this system over the next couple of years.

Due to the installation delays and understaffing, the City was forced to forgo their 2nd quarter billing cycle. Customers were recently billed for two quarters worth of sewer and water use. At the April 5 City Commission meeting, commissioners approved an extra month (two total) for customers to make a payment in full with another two weeks after that period being provided to avoid a service shut-off.

The City will look to formally launch the new technology and interactive customer portal in the next few months once City staff has the system fully up and operational. This information will be provided at a later billing period along with an explanation of the upgrades as well as instructions on how to take full advantage of the benefits it offers.

For more information, please call Watervliet City Hall at 269-463-6769 during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30am-5:00pm.