CITY OF CORSICANA, TEXAS

June 29, 2012

Customers have recently been asking questions at the Utility Billing Department about the accuracy of the water meters being used by the City. There have been untruthful claims used to start rumors about the meters. Because there are rumors being passed on as the truth, I thought it would be a good idea to share with everyone who is interested in the subject the facts.

In 2001, the City's consultant, Johnson Controls, recommended that the City change the type of meters being used in the system. The meter replacement was part of a project to install radio or remote read meters. The City replaced all of the meters and installed new meters. The new meters were a type known as a PMM meter. PMM meters are the most widely used meters in the world today. The PMM meters were warranted to be accurate within 3%, which is the standard in the industry.

The City discovered in 2007 that the meters were sensitive to pressure fluctuations. In other words, pressure changes in the system would cause the register on the meter to turn. Immediately, the city made the decision to stop using the PMM meters and begin using a meter called a PD or positive displacement meter. This type of meter is not effected by pressure changes. Then the city staff set out to research the issues to determine the significance of the problem with the PMM meters. Several meters were set around town side by side with other types of meters. Fire hydrants were flushed to try and make the meters over read. After gathering data from multiple locations around the City, it was discovered that the vast majority (99.9%) of the meters were well within the 3% tolerance used by the industry. The City also discovered that there were isolated cases of some meters misreading in amounts greater than 3% and sometimes the meter would over read and other times the meter would under read.

In order to investigate this further, the City hired an engineering firm that specializes in municipal water systems to analyze the findings and to make recommendations to the Council. The recommendation was to study the problem more by placing more data gathering sites around the city and investing many man hours in collecting much more data. There was no guaranteed outcome and the cost was high. In addition, the Council investigated the possibility of filing suit against the meter manufacturer. The conclusion was that using City resources to pursue litigation was not the best use of the City's money given the cost of a potential suit and the uncertainty of any outcome. Later the City sought to employ another lawyer on a contingency basis to pursue the matter, at no cost to the City. Although there was some interest at first, the economic considerations involved in such a suit ultimately resulted in the matter not being pursued.

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The Council chose to respond to the problem with PMM meters in a different way. First, because the PMM meters, like all meters, can malfunction, citizens who report problems with their meter have the option of getting their names placed on the meter change out list. For those persons who desire a change from a PMM to a PD meter, the City will make that change as part of a regular change out program, based upon the evidence of any reported problem that a citizen may have with a water bill.

The City has a process by which the citizen's complaint is analyzed. The type of meter is verified, the property owner's line is checked for leaks, history of usage is analyzed comparing present bills with past bills before the new meters were installed. In those cases where there is no explanation for a significant increase in a citizen's water bill, an adjustment to the bill may be made.

At some point in the future, the City's regular meter change out program will result in the replacement of all PMM meters with PD meters. In the meantime, the City will continue to respond to complaints on a case by case basis.

In summary:

1. The City discovered that PMM meters are susceptible to misreading by a small percentage the amount of water going through the meter. Based on the data the consultant obtained, it appears that the vast majority (99.9%) of the meters read within the meter's specifications.

2. When a PMM meter does misread, it sometimes results in an overcharge, and sometimes results in an undercharge.

3. Even for those meters that might misread, the vast, vast majority of misreads are within the 3% +/- tolerance which is the standard in the industry.

4. The City has an informal process in place to investigate significant fluctuations in a citizen's water bill. The City will look at all the factors that might contribute to a bill being high and takes appropriate action.

5. The PMM meters are in the process of being replaced with PD meters.

I hope this factual information is helpful. This is not a new topic for water customers in the City of Corsicana. It was reported in the Corsicana Daily Sun article, "Water Woes Still Flowing" on June 1, 2007. The City gives no discounts, only adjustments that are based on obvious malfunctions or verified leaks. The City staff is always willing to answer any questions.

Sincerely yours,
Chuck McClanahan, Mayor