

The Community Planner

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Planning, Financing, and Administration News

Remote Water Meter Systems

Over the past year a number of cities have asked us about water meter replacement and the benefits of a remote metering system. Remote metering systems have several benefits.

After a remote read device is installed, meter readings can be read without entering private property. The most common way to receive water meter readings is by using a laptop with remote reading software installed and driving through town. Other smaller communities have had great success with a localized tower which captures the readings from the individual meters on the system. Remote metering provides more accurate water meters readings, customer convenience (not reading meters) and time saved for data entry of water bill readings.

While these are advantages, Cities should carefully consider some of the following items before moving forward with a full system replacement of water meters and remote read system.

Upcoming Program Deadlines

April-June 2012—Public Facilities Authority Project Priority List Deadlines (Water, Wastewater, and Storm)

March 30, 2012—Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Trail Grant Applications Due



WHY REPLACEMENT? What are the current age of the water meters and is the City is the losing revenue with inaccurate readings, is the public calling for an automated system?

SEWER BILLING The majority of communities base the levels of sanitary sewer billings off water consumption. This should be taken into consideration with the City's replacement analysis since it may be additional revenue.

FINANCING The City should consider how the project will be financed. The State of Minnesota Public Facilities Authority has provided funding for remote water meters with low interest loans in the past, however it appears that most of these projects are no longer

eligible for funding on their Intended Use Plan (IUP). The City can use other funds such as reserves or potential other loan programs as well.

CURRENT RATE STRUCTURE How will the cost of new water meter system along with remote read system affect current rates? Will current rates have to be increased to pay for the system?

SOFTWARE INTEGRATION Cities should check to see how their utility billing software will integrate with remote water reading system.

COST/BENEFIT Replacing water meters community wide and integrated a remote read system can be a large cost to the community. Therefore it should be analyzed when the City can expect a payback on their investment with all variables considered.

I&S Group has performed an analysis of the considerations above for several communities, and would be happy to discuss the options further with your City.

At Your Service

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

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