



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Public Works and Transportation Committee **Date:** February 6, 2004
From: Robert Gonzalez, P.Eng.
Director, Engineering **File:**
Re: **Richmond Long Range Drinking Water Management Plan:**
Volunteer Water Meter Program Update

Staff Recommendation

That the Richmond Long Range Drinking Water Management Plan: Richmond Water Meter Program Update report from the Director of Engineering, dated February 6, 2004, be received for information.

Robert Gonzalez, P.Eng.
Director, Engineering
(4150)

Att.1

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER

Staff Report

Origin

On December 8, 2003, City Council adopted Bylaw 7620, amending the City's Waterworks and Water Rates Bylaw. The amendment includes provisions that allow the City to bill residential water customers based on a metered rate and is in alignment with the City's long-term water management strategy. The purpose of this monthly report is to update Council on the progress of the water metering program.

Findings Of Fact

Volunteer Water Meter Program

The Richmond Volunteer Water Metering program will be launched on February 23, 2004. The fact that the program has not technically started has not stopped 109 property owners from volunteering for the program to date. Current home owner interest is being generated by media stories centered on water metering. It is worth noting that an article in the Richmond Review on January 31, 2004, that was centered on customers with existing meters generated a surge of volunteer water meter customers.

Operational Considerations

The project team has decided to proceed with volunteer meter installations starting February 6, 2004. Though this is in advance of the official program launch date, the large number of volunteers to date has become a concern to the project team with respect to wait times for water meter installation. Given the large response to the volunteer program without advertising, wait times may become longer than desired once advertising begins. By clearing the current requests for meter installations the wait times for the program can be kept to a minimum.

Marketing and Public Education

Neptune Technology continues to meet their schedule for marketing and public education. The web site is currently on line (www.watermeter.ca) and is scheduled for completion by February 14. The 12 page information booklet is currently being translated into Chinese and will be completed by February 20. Both of these items will be available prior to the program's official launch on February 23, 2004.

Information concerning the volunteer water meter program (see attached) is being included in the tax insert for single family dwellings that do not currently have a water meter.

Photos of actual water meter installations in the City of Richmond are being added to the water metering web site to provide potential volunteers with an expectation of what the completed installation will look like.

A ceremonial installation at the Mayor's house is planned as part of the volunteer program's official launch on February 23. An outline for both the Ceremonial Installation and the March 9 Open House are attached.

Residential Customers with Existing Water Meters

On January 22, 2004, residential customers with existing meters were sent a follow up letter with updated information and a frequently asked question sheet (attached). This second letter expanded on the first, incorporating answers to the most frequently asked questions and offering residential metered customers a free water conservation kit. Furthermore, this letter advised property owners that water usage will be used to determine sanitary sewerage charges for customers with water meters, as noted by the Public Works and Transportation Committee at the Committee's last meeting. To date, 56 residents have requested a water conservation kit.

The second mail out generated few telephone inquiries (beyond requests for water conservation kits), with 1 individual expressing a negative reaction to the program. This brings the total number of people who have expressed a negative opinion about the program up to 7.

Approximately 700 single family dwellings have been identified that have water meters but are not currently paying the metered rate for water and sewer. Neptune Technology is in the process of cataloguing and reporting these meters to the City. These customers will be sent an information package and an offer for a free water conservation kit once they have been moved to the metered rate for water/sewer. It is expected that these homes will begin paying the metered rate by the end of February and will bring the total number of non-volunteer metered customers up to approximately 2,500.

Financial Impact

There is no financial implication to this component of the Richmond Water Meter Program outside of the contract.

Conclusion

Neptune Technology Group is on target for the February 23 launch of the Richmond Volunteer Water Meter Program. To date, staff have received 109 requests from residents volunteering for the program without the aid of formal advertising.

Public response from the residential existing meter customers has been reasonably positive, with only 7 callers to date that were considered upset by the program. By the end of February 2004, the number of single family dwellings with existing meters on the metered rate will total approximately 2,500.



Lloyd Bie, P.Eng
Project Engineer
(4385)

LB:lb

5

REASONS To Consider A Water Meter



The City of Richmond has implemented a voluntary water metering program, and has contracted Neptune Technology Group to install the water meters. This flyer is produced by Neptune to introduce you to the metering program and to let you know how you may volunteer.

NOW YOU HAVE A CHOICE.....

You now have a choice in how you pay for water. You can continue to pay the flat rate (a fixed yearly charge) which will likely increase significantly over the next five years. Or you can have a water meter installed and pay only for the water & sewer services you actually use. Here are 5 reasons to volunteer for a water meter.

1 THE COST OF WATER IS GOING UP

The City of Richmond buys its water from the GVRD and has no control over the price. The cost for water is expected to rise as much as 50% over the next five years. If you remain on a flat rate for water you will have no choice but to pay these higher rates.

2 A WATER METER GIVES YOU CONTROL

With a water meter you pay only for the volume of water you actually use. When water rates go up you can keep your water & sewer bills lower by reducing your water use. If you are already a low water user a water meter makes sense for you.

3 FREE WATER CONSERVATION DEVICES

After your meter is installed you can request a free leak detection and water audit service. We will install a high-quality low-flow showerhead and a toilet water saving device at no charge. These devices will set you on your way to lower water bills.

4 FAST "NO HASSLE" INSTALLATION

The water meter will be installed outside your house. You don't even have to be home for the installation. The meter reading device will also be located outside. A meter reader will never have to enter your home and your privacy will be ensured.

5 THE "FIRST YEAR" GUARANTEE

You will have 12 months to adjust your water consumption. If after a year on the metered rate your total bills are more than they would have been under the flat rate for that same period you will receive a rebate for the difference. This guarantees that you will not pay more in the first year if you have a water meter*.

YES I WANT TO VOLUNTEER FOR A WATER METER

If you are ready to save money, here is how to get the process started.

STEP 1: Call (604) 271-9700 to volunteer for a water meter. Or you may register online at www.watermeter.ca

STEP 2: A Neptune representative will inspect your property to determine where the meter will be installed. The inspection will take place near the street and you do not have to be present. The representative will leave a form on your front door.

STEP 3: Fill out the form and return it to Neptune in the postage-paid envelope supplied.

STEP 4: Neptune will install the water meter. You do not have to be present.

COME TO OUR INFORMATION SESSION For more information about the program and its benefits.

TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2004
RICHMOND CITY HALL
10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Senior City staff and Neptune representatives will be on hand to answer all your questions. This will be the first of several public information sessions.



IS A WATER METER RIGHT FOR YOU?

3 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DECIDE

1. How big is your family?

The current flat rate is based on the cost of providing water to a family of four. So if there are less than four people in your household you will likely benefit from a meter.

2. How large is your property?

If you have an average size lawn and gardens and avoid excessive irrigation you will avoid high water bills. If you have a lot of ground cover that does not require any watering (gravel, decks, etc.) This will also help keep your bills low.

3. How water conscious are you?

If you are water conscious and practice a few simple water conservation tips you may pay less under the metered rate than under the flat rate.

Here are some customers who could save money with a water meter:

- Seniors
- Single Occupants
- Empty Nesters
- Young Couples
- Small Families



*FOR MORE INFORMATION

CALL 604.271.9700

OR VISIT OUR WEB SITE
www.watermeter.ca

5

大理由 去考慮使用水錶



列治文市已推行一項自願水錶計劃，並委任了 Neptune Technology Group 為承辦商，專責水錶的安裝工程。本單張由 Neptune 公司刊製，為您介紹水錶計劃及自願參加這項計劃的方法

現在您有一個選擇.....

您現在可以選擇怎樣支付水費，您可以繼續繳付劃一費用（定額年費），而這項收費於未來五年將可能大幅增加；或者您可以安裝水錶，便只需負擔自己實際用水量及排污服務的費用。參加自願水錶計劃的五大理由如下：

1

食水成本正不斷上升

列治文市向大溫區域管理局（GVRD）購買食水，無權去控制水價。於未來五年，預期食水的成本將大幅上調至五成，如果您繼續選用劃一水費的安排，您將別無選擇，只好繳付這些較高昂的水費。

2

水錶可讓您控制開支

使用水錶後，您只需負擔自己實際用水量的費用。當水費和排污費增加時，只要您節約用水，便可減省水費。如果您的用水量很低，水錶就更適用。

3

免費安裝節約用水的設備

安裝水錶後，您可以要求進行免費的漏水測試及用水審計服務。我們將免費到府上的淋浴間安裝可減慢水流速度的高質水龍頭以及節約沖廁水的設備，幫您達成減低水費的目標。

4

安裝快捷妥當，「絕不麻煩」

水錶將安裝在屋外，安裝時也不需要您留在家中。水錶讀數的裝置也在外面，抄錶員永遠不需要走進您家，確保您的私隱不受影響。

5

「首年」保證計劃

您將有十二個月的時間來調節用水量。如果一年後水錶讀數顯示您需要繳納的全部水費，比同一段時間內的劃一水費還要高，您將獲得回扣以補償兩者的差額。這項保證確保您在使用水錶後的第一年內不會給多了水費*。

好！我想參加自願水錶計劃

如果您已準備好要節省開支，請按下列步驟進行。

第一步：致電(604)271-9700報名參加自願水錶計劃，也可前往www.watermeter.ca辦理網上登記手續。

第二步：Neptune公司的代表將到府上視察，以決定安裝水錶的位置。視察工作只在街道附近進行，您不用在家，做好後代表將在正門留下一份表格。

第三步：請填寫該份表格，然後用附上的回郵信封將表格寄回Neptune公司。

第四步：Neptune公司將安裝水錶，您不用在家等候。

請出席我們的資料講座

以獲悉更多有關水錶計劃及其好處的資料。

二〇〇四年三月九日星期二
列治文市政府大樓
上午十時至晚上八時

市府高級職員及Neptune公司的代表將在場回答大家的問題。這將是首次的公眾資料講座，日後還有多個同類講座



NEPTUNE

水錶適合您嗎？

3 個問題 助您作出決定

1. 您有多少名家庭成員？

現時我們是根據向一家四口供應食水所需成本來計算劃一水費。所以如果您的住戶人數少過四名，水錶可能對您有利。

2. 您的物業面積有多大？

如果您的草地和花園屬一般大小，避免大量灑水，便可免付高昂水費。如果您的物業有大幅不用灑水的地面（如碎石、平台等），水錶更能夠為您減省水費。

3. 您能否自動自覺地節約用水？

如果您能自動自覺地節約用水，並採取一些簡單的省水措施，那麼有了水錶後，您的水費可能會低過劃一水費。

水錶能為下列這些顧客節省開支：

耆英
獨居人士
子女已遷離的人士
年青夫婦
小家庭

RICHMOND
WATER METER PROGRAM
列治文水錶計劃



*查詢資料

請致電 604.271.9700

或瀏覽我們的網站

www.watermeter.ca



Open House and Ceremonial Installation

Following is Neptune's vision of these two upcoming events.

1. Ceremonial Installation – Monday, February 23, 10: a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

This event will be held outdoors at the home of the Mayor or the home of another high ranking politician. We will set up a small open-sided tent over the meter pit and the local media will be invited to attend. There will be a short presentation (no longer than 10 minutes) by the Mayor. City and Neptune staff will be on hand to answer any questions deferred by the Mayor. The Mayor will open the presentation by talking about the importance of water conservation and why Richmond has a Volunteer Metering Program. This will be followed by a Question and Answer period.

The event will be promoted through a joint Press Release from Neptune and the City of Richmond. This Press Release will be finalized by February 13.

2. Open House – Tuesday, March 9

This event will be held at City Hall. Neptune will send three of its staff to attend the Open House: Mike Middlemass, Bill Tan, and Neal Klassen. It is recommended that key Richmond Utility staff clear their calendars for that day so that they, too, can attend.

It will be an informal open house with customers dropping in throughout the day. We will have a large, colorful display booth and information handouts (fact sheet, 12-page booklet). A Powerpoint presentation will run in a continuous loop. Also on display will be the water meter, the pit lid, and the meter reading device. We do not envision formal presentations throughout the day. Having hosted dozens of similar open houses across Canada we have found that the informal "drop in" format works best.

This even will be promoted through the insert in the Tax Notice, advertising in local media, signs at City Hall, and a joint press release. This press release will be finalized by February 13.

Neal Klassen
Manager, Public Education Programs
Neptune Technology Group



City of Richmond

6911 No.3 Road, Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1
Telephone (604) 276-4000
www.city.richmond.bc.ca

January 22, 2004
File: 6060-02-01

Engineering
Telephone: (604) 276-4289
Fax: (604) 276-4197

Dear Property Owner:

Re: Richmond Residential Water Meter Program

This letter is a reminder that you are no longer paying the flat rate for water or sanitary sewer utilities. Instead, you will be billed in a more equitable manner, based on water and sanitary sewer usage.

The amount of water you use is measured by a water meter at your property line. The meters will be read quarterly and you will receive four utility bills per year. Water and sewer charges will appear on each of the quarterly utility bills and will be based on your actual water usage. Solid waste charges (garbage pick up, recycling, etc.) will continue to be billed once per year, and will appear on one of the quarterly utility bills.

Your future sanitary sewer charges will be based on your water usage. Not all of the water you use goes "down the drain," however, approximately 80% of it does. Therefore, your water meter provides the City with a good estimate of your sanitary sewer use, and will be used to more equitably bill you for your share of the City's sewer costs. Though it is not exact measurement of your sewer use, it is far more equitable than the current flat rate system.

You should receive your first quarterly utility bill in April 2004. It will include:

1. A unit rate charge of \$0.6112 per cubic meter for water used. Note that one cubic meter is equal to 1,000 litres.
2. A \$10 per quarter operating fee. This fee covers all of the operating costs associated with the water meter such as maintenance activities, meter reading and eventual replacement.
3. A unit rate sewer utility charge of \$0.4999 per cubic meter of water used.
4. Solid waste utility charges will only appear on one of the quarterly utility statements per year.

Unfortunately, those who currently pay their taxes and utilities on a monthly basis will not be able to pay their future utility bills on a monthly basis. The new water and sewer rates are based on usage. Therefore, they can not be reliably predicted in advance and divided into twelve equal payments. Payment of City taxes will continue to be offered on a monthly basis, only the utility bills will be affected by this change.


Island City, by Nature

Residential Water Metering
Customers With Existing Water Meters
Common Questions and Answers

Q: Can one continue to pay one's water and sewer bills on a monthly basis if one has a water meter?

A: No. The consumption based water and sewer bills are variable, based on how much water is consumed. As the amount of the bill is unknown in advance, it cannot be divided into 12 known payments. The water/sewer bills will be issued on a quarterly basis. However, one can continue to pay the rest of the tax bill on a monthly basis.

Q: Does water metering affect one's sewer billing?

A: Yes. Sanitary sewer billing will be \$0.4999 per cubic meter of drinking water used for metered properties.

Q: Will one's garbage bill be on the quarterly water/sewer bill?

A: No, one will continue to pay one's garbage bill annually.

Q: Will one save money with the change to consumption based billing for water and sewer?

A: It depends on how much water one uses. The water rate was designed such that households that use an average amount of water will pay the same amount as flat rate customers. Households that use more than an average amount of water will pay more and households that use less than an average amount of water will pay less.

Q: The \$10 per quarter meter operating fee appears unfair, as flat rate customers do not have to pay this fee.

A: The meter operating fee was considered when the rates were set and was included in the amount metered customers pay in comparison to flat rate customers. Customers that use an average amount of water will pay the same amount as customers on a flat rate, including the meter maintenance fee.

Q: Why do I have a meter and other residents don't?

A: Over the last 10 years water meters have been installed as part of new home construction or water service renewal. Meters were installed during these processes, as that is the most cost effective time for installation.

Q: Is everyone going to get meters?

A: Eventually it is likely that everyone will be metered. However, for the near future only those with new homes, new water services and volunteers will be metered.

Q: Why has the City chosen to meter water?

A: Water meters provide an equitable way for people to pay for the use of the water and sewer utilities. Through this program the City will move toward a "user pay" water system, which will be equitable to all users.

Q: What can I do if I get a high water bill because I had a leak?

A: Fix the leak as quickly as possible, then apply to the City for a credit for the water that was leaked. The receipt from any plumbing work that was done to remedy the leak will prove that you reacted quickly to the problem and deserve a credit.

Q: How much water does an average home use?

A: The City's statistics show that, on average, regular size homes use approximately 410 m³ of water per year and large homes use 680 m³.