

## Environmental & Franchise Utilities Committee Meeting Minutes, 5/14/12

Present: Michael Halley, Susan Silvers, Martha Rasmussen, Joy Messer, Scott Vaughan, Daryn Hamilton, Carl Chandler, Rick Taylor, Michael Koren, Jennifer Diamond, John Andrews, Walter Irwin, Jim Morrow, Ron Hall, Kiki Kossow, John Brown, Evelyn Butler, Christine Loyaccono, Brian Horsefield

### Points of discussion

A group of citizens who have concerns about the safety of the Waterworks department's radio-read meters have been circulating a petition asking for an opt-out program for homeowners who prefer not to use the radio meters. Waterworks superintendent Carl Chandler has reviewed the costs associated with offering a non-radio meter option and offered the following recommendations:

- A \$100 one-time fee for switching the meter, plus labor costs (\$75/hour charged in half hour increments)
- An ongoing \$10/month fee for anyone choosing to use the non-radio meter

Halley explained that these recommendations are in line with other opt out programs across the country. With no evidence that the Neptune radio-read meters are in any way harmful to peoples' health the waterworks department considers them to be standard equipment due to their cost savings and safety benefits. Anyone choosing to use a hard-wired, touchpad meter must pay for the related expenses, including the cost of the meter itself (which must be special ordered), installation, and manual reading. The Neptune radio-read meter is not a "smart meter" in that it only transmits water use data, it does not receive. It transmits a signal for 7 milliseconds every 14 seconds, making it active for about 44 seconds of every day.

Chandler discussed the Iowa DNR requirement that municipalities replace homeowners' meter every five to seven years, meaning all homes in Fairfield will be due to receive a radio-read meter in the near future. Any homeowner who opts out would pay for the cost of the alternate, non-radio meter as well as the ongoing monthly fee. Billing would be managed by the waterworks billing staff.

Several citizens had the opportunity to ask questions, express concerns, and make the request that the opt-out program fees be as low as possible. Jennifer Diamond spoke on behalf of the group who organized the original petition stating that they feel that a one-time fee for switching meters is fair, but an ongoing fee is not. She also requested that information about the opt-out program be included in the water department bill and that a cap be set on the total amount charged for the meter change out. Halley offered for a representative from the group to make a brief statement during his committee report to the full council.

After the committee heard all comments about the proposed opt-out program Susan Silvers moved that the committee take Chandler's recommendation to the full council, seconded by Martha Rasmussen. Motion carried unanimously.

### Recommendations/Actions

- Committee moved to bring Carl Chandler's radio-read meter opt out program proposal to the full council for consideration and vote.