



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota

Blaine City Hall
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Legislation Text

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WORKSHOP ITEM *Jon Haukaas, Director of Public Works*

ADVANCED METERING INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER 86 - UTILITIES

Staff will present a brief overview of Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) and current projects that are underway.

1. Overview of Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI)

The City uses an AMI system to remotely collect meter readings of water use by our residents and businesses. This is accomplished by transmitting the reading on the water meter register through a radio communication network back to a main Data Operations Center server at City Hall. This information is used by Utility Billing to generate our customer invoices.

The City is in the process of upgrading its AMI communication modules from a fixed network to the new Sensus FlexNet SmartPoint module technology. Staff will provide a brief explanation of the systems, the need for this change, and resulting benefits.

2. Purchase of AMI Communication Modules to upgrade the system.

The water metering system of a Utility is often seen as the ‘cash register’ for the City. The water metering system is responsible for the collection of nearly \$10M in revenue annually. It is critical to ensure the accuracy of the entire system for revenue collection but also for transparency, equity, and the trust of the customer.

Only about 1/3 of the AMI system has been upgraded to the new FlexNet System. This has been primarily accomplished through staff addressing replacements in coordination with new construction or remodeling permits over the past several years. The remaining replacement needs to be accelerated by use of a contracted service provider. We are currently advertising for an installation contractor to complete the field work. The City will be separately purchasing all hardware through our selected vendor directly.

3. Amendments to Chapter 86 - Utilities

A review of existing City Code identified clarifications and improvements to three Code Sections that are seen as being necessary to successfully complete the implementation of this program. The suggested language is based on research of similar Ordinances from several municipalities around the Twin Cities, selecting the best and most effective wording.

The first item in **Sec. 86-11**, expands the definition of *Meter* to include all components of the AMI system; not just the actual water meter but also the radio communication components that make it a complete metering system.

Sec. 86-11. - Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

Meter the actual water meter for measurement of water usage and shall also all other components of the metering system including but not limited to the water meter register, the communications radio module, and the wiring connecting the register to the module.

The second item in **Sec. 86-12**, is to improve the City's ability to protect the public health, our system, and enforce compliance with City requirements. The additional language reserves the right of the City to discontinue service for a number of reasons including public health concerns, system integrity, and non-payment. This discontinuance requires a notification and hearing process to resolve prior to discontinuing service except in emergency situations such as repair of public health concerns.

Sec. 86-12. - Discontinuing service.

- a) The city reserves the right to discontinue service to any customer of the water and sanitary sewer system without notice when necessary for repairs, additional connections or reconnections, or when, in the judgment of the public works director or designee, such action is necessary to protect the purity of the municipal water supply or the safety of the water system and/or the life, health, and safety of its customers.

- b) The city reserves the right to discontinue service to any customer of the water and

sanitary sewer system for disregard of any rules or regulations in connection with the use or operation of the system.

- c) The city reserves the right to discontinue water and sanitary sewer service to any vacant property or premises without heat.
- d) The city reserves the right to discontinue service to any customer of the water and sanitary sewer system for nonpayment of charges or bills.
- e) The service of water or sanitary sewer shall not be shut off for nonpayment of charges or bills until notice and an opportunity for a hearing have first been given to the occupant and owner of the premises involved. The notice shall be personally served or delivered by certified mail and shall state that, if payment is not made before the date stated in the notice, but not less than ten days after the date upon which the notice is given, the water supply to the premises will be shut off. The notice shall also state that the occupant may, before such date, demand a hearing before the city council, in which case the supply will not be shut off until after the hearing is held. If, as a result of the hearing, the city council finds that the amount claimed owing is actually due and unpaid and that there is no legal reason why the water supply of the delinquent customer may not be shut off in accordance with this article, the city may then shut off the supply.
- f) Whenever any service has been discontinued for nonpayment of charges or bills or for disregard of any rules or regulations in accordance with the procedures set forth above, it shall not be resumed except upon payment of the charges or bills accrued together with interest thereon, at a rate to be determined by city council or compliance with the rules and regulations previously violated and payment to the city of a disconnect fee in the amount established by city council.

The last part, in **Sec. 86-183** of the Code update addresses the remedy if a homeowner obstructs the City's ability of access and maintain our metering infrastructure. We are recommending any enforcement stays consistent with the policies established above. A process of managing

this will be needed to support our installation contractor in completing our upgrades.

Sec. 86-183. - Location; obstructing.

All residential water meters will be installed in the laundry area, adjacent to a floor drain, or in the well pit if the well pit is in a heated basement. The well pit door shall have louvers to prevent the meter from freezing. Meters in breezeways or garages are not permitted. The customer is prohibited from obstructing the meter so as to prohibit the reading or repairing of the meter. Failure to grant access to the inside of a home to read, replace, or repair a water meter shall be enforced per Sec. 86-12 Discontinuing Service. ~~result in a 200,000 gallon penalty assessment to the resident's water bill.~~

Staff is requesting feedback from the City Council on proceeding with these items.