

Michelle Webb

From: Kathleen Menke [ci@akmk.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 05, 2013 1:55 PM
To: Stephanie Scott; JoAnn Waterman; Debra Schnabel; Jerry Lapp; Dave Berry; George Campbell; Diana Lapham
Cc: Julie Cozzi; Michelle Webb; Carlos Jimenez
Subject: Water Metering Considerations

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Categories: Agenda Business

Dear Assembly, Manager, Clerk, and Public Works Director:

As I listened to the KHNS story about water metering, some considerations came to mind that perhaps may be useful for folks to consider before making decisions regarding water metering, water and sewer bills, extending water and sewer lines, and water and sewer capital upgrades and maintenance and operations in general.

I was asked by a couple of people to write down some of my comments as they don't fit easily into a three-minute comment period.

Someone suggested I first relay my background in this field. So...I worked in water and wastewater treatment operations in Colorado for five years. Certified Class A (the highest of four levels) in both Water and Wastewater Treatment Operations and as Class II (the 2nd highest of three levels) of in Water Distribution and Wastewater Collection systems. I was the first woman in Colorado to achieve a double A certification in Water and Wastewater Operations and received awards from the State of Colorado for my work in the field.

Most communities that choose to install water meters do so to hold down peak summer demand, because peak summer demand (outside watering for lawns, etc.) drives the need for system treatment and capacity. Most communities use treated water for outside irrigation, so limiting peak demand in areas such as Colorado or Arizona or California may be important.

Might be good to ask for charts from the Haines water department showing when, where, and how much peak demand occurs and how much of the costs for the system in Haines is driven by this peak demand?

If fairness is an issue, sewer rates should not be tied to water metering that also measures water use in the summer, because water used for irrigation does not flow through to the sewer system.

Water meters are expensive. Not the meters themselves perhaps, but their installation, their maintenance, reading and recording them, and replacing them (forever at regular intervals).

If fairness among household size is a serious and real issue, are there alternative ways to calculate relative fairness? By the number of bathrooms, bedrooms, and/or household members for example? Perhaps better than entire community having to endure increased utility rates due to the costs of water meter installations, monitoring, maintenance, and replacement?

Fairness to the community would be that everyone's rates should not rise because of the excess costs of metering.

We live in a rain forest and while we do have occasional dry spells where the community might be advised to use less outside watering for a week or two from time to time, our environment likely doesn't really demand meters for peak summer use.

Likewise on the issue of extending water and sewer lines through town, it is also important to consider long-term operations and maintenance costs. It is not a given that there should be extended sewer lines where there is a planned extension of water lines. Sometimes, it might make sense to just extend a water line (for example Mud Bay Small Tracts loop) without extending sewer lines. The costs of lift stations to pump sewage uphill (operations and maintenance over the long term) may not be justified in areas where adequate septic tanks are already in place. No one wants their yards torn up for new sewage lines or to pump sewage from their own yard uphill to a sewage main who already has a state approved septic tank.

The community as a whole should not pay for lift stations where sewer line extensions are not necessarily wanted or needed or justified by costs/benefits. Problems such as increased costs, yard disruptions, and risks (flooded homes from sewer water that get backed up into a home if a yard pump or lift station pump fails) should be taken into consideration, along with adequate public input in specific areas before such decisions are made extending sewage treatment lines where sewage has to be pumped uphill.

Furthermore, while extension of water mains and hook-ups and a few new water tanks may be fairly straightforward and not place a significant demand on the treatment system, this cannot be said for the extension of sewer lines, particularly those involving lift stations. Our sewage treatment plant is already pushed to capacity from time to time. A rush to increase sewage treatment capacity through excessive extension of sewage treatment lines may not be the best course of action when considering the long-term consequences of required upgrades to the sewage system to meet increased deliverance of wastewater.

Fairness also requires that developers of new subdivisions, not the entire community, incur the majority of the costs associated with new development.

Regards, Kathleen Menke