**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council**

**SUBJECT: MyH2O FIELD DEPLOYMENT UPDATE**

The MyH2O program deployment continues on an aggressive pace and plans are to have all field work completed by January 2022. To date, more than 200,000 new meters have been exchanged with the connecting radio endpoint that enables remote meter reads. Additionally, about 22,000 previously installed new meters remain to be retrofitted with the radio endpoint.

The water utility has received a limited number of requests from customers asking to opt out of the program over privacy issues and perceived health concerns surrounding radiofrequency (RF) emissions. After conversations explaining the scientific data on this issue and that the city does not offer this option, installations have continued on all but two locations. The meters are part of the utility's infrastructure and must be replaced as they decline in accordance with asset management principles. Any opt out program would still require meter exchanges over time. Those meters would not be equipped with the radio endpoint and would continue to require manual meter reads.

The Texas Local Government Code conveys inherent authority to municipalities to regulate utilities in a manner that protects the City's interests. During the planning phase of the MyH2O program, staff researched potential customer concerns and the advanced metering infrastructure deployments of other major water utilities. Fort Worth's decision not to offer an opt out option is based on the following factors:

1. Business efficiency: All utilities are turning to remote read technologies and advanced metering infrastructure as a best practice because of their accuracy and efficiencies. As such, meter reading companies are becoming a thing of the past. Last year Fort Worth returned meter reading in-house with temporary workers until all meters are exchanged and radio end points activated because the cost of contract meter reading had increased substantially.

   Continuing manual meter reading would be costly, inefficient and inequitable. These costs would be in lieu of the radio transmitter and therefore borne by the individual customer. Utilities that offer an opt out option charge a one-time enrollment fee and often charge the customer an additional monthly meter reading fee. Manual read fees would be necessary to cover costs to hire and retain staff to read meters, operate a fleet of vehicles, and to maintain or upgrade a legacy manual reporting process that has become obsolete and incompatible with our billing system.

2. Electromagnetic exposure: The radio end points attached to the meters are fully compliant with all FCC and public health regulations.

   Numerous health studies and regulatory agencies, including the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection and the Federal Communications Commission have refuted the claim of negative health effects. The World Health Organization has published thousands of articles – none of which concludes there are any negative health consequences from exposure to low-level electromagnetic fields.

   The RF associated with Fort Worth's MyH2O system qualifies as low level electromagnetic fields – given that the radio technology uses low voltage, battery-powered transmitters that operate only four to six times a day for fractions of a second each time. Furthermore, the meters are 30 feet or more from a home and risk from RF exposure drops rapidly with distance, according to the Texas Public Utility Commission.

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3. Privacy – Customer information is safe. MyH2O uses the most secure technology available. Only the register reading is transmitted and it is sent through a secure frequency with encryption. The system does not collect, transmit or store personal information. In addition, the radio frequency does not interfere with other electronic devices in the home or business, and it will not interfere with a data network.

   The data obtained by the system does not disclose how the water was used and is not under surveillance. Data from individual customer meters is not shared or discussed with anyone except the water account customer. Regardless of whether the data is obtained through a remote or manual meter read, the city does not disclose water usage data to any person or entity except as required by law.

The premise of the MyH2O program was to exchange legacy meters that were no longer measuring water accurately, to use the latest technology to improve transparency in billing, and to leverage data to inform operational strategies to reduce water loss. The program also encourages the evolution of transformational business processes and customer services. Being able to see hourly water use goes a long way in stemming water loss and waste. AMI is a key component in the utility's operational strategy and a best management practice recommended by the Texas Water Development Board for meeting conservation goals necessary for long-term viability of water supplies. Additionally, supporting technologies allow for an online portal that gives customers the information and tools they need to control their water use and provide for greatly enhanced customer engagement.

For questions on this report, contact Chris Harder, Water Director, at 817-392-5020 or Kara Shuror, Deputy Water Director, at 817-392-8819.

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