


Agenda Report Reviewed by:
City Manager: 

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: September 20, 2022
To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Public Works Superintendent, Dante Del Prete
Subject: No Cost Opt-Out Program for City Wide Water Meter Project
Responsible Department: (Public Works/City Administration)
Recommendation: That the Sebastopol City Council Approve a no cost Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Opt-Out Program
Funding: Currently Budgeted: X Yes No N/A

Account Code/Costs authorized in City Approved Budget (if applicable) AK (verified by Administrative Services Department)

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

This item is for consideration and approval of a no cost Opt-Out program for the City-Wide Water Meter replacement project (Advanced Metering Infrastructure /AMI).

BACKGROUND:

At the February 15, 2022, City Council discussed a proposed Opt-Out program and potential fees that might be associated with the Opt-Out option. Staff was directed to:

Return for a final Opt-Out Program and Fee Schedule for Council review and approval with the following recommendations:

- Three pings as proposed daily (Two at night - One random)
- Waive proposed \$50 set up fee/No initial sign-up fee
- Read manual meters every other month/6 times a year/\$18.75 every other month

The proposed fee was determined by calculating 3.75 minutes of the user fee schedule cost for one hour of service for customers choosing the Opt-out program option.

DISCUSSION:

Since the February 2022 City Council meeting, the City has received public comment concerning the charges for Opting out of this Program. In support of offering our customers a choice in metering infrastructure and in response to residents who do not want to have advanced metering infrastructure on their water service City staff is proposing a no cost AMI Opt-Out Program for residential customers who prefer not to have the data cellular water endpoint communication device installed with their water meter. The opt out program would allow customers to continue to have their meter read manually at the end of every month. As a majority of the water meters will be retrofitted with cellular water endpoint communication, it is anticipated that staff time saved by digitally reading of water meters would instead be allocated towards the continued manual reading of water meters for those customers who choose to opt out of the program. Staff has determined that the cost of manually collecting data for water meters that have been entered into the Opt-Out program is consistent with other current business duties and can be accommodated in the regular operations budget.

The Opt-Out Program enables customers to elect not to have an AMI communicating meter in favor of a non-communicating meter. Note that customers electing to opt out from the program will not have access to or receive the benefits of information that require the communication network of the AMI and communicating meters. Customers who do not own the property and seek to opt out must provide signed permission from the property owner. A customer who elects to opt out at more than one property is responsible for executing the Opt-Out Form for each service location.

City staff is recommending providing the Opt-Out Service for those customers who do not want to have the digital water meters installed at no additional cost to the customer. A copy of the Opt-Out DRAFT Program is attached for information.

The effective date of this opt-out program is depending upon the completion of the meter program change out. At this time, the city does not have a definitive date when all the digital meters and cellular water endpoint devices will be installed. Currently, none of the new cellular water endpoint devices have been installed to date. When the change out is completed, an announcement will be made on the City website and weekly newsletter a month prior to the effective date.

GOALS:

Goal EV 7: Maintain a Stable and Self-Sustaining Fiscal Base in Order to Generate the Resources Necessary to Provide Desired City Services and Support New Growth that is Consistent with the City's Values and Goals

Goal CSF 1: Provide High Quality Community Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure to All Residents, Businesses, and Visitors in Sebastopol

Goal CSF 3: Provide an Adequate, Clean, Safe, and Environmentally Sound Water Supply to All Existing and Future Water Users in Sebastopol.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

City Council and staff have received several comments on this topic. Staff anticipates receiving public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this Staff Report. Such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of the agenda item.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to schedule meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Staff has determined the cost of manually collecting data for water meters that have been entered into the Opt-Out program is consistent with other current business duties and can be accommodated in the regular operations budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Sebastopol City Council consider and approve a no cost Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Opt-Out Program.

ATTACHMENTS:

AMI Water Meter Opt-Out Program

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Opt-out Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Q: What is the City's Water Meter AMI Plan?

The City is replacing approximately 1,650 of its older mechanical water meters within its service area with new digital meters with no moving parts that can measure water use with greater accuracy and retrofitting 1,350 existing water meters with digital recording registers. In addition to the meter change, the City will install a separate transmitter that can send data to receivers by radio. The AMI Program will improve efficiency and reduce costs by allowing city staff to automatically read your meter and eliminating the need to visit your property to manually read it. Additionally, the new system will greatly assist the City in detecting leaks, troubleshooting customer billing issues and providing helpful information to customers about their water use.

Q: What is the City's AMI Opt-out Program?

We understand that some have concerns regarding the AMI equipment being installed at their water metering connection and we want to be responsive to those concerns. While we believe the equipment is safe, the City is providing an AMI Opt-out Program for residential customers who prefer not to have the transmitter installed with their new water meter retrofit. The program allows customers to have their meter read manually at the end of every month.

Q: Who can opt-out?

Any residential customer can opt-out. However, the request must be made by the Sebastopol customer of record (family members, neighbors, or landlords cannot act on behalf of another customer).

Q: How can I opt-out?

To opt-out, a residential customer of record must complete and submit an opt-out application. This application may be obtained from the city website at www.cityofsebastopol.org or by calling Administrative Services (Finance) at (707) 823-7863 to requesting an application. Applications are also available at City Hall office located 7120 Bodega Ave., Sebastopol, CA.

Q: What will opting-out cost?

The opt-out program is a service that is provided at no additional cost to the customer.

Q: How long will the process take?

Once the City receives a signed opt-out form, the establishment of the account and the removal of the data collector / transmitter can occur up to 3 weeks period depending on the number of requests. For data recording and a clean cut off for billing purposes, the City may elect to avoid removing the data collector / transmitter until after the close of the monthly billing cycle – usually at the end of the month. If you have special requests regarding the removal of the data collector / transmitter, call (707) 823-7863 to schedule an appointment.

Q: Once enrolled in the opt-out program, how can I terminate participation, and will I incur any costs?

To cancel your program participation and to schedule an installation appointment, please contact the Public Works at (707) 823-5331. There will be no charge for changes made to your account or for the installation of the data collector / transmitter. Additionally, Sebastopol customer of record must sign a cancelation/termination agreement before being removed from the opt-out program.

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Opt-out
Program Application

At the City of Sebastopol, we support offering our customers a choice in metering infrastructure. The AMI Opt-Out Program is for residential customers who prefer not to have the data collector/ transmitter installed with their water meter. The program allows customers to have their meter read manually at the end of every month at no additional cost to the customer.

Please complete both Section A and Section B.

Section A: Customer and Account Information

* Indicates required field

Customer of Record* _____

[] Owner [] Renter* [] Others (Please specify) _____

*Attach rental agreement

*Property owners' approval signature _____

*By signing this authorization, property owner acknowledges and approves renter's request to Opt-out.

Account Number* _____

Service Address* _____

Mailing Address (if different than service address)* _____

Daytime Phone #* _____ Email _____

Section B: Acknowledgements

Please sign and date the following:

I, the aforementioned customer of record for the account identified above, hereby request that the City of Sebastopol disconnect/deactivate the advanced metering infrastructure from the identified service address in Sebastopol, CA.

Print Name* _____ Signature* _____

Date* _____

Please return the original, signed application to the City of Sebastopol
Digital and facsimile copies will not be accepted
7120 Bodega Ave, Sebastopol CA 95472

City Use Only:

Proof of Customer of Record**(if application is mailed in) _____ Account Validation: _____

Date Received: _____ Staff: _____

**Current PG&E billing statement