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NEWS RELEASE

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Water Meter Replacement Project Kicks Off with ‘Smart Water’ Pilot Study

DUBUQUE, Iowa – Over the next 18-24 months, every water meter in Dubuque will be replaced. The new meters will greatly increase metering accuracy and efficiency and feature automated meter reading (AMR) abilities, eliminating the need to manually read 22,500 meters every month -- saving more than \$144,000 per year.

The new system, an example of the City’s ongoing sustainability initiative, will allow water customers to identify waste and consider corrective measures which will translate into “smarter” water use and increased energy savings. More efficient water use will also reduce the use of both energy and chemicals in treating and delivering water. According to national research, 30 percent of households have water leaks (faucet, toilet, etc.). The City has created a grant program for financial assistance on costs of repairs of leaks identified through the project. The City will pay 50 percent of the replacement cost, not to exceed \$100, for repairs made to devices inside the home.

Existing water meters will be replaced with a new water meter, manufactured in the U.S. by Neptune Technology Group, that is augmented with an unmeasured flow reducer (UFR), manufactured locally by A.Y. McDonald Manufacturing. The UFR allows measurement of flows below ¼ gallon per minute - such as leaks and drips - that have been previously immeasurable, even by new meters. The meter will be connected to a radio frequency meter interface unit (MIU), which collects meter usage data and remotely transmits the information to data collectors. The MIU and water meter work as a unit to detect intermittent leaks, continuous leaks, reverse flow situations and zero usage situations. The system will automatically transmit meter usage data over radio frequency waves each hour to data collectors placed throughout the community.

The meters will be installed by geographic “zones” over the next 18 months. Customers will receive notification letters when it is time for them to schedule an installation appointment.

The City has contracted with Northern Water Works Supply (NWWWS) to install the new meters. Installation appointments will be scheduled in two-hour “windows” of time, such as 8-10 a.m., for example. A NWWWS representative will arrive during that time and will require access to the water meter inside the home or business. Each installation will take approximately 60 minutes. All NWWWS installers have completed training and background checks and will have identification, wear identifiable uniforms, and drive marked vehicles.

The first phase of the standard meter replacements will begin in early March when the first round of notification letters will be mailed to customers. Those installations are expected to begin in mid-March. Water service will be interrupted at each location while the meter is replaced but customers can use water as soon as the install is completed.

Prior to beginning the citywide meter replacements program, volunteers will be solicited for Dubuque’s “Smarter” Water Project, a pilot study of volunteer households that will be provided with advanced water meter technology, or “smart meters.” Eligibility to participate in the study will be defined first by location and will be based on logistical requirements of the technology being integrated and customer interest. Volunteers will be provided with additional information and may be featured in future phases of the Smarter City Project. The 12-month study is part of the City of Dubuque’s Smarter City partnership with IBM Research. IBM technology will interface with the City’s system to process water consumption data and provide near real-time visibility into the overall city water consumption. IBM Research is also building new service systems integration, data management, and analytic technologies that will create new insights for consumers which will translate into better water utilization and energy savings.

Letters will be sent to water customers eligible for the Smarter Water Project over the next two weeks. There is no cost to participate in the pilot study and data collected and developed through the program will be completely anonymous. Participating customers will receive access to new technology that will provide data and insights into how water can be utilized more efficiently in their home. The data will also help the City make better decisions about water production and distribution, ultimately lowering costs. Participating households will be given priority access to free water audits, matching grants to fix water leaks, and participation in future Smarter City projects for electricity, gas and solid waste management.

Funding for this \$8.7 million project is from a \$7.7 million State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan and a \$1 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) forgivable loan.

A website, with additional information, images, and frequently asked questions, is under construction on the City of Dubuque website at www.cityofdubuque.org/watermeters.