

NEWS RELEASE

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Water Meter Replacement Project Completed \$1.35 Million Under Budget

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The City of Dubuque has completed its community-wide water meter replacement and unmeasured-flow reducer (UFR) installation project at an estimated \$1,352,415 or 15.6 percent below the projected budgeted amount.

The Dubuque City Council accepted completion of the project at their June 4, 2012, meeting and authorized payment of the final contract amount of \$7,324,285 to the project contractor, Northern Water Works Supply. The original total projected project cost estimate was \$8,676,700. Including the unanticipated \$1 million forgivable loan the City received for the project through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the project was \$2,352,415 or 27.1 percent under expected City funded costs. Additional funding was provided by a State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan.

The old meters were replaced due to their age and inability to accurately measure flows. The last time the majority of the meters were replaced was in the 1980s. The project began in early 2010 and by the end of September 2011, each of the 22,168 water meters in the City of Dubuque had been replaced with new meters featuring automated meter readings (AMR) capabilities, eliminated the need to manually read meters monthly and saving the City more than \$144,000 each year.

The project was managed by Water Department Manager Bob Green, Finance Director Ken TeKippe, and Information Services Manager Chris Kohlmann. Northern Water Works Supply hired 12 local citizens as part of their installation team and used two Dubuque plumbing firms as needed with the project, Jaeger Plumbing and Modern Piping, Inc. Northern Water Works also subcontracted the installation of the 14 collector antennas to RACOM Communications of Dubuque.

The new water meters are equipped with a radio frequency meter interface unit (MIU), which collects meter usage data and remotely, securely, and automatically transmits the data hourly over radio frequency waves to data collectors in 14 locations throughout the community. The MIU and water meter work as a unit to detect leaks and reverse-flow and zero-usage situations. This information is monitored

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by the City's Utility Billing Department, along with usage data for monthly billings. During the project, the City also changed its measurement of water consumption from cubic feet to gallons to allow customers to be more aware of how much water they use.

The majority of the new water meters, manufactured in the U.S. by Neptune Technology Group, were also fitted with the Unmeasured Flow Reducer (UFR), manufactured locally by the A.Y. McDonald Manufacturing Corporation, directly supporting 10 new local manufacturing jobs. The UFR allows measurement of flows below one quarter of a gallon per minute – such as leaks and drips – that were previously immeasurable by aged meters. The new meters also have a digital display and can be read manually by customers. Simply shine a light on the meter to activate the LCD display. It will show a meter reading and then, after six seconds, it will show the rate of flow. A flashing faucet icon on the display represents an intermittent leak or flow. A constant faucet icon represents a constant flow or leak.

In conjunction with the water meter replacement project, the City successfully completed a 12-month Smarter Water Pilot Study through which more than 300 Dubuque households had access to a portal/website developed by IBM Research which provided detailed, customer specific information on their water usage. Among participants in the study, water utilization was reduced by 6.6 percent and leak detection and response increased eight-fold. The Smarter Water Portal is now available to Dubuque residents and many small businesses to help them make more informed decisions about how they use water and track the associated costs. The portal provides a customer-specific, integrated view of water usage with data displayed in gallons, cost, or by carbon footprint. The portal also provides leak detection and notification, historical usage data, and comparative data. There is no additional cost or equipment needed to access the portal, just internet access. For more information, or to register, visit www.cityofdubuque.org/smarterwater or call 563-690-6111.

This new system is an example of the City's ongoing sustainability initiative and allows 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 the treating and delivering water.

According to national research, 30 percent of households have water leaks. As part of this project, the City created a grant program for financial assistance on costs of repairs of leaks identified through this project. The City will pay 50 percent of the replacement cost, not to exceed \$100, for repairs made to devices inside the home. To date, more than 400 homeowners who have received assistance through this program for a total amount of approximately \$18,000 for completed repairs.

City of Dubuque water customers seeking additional information on this program or their account should contact the Utility Billing Department at 563-589-4144 or utilityb@cityofdubuque.org, or www.cityofdubuque.org/utilitybilling.

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