



## **STUDY SESSION**

### **TOWN BOARD**

**Tuesday, April 9, 2013**

**4:30 p.m.**

**Rooms 202/203  
170 MacGregor Ave.**

### **AGENDA**

- 4:30 p.m. Future Study Session Agenda Items.**
- 4:40 p.m. Town Board Meeting Procedures/Tool Box.**
- 5:00 p.m. Break for Dinner.**
- 5:15 p.m. Employee Retirement Plans.**
- 5:30p.m. Municipal Code Updates & Leak Policy for Water.**
- 6:30 p.m. Meeting Adjourn.**



# Memo

To: Honorable Mayor Pinkham  
Board of Trustees  
Town Administrator Lancaster

From: Jackie Williamson, Town Clerk

Date: April 5, 2013

RE: Future Town Board Study Session Items

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**April 23, 2013**

Policy Governance II – Board/Staff  
Linkage – Part 1  
Town Administrator Evaluation Process

**May 14, 2013**

Capital Planning and Management  
Support for Highland Festival/Evaluation  
of Special Events

**May 23, 2013**

Strategic Initiatives – Review of Citizen  
Engagement

**May 28, 2013**

Town Administrator Performance  
Review

**May 29, 2013**

Town Board Retreat

**June 11, 2013**

Mayor's Contingency Fund  
Development Plan Review Process

**June 25, 2013**

No scheduled items

**June 26, 2013**

Pre Budget Meeting

**July 9, 2013**

Proposed Amendments to Policy 101 –  
Board Assignments

**Other Items Not Currently Scheduled  
for Town Board Study Sessions**

- Revision to Stanley Historic District Agreement
- Update on Insurance Coverage
- FOSH – Feasibility question and process approval



# Memo

To: Honorable Mayor Pinkham  
Board of Trustees

From: Frank Lancaster

Date: *April 9th, 2013*

RE: Town Board Meeting Procedures/Tool Box.

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**Background:**

*Several Trustees have raised questions about several procedural items related to the operation of the Board of Trustees. Some relate to meeting management, some to official protocol and practices. In 2011 the Board adopted several practices that may address some of these issues, while others have not been discussed. Some of these same issues are addressed under the Governing section of Policy Governance. The purpose of this agenda item is to review these items and for the board to come to some consensus on how to handle these issues in the future. Specific issues that have been raise are:*

- *Meeting Management*
- *Process for limiting speakers time*
- *limiting speakers to the topic at hand*
- *Board committee appointments process.*
- *Trustees' responsibilities to support a Board decision*
- *Amending the Development Code to provide that, when special review is required, that process take place before any variance request may be submitted to the Board of Adjustment*

**Budget:**

*n/a*



# Memo

To: Honorable Mayor Pinkham  
Board of Trustees  
Town Administrator Lancaster

From: Jackie Williamson, Director

Date: April 3, 2013

RE: Town Retirement Plans

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**Background:**

The Town joined the Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA) on January 1, 1964, thereby providing Town employees with a defined benefit retirement program. The employee contributes a percentage of each paycheck and the Town contributes a percentage established by PERA annually. Currently the employee contributes 8% and the Town contributes 13.7%, see the chart below.

The Police department and management have had alternate retirement plans because PERA has not been as portable in the past, and police personnel and management tend to change jobs. All police personnel (sworn and non-sworn) and management hired externally and not promoted through the Town are members of ICMA 401(a) plans in which the employee and the Town contribute funds. Currently these employees contribute 8% per paycheck; however, the amount contributed by the Town varies, see chart below.

	Estimated # Employees	Retirement Rate
PERA EMP VESTED	47	13.70%
PERA EMP NOT VESTED	31	13.70%
ICMA MGMT EMP	5	13.70%
ICMA PD SWORN EMP MGMT	1	13.70%
ICMA PD SWORN EMP	19	11.10%
ICMA DISPATCH/ADMIN EMP	11	11.10%

Recently Administrative Services was requested to review the retirement benefits for all Police personnel because an inequity was perceived. Through the review it was determined the percentages paid by the Town to individual PERA and ICMA accounts has never been consistent, see the chart below for details. With the downturn in the economy beginning in 2005, PERA began to have financial issues which had significant effects on its structure and contributions from 2006 – 2010. During this timeframe ICMA

contributions by the Town were not updated to keep pace with the changes. Therefore by 2011 there was a 4.5% difference in the contribution for PERA covered employees versus ICMA employees.

	EMPLOYEE			EMPLOYER		
	ICMA Manage	ICMA Police	PERA	ICMA Manage	ICMA Police	PERA
1/1/2001	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	9.43%
1/1/2002	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	9.19%
1/1/2003	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	9.60%
1/1/2004	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	10.00%
1/1/2005	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	10.00%
1/1/2006	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	10.50%
1/1/2007	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	11.00%
1/1/2008	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	11.90%
1/1/2009	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	12.80%
1/1/2010	7.50%	8.00%	8.00%	10.00%	9.20%	13.70%
1/1/2011	8.00%	8.00%	8.00%	13.70%	11.10%	13.70%
1/1/2012	8.00%	8.00%	8.00%	13.70%	11.10%	13.70%
1/1/2013	8.00%	8.00%	8.00%	13.70%	11.10%	13.70%

In 2011, Administration took a step towards closing the gap on these inequities by approving a change to the ICMA contributions: Management from 10% to 13.7% and Police from 9.2% to 11.10%. To date there remains a 2.6% difference between the two retirement plans in the Town's contribution rate.

Staff recommends the Town contribute the same amount to each employee's retirement plan moving forward. PERA employer contribution rates are set by PERA and may not be modified by the employer. Therefore, it is recommended the Town adopt a policy to contribute to all employee retirement plans at the rate established by PERA moving forward and update ICMA contracts annually to reflect such changes if necessary.

Staff would also recommend the Town retroactively contribute to the Police employee ICMA retirement plans at the 13.7% rate starting January 2011. This would be a difference of 2.6% for all police personnel except for the Police Chief as he is considered management.

**Budget:**

Approximately \$70,180 would need to be allocated to Police personnel ICMA retirement accounts in order to make up the 2.6% deficit in contribution for 2011 and 2012. An adjustment to the 2013 contributions and budget would also be required as the 2013 budget was approved with the 11.1% contribution rate. The overall budgetary impact is estimated at \$100,000 from the General Fund.



# Report

To: Honorable Mayor Pinkham  
Town Board  
Town Administrator Lancaster

From: Utilities Director Bergsten

Date: April 9, 2013

RE: Municipal Code Updates for Water

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## **Revisions to Sections 13.20 – 13.38 of the Municipal Code**

In the process of reviewing business operations, the Utility Department has worked with Attorney White to revise the language in the Water section of the Municipal Code. Attached is a redlined copy for your review.

Most of the changes are cosmetic and do not change the intent of the section. Some of the alterations that are worth pointing out are:

- a) Multiple sections in the beginning regarding the Tabor Act that Attorney White referred to as irrelevant due to statutes and case law;
- b) Modification to section “13.24.050 *Separate connections required*” to allow flexibility of service line design on Town Homes;
- c) Addition of section “13.24.090 *Authority to shut service off*” clarifying the Department’s authority to operate the customer’s service valve;
- d) Clarification in section “13.28.090 *Charges when meter fails to register*” to state that customers must provide the Department access to the water meter.

The most notable area for discussion is: “13.32.040 *Discontinuance, termination and abandonment of service.*” As discussed in the February PUP Committee meeting, this section allows a water service to be revoked. Our Municipal Code allows water service charges to be collected through a lien on the property, insuring the recovery of delinquent charges. It is our intent to revise Section 13.32.040 with the Board’s input. Set forth below is Section 13.32.040 as currently stated in the Code, and Staff’s recommended changes for your review.

Existing Municipal Code Language:

***“13.32.040 Discontinuance, termination and abandonment of service.***

Any person who desires to discontinue the use of water shall file written notice with the Finance Officer and pay all current and back charges for water used. Any customer who fails to pay the applicable minimum rate set forth in this Chapter for a period of one (1) year, or whose service is terminated as elsewhere provided in this Chapter and whose service has not been restored within one (1) year from such termination, shall lose any right to have any water service, including the forfeiture of the connection charge. Any reconnection to the Town's water system after disconnection of service, pursuant to this Section, shall require a new application for service including payment of all tap fees and connection charges. Any tap connection that is terminated shall be physically disconnected from the Town's water system at the owner's expense. (Prior code §6.11; Ord. 6-78 §4, 1978; Ord. 7-79 §1, 1979; Ord. 2-93 §1(part), 1993; Ord. 15-97, 1997)”

Proposed Municipal Code language for Section 13.32.40 for consideration and discussion:

***13.32.040 Discontinuance, termination and abandonment of service.***

- (a) In the case where a property owner provides the Town Finance Department with a written and notarized notification of their intent to discontinue water service to their premises, the meter shall be removed and the service line shall be permanently capped at the water main at the owner's expense. The property owner must pay all current and back charges for water service. The written notification must certify the owner's intent to either (1) relinquish their water tap ownership (water rights and plant development fees), or (2) maintain their ownership of tap, which in turn, will require their monthly payment of one-half of the minimum monthly service charge in order to retain said ownership.
- (b) To abandon the existing service line, the corporation stop for the service line shall be permanently shut off at the water main at the owner's expense. The Department will not resume water service to the premises through a replacement line until the abandoned service line has been permanently disconnected. Full monthly minimum charges will apply during the replacement period.
- (c) Any tap connection that is terminated shall be physically disconnected from the Town's water system at the owner's expense within sixty (60) days.
- (d) If the Department receives notice from the Chief Building Inspector or the State Department of Public Health & Environment that a structure has been

condemned as not habitable or unsanitary or dangerous to human life, water service shall be shut off at once. Full monthly minimum charges will be held as a lien against the property. Service will be restored upon payment of all accumulated service charges, not to exceed the present value of tap charges (water rights and plant development fees). (Prior code §6.11; Ord. 6-78 §4, 1978; Ord. 7-79 §1, 1979; Ord. 2-93 §1(part), 1993; Ord. 15-97, 1997)



# **Title 13**

## ***II. WATER***

### **Chapter 13.20 Water Administration**

#### **13.20.010 Creation of Water Department.**

There is created and established a Water Department of the Town for the purpose of the management, maintenance, care and operation of the Town's water system. (Prior code §6.1)

### **Chapter 13.22 Water Activity Enterprise**

#### **13.22.010 Establishment of the Enterprise.**

The Town hereby establishes the Water Activity Enterprise as an agency of the Town and formally designates it as the "Town of Estes Park, Water Activity Enterprise" (the "Enterprise"). It shall be the purpose of the Enterprise to pursue or continue all of the Town's water activities, including those defined in Title 37, Article 45.1, Part 1, C.R.S. (the "Act"), such as water acquisition or water project or facility activities, including the construction, operation, repair and replacement of water facilities, and administration, using revenues and income generated by and earned or acquired in connection with such water activities and held and managed in the Town's water enterprise fund. As between the Town and the Enterprise, all water activities will be deemed done and furnished by the Enterprise. (Ord. 8-99 §1, 1999)

#### **13.22.020 Enterprise excluded from the provisions of TABOR.**

Pursuant to and in accordance with the Act, the Enterprise shall be excluded from the provisions of Section 20 of Article X of the Colorado Constitution (TABOR) and shall be entitled to impose rates, fees, tolls and charges; collect and spend revenues; issue revenue bonds; and construct, operate and maintain facilities and provide water services; all without reference or regard to the limitations contained in TABOR. (Ord. 8-99 §2, 1999)

#### **13.22.030 Governing body.**

The members of the Board of Trustees shall serve as the governing body of the Enterprise. Acting as the Enterprise Board, the Board of Trustees may exercise the Town's legal authority relating to water activities as defined in the Act. (Ord. 8-99 §3, 1999)

#### **13.22.040 Powers of the Enterprise.**

The Enterprise shall have all powers and authority granted to water activity enterprises by the provisions of the Act.

### **13.22.050 Enterprise obligations and Town obligations.**

The Town shall provide administrative services for the Enterprise and its activities, to continue to hold title to and own all of the assets currently owned by the Town and necessary to the operation of the Enterprise, to levy taxes for and pay debt service on general obligations of the Town incurred in the past to finance the acquisition, construction and installation of water, water facilities and improvements, and to impose all rates, fees, tolls and charges for water activities.

### **13.22.060 Transactions in the name of the Town or the Enterprise.**

Any and all transactions of the Enterprise may be done in the name of the Town or in the name of the Enterprise.

## **Chapter 13.24 Water Rules and Regulations**

### **13.24.010 Inspections.**

Whenever the Department deems it necessary, it may inspect the premises, including structures, of any water customer for the purpose of examining the condition of all pipes, motors, meters and water fixtures, or the manner in which the water is used.

### **13.24.050 Separate connections required.**

Each single family dwelling receiving water service must have a separate service line running from the corporation cock, located at the Town's water main. The property owner is responsible for installation, maintenance and repair of the water service line. Installation of the service line must be approved by the Department Director or a designee prior to installation. (Prior code 6.12; Ord. 11-73 §1, 1973; Ord. 15-97, 1997)

### **13.24.080 Water service and usage.**

(a) Continuity of service. The Department will endeavor to furnish and supply, but does not guarantee, uninterrupted water service. The Department will not be liable for any injury, loss or damage for interruptions due to system maintenance, upgrade or repair considered necessary or causes or contingencies beyond the control of the Department, including but not limited to accidents, breakdown of equipment, acts of God, drought, floods, storms, fires, strikes, riots, war or authority and orders of government, or for disconnection because of unsafe operation of equipment detrimental to other users, nonpayment of bills for service or diversion of water. Such interruptions shall not relieve the customer of payments for service under applicable rate schedules.

(b) Shortage of water. The Department will make reasonable effort to furnish a continuous supply of water to meet demands. However, should shortages occur by reason of drought, acts of God, or system outages for maintenance, upgrade or repair, the Department shall have the right to grant preference to those services which are the most essential to the public welfare. The Department shall not be held liable for any claim, loss or liability from shortages in supply of water.

(c) No claim shall be made against the Town on account of the breaking of service pipes or apparatus or for failure in the supply of water. No reduction in the rates will be made for any time that service pipes or fixtures may be inoperable due to service interruption.

(d) Liability. All installations of water pipes, meters or other materials or equipment made by the Department at its expense shall remain the property of the Department and shall not be tampered or interfered with directly or indirectly by the customer or any other unauthorized person.

(e) WaterIrrigation restrictions. In case of water shortage or scarcity, the Department may place any restrictions which it deems necessary upon the use of water. (Prior code 6.13; Ord. 15-97, 1997)

### **13.24.090 Authority to shut service off.**

The Department shall have the authority to terminate water service if the conditions warrant the need to mitigate leaks, protect the distribution system, limit property damage or for nonpayment for service. The Department shall not be responsible for damages to the property, service pipes or apparatus when the service is terminated.

### **13.24.120 Extraterritorial water service.**

(a) Use of water outside the Town limits shall be subject to the paramount rights of users within the Town limits, and in case there shall be insufficient water or system capacity to provide for users both within and without the Town limits, the Board may reduce, curtail or shut off the users outside the Town limits during such period of water shortage or system capacity.

(b) All applicants for water service outside the boundaries of the Town, including any changes or enlargement of service, shall, if required by the Town, annex their property to the Town prior to furnishing of water service; or if their property is not eligible for annexation, execute a water tap agreement requiring annexation to the Town when said property is eligible for annexation. (Prior code §6.19; Ord. 24-98 §1, 1998)

### **13.24.150 Regulations; part of service contract.**

All regulations of the Department shall be considered a part of the contract withwith any person or entity using the water system, and every person or entity taking water shall be considered as having expressly consented to be bound thereby. (Prior code §6.27)

### **13.24.230 Contract line extensions.**

(a) The Town or another party may construct certain water mains to provide water service to undeveloped portions of the Town's water service area. A listing of these water main extensions and the areas they serve is on file in the Department. All connections to these mains from the designated areas shall be subject to a contract line assessment.

(b) The Town reserves the right to charge the entire contract line assessment for any new subdivision at the time of the issuance of the first building permit in said subdivision. (Ord. 1-92 §1, 1992; Ord. 2-93 §7, 1993; Ord. 15-97, 1997)

## Chapter 13.26 Cross-Connections

### 13.26.010 General policy.

The Department shall be responsible for the protection of the Town's potable water distribution system from contamination or pollution due to the backflow of contaminants or pollutants through the water service connection. If, in the judgment of the Department, an approved backflow-prevention assembly is required at the consumer's water service connection or within the consumer's private water system for the safety of the water system, the Department shall give notice in writing to said consumer to install such an approved backflow-prevention assemblies at specific locations on his or her premises. The consumer shall install and maintain such approved assemblies within the time frame set forth in the notice and at his or her own expense.. Failure, refusal or inability of the consumer to install, have tested and maintain said assemblies shall constitute grounds for discontinuing water service to the premises until such requirements have been satisfactorily met. (Ord. 3-04 §1, 2004)

### 13.26.020 Definitions.

Definitions of terms used in this chapter are those contained in the Colorado Cross-Connection Control Manual, Department of Health and Environment's latest edition unless otherwise defined below:

(1) *Approved backflow device* means a backflow device or air gap meeting the standards and installation requirements of the A.S.S.E. (American Society of Sanitary Engineers), the latest edition of the Cross-Connection Control Manual and/or the requirements of the Water Department. Approval by the Department will be dependent upon the hazards assessed, but shall not be less than the Cross-Connection Control Manual requirements for potable water system protection. *Approved status* shall also be contingent upon inspection, testing and passing of such test by a Certified Cross-Connection Control Technician. Any variation or exception may be by direction from the current edition of the Colorado Cross-Connection Control Manual.

(2) *Certified Cross-Connection Control Technician* means a person who possesses a current certification as a backflow tester and repairer from one of the following national certification councils: American Society of Sanitary Engineers (A.S.S.E.), the American Backflow Association (A.B.P.A.) and the American Boards of Certifications (A.B.C.). Any variation or exception will be by direction from the current edition of the Cross-Connection Control Manual.

(3) *Containment* means the installation of an approved backflow device isolating the premises and all plumbing connections to the service connection therein from the Town's potable water supply. At the Department's discretion, installation of the approved backflow device shall, at a minimum, be placed at or near the property line with all necessary equipment/enclosures to ensure uninterrupted service and meet all installation safety codes at the consumer's expense.

(4) *Cross-connection* means a connection or potential connection between any part of the Town's potable water system and any other environment containing other substances in a manner that, under any circumstances, would allow such substances to enter the Town's potable water system. Other substances may be gases, liquids or solids, such as chemicals, waste products, steam, water from other sources (potable or nonpotable) or any matter that may change the color or add odor to the water.

(5) *Service connection* means the terminal end of the water supplier service connection from the Town's potable water distribution system to the threads on the corporation stop where the Department loses jurisdiction and sanitary control and consumer ownership begins. *Service connection* shall also include water service connection from a fire hydrant and all other temporary or emergency water service connections from the Town's potable water system. (Ord. 3-04 §1, 2004)

### **13.26.030 Requirements.**

(a) New connection. All new connections to the Town's water system shall have an approved backflow device. The Department will provide on-site evaluation and/or plan review in order to determine the type of backflow device that will be required as a condition of service. All new connections requiring a backflow device shall be inspected and tested by a Certified Cross-Connection Control Technician.

(b) Changes in service. Any changes in service, including but not limited to reconnection, change in the number of fixture values, or changes in the type of water service, shall require installation of an approved backflow device.

(c) Existing installations. For connections or premises without backflow devices existing prior to September 1, 2004, the Department will perform on-site evaluations and/or plan reviews and inform the consumer by letter of any corrective action deemed necessary, the method of correction and the time allowed for correction as a condition of service. Up to sixty (60) days will be allowed but may be shortened depending upon the degree of hazard (pollutant or contaminant) involved. The Department does not waive the right to require a backflow device if future directions requires such.

(d) Testing. All backflow devices shall be tested and pass said testing requirements at least annually by a Certified Cross-Connection Control Technician using the latest test procedures as specified by one (1) of the following councils: A.S.S.E., A.B.C., A.B.P.A.

(e) Emergency disconnection. At the Department's discretion, severing the service connection will be performed if the degree of hazard warrants such action in order to protect the Town's potable water supply. Discontinuance of service may be summary, immediate and without written notice whenever, in the judgment of the Department, such action is necessary to protect the Town's potable water supply or the distribution system, including unmetered losses from customer owned service lines.

(f) Failure to comply. If, after a first notice by letter or direct delivery of notice, the consumer fails to comply with the Department's directive or fails to allow access to premises for inspection and/or repairs, immediate termination of service can occur. At the Department's discretion, no more than an additional ten (10) days shall be granted to comply with said directive. Failure to allow access by the consumer, or those designated by him or her, to premises for inspection or repair by the Department will automatically classify the premises as a high-hazard risk to the Town's potable water supply. Appeal of any notice shall be directed to the Department Director. An appeal shall not stay the execution of the failure to comply order by the Department in order to protect the Town's potable water supply. The failure to comply order may be reversed if the appeal is upheld.

(g) Record keeping. The Department shall maintain records of all backflow device inspections and test results for a minimum of three (3) years.

(h) Variance. Upon written application by the consumer, the Department may vary any of the requirements of this section upon the finding by the Department that an approved backflow device is not necessary to protect the Town's potable water supply. The Department may approve the variance with or without conditions. (Ord. 304 §1, 2004)

### **13.26.040 Requirements of consumer.**

(a) Cross-connections. The consumer shall be responsible for the elimination or protection of all cross-connections (known or unknown by the Department) on his or her premises by installing an approved backflow device at his or her expense. Such backflow device expenses shall include installation, maintenance, protection, testing, repair, removal or replacement of said devices as required by the Department as a condition of service.

(b) Backflow device. No backflow device shall be bypassed, disabled, removed or modified without written consent by the Department. Any such modifications shall result in termination of service.

(c) Fire suppression system design and installation. The consumer, or those designated by him or her, will comply with current National Fire Protection Association (N.F.P.A.) standards and/or the current Water Department Policy Manual as amended when designing, installing and maintaining any fire suppression system as a condition of service. (Ord. 3-04 §1, 2004)

## **Chapter 13.28 Metered Service**

### **13.28.050 Customer liable for meter damage.**

All customers shall be liable for any damage to a water meter caused by freezing or willful or negligent acts.. All such damages shall be charged to and paid for by the customer. In the event the damages shall not be paid when due, the provisions and procedures of Chapter 13.32 pertaining to delinquent water rent shall apply to all unpaid charges for such damages. (Prior code §6.21-5; Ord. 16-72 §1(part), 1972)

### **13.28.080 Unlawful to interfere with or bypass meters.**

It is unlawful for any metered customer, or for any other person, to tamper or interfere with any meter, remote reader or meter seal, or to so arrange his or her water service or piping so that the use of water will not be accurately metered. The Town shall immediately discontinue water service to any user who violates the provisions of this section until satisfactory payment has been made for Department-estimated water use and meter repairs. (Ord. 13-77 §5, 1977)

### **13.28.090 Charges when meter fails to register.**

If any meter fails to register in any billing period, the water user shall be charged according to the average quantity of water used in a similar period as shown by the meter when in order, and the Department may prorate any water bill for any such period of time water service is received while

not being metered. The customer shall provide timely access to meter for maintenance and replacement. The meter must be kept in an easily accessible location. (Ord. 1377 §6, 1977)

## **Chapter 13.32 Water Rates and Charges**

### **13.32.010 Water rate schedule.**

(a) Applicability. The water rate schedule is applicable to water service for all customers receiving water service from the Town's water system.

(b) Rates. The rates for water service to all customers on the Town's water system are as more fully set forth on the Town's water rate schedule on file in the office of the Department Director. (Prior code §6.28-2; Ord. 293 §3; Ord. 328 §2; Ord. 371 §2; Ord. 10-71 §9, 1971; Ord. 5-74 §2, 1974; Ord. 4-75 §1(part), 1975; Ord. 12-77 §2, 1977; Ord. 6-78 §7, 1978; Ord. 34-78 §4, 1978; Ord. 7-79 §2, 1979; Ord. 28-79 §2, 1979; Ord. 13-80 §2, 1980; Ord. 24-80 §3, 1980; Ord. 12-85 §3, 1985; Ord. 21-86 §3, 1986; Ord. 29-87 §2, 1987; Ord. 2-93 §2, 1993; Ord. 1-94 §3, 1994; Ord. 15-97, 1997)

### **13.32.020 Consumer obligations.**

All owners of property shall remain ultimately and legally liable for the payment of any and all water service charges to the premises, regardless of whether such property is used for single-family, multi-family or commercial purposes, and regardless of whether the billings are made in the name of the owner, tenant or other occupant of the premises. Such billings are for personal convenience only and shall not in any way affect lien rights of the Town against the premises to which the services are furnished.

### **13.32.030 Monthly minimum rates.**

Monthly minimum service charges apply to all service connections. One half of the applicable monthly minimum service charge is applied when plant development charges and water rights fees have been paid in advance of the physical connection to the water system.

### **13.32.040 Discontinuance, termination and abandonment of service.**

(a) In the case where a property owner provides the Town Finance Department with a written and notarized notification of their intent to discontinue water service to their premises, the meter shall be removed and the service line shall be permanently capped at the water main at the owner's expense. The property owner must pay all current and back charges for water service. The written notification must certify the owner's intent to either (1) relinquish their water tap ownership (water rights and plant development fees), or (2) maintain their ownership of tap, which in turn, will require their monthly payment of one-half of the minimum monthly service charge in order to retain said ownership.

(b) To abandon the existing service line, the corporation stop for the service line shall be permanently shut off at the water main at the owner's expense. The Department will not resume water service to the premises through a replacement line until the abandoned service line has been permanently disconnected. Full monthly minimum charges will apply during the replacement period.

(c) Any tap connection that is terminated shall be physically disconnected from the Town's water system at the owner's expense within sixty (60) days.

(d) If the Department receives notice from the Chief Building Inspector or the State Department of Public Health & Environment that a structure has been condemned as not habitable or unsanitary or dangerous to human life, water service shall be shut off at once. Full monthly minimum charges will be held as a lien against the property. Service will be restored upon payment of all accumulated service charges, not to exceed the present value of tap charges (water rights and plant development fees). (Prior code §6.11; Ord. 6-78 §4, 1978; Ord. 7-79 §1, 1979; Ord. 2-93 §1(part), 1993; Ord. 15-97, 1997)

### **13.32.080 Liens on unpaid service charges.**

All service charges shall be charged against the owner of the property served, shall be a lien upon the respective lots or parcels of land where the service is assigned from the time when due and shall be a perpetual charge against the lots or parcels of land until paid. In the event said charges shall not be paid when due for property within Town limits, the Town Clerk shall certify such delinquent charges to the County Treasurer and the charges shall be collected in the same manner as though they were part of the taxes. On all delinquent water and connection charges for property outside the Town limits, there shall be a charge of one percent (1%) per month on the amount due, which shall be added to the amount due until paid. In the case of condominiums to which water is furnished, the consumption of every condominium unit, the lien for the unpaid water, interest and costs, if any, imposed by this Code shall attach upon such condominium unit in an amount which is computed by dividing the total amount of the lien by the number of condominium units. (Prior code §6.25; Ord. 316 §2; Ord. 10-71 §6, 1971; Ord. 19-73 §1(part), 1973; Ord. 13-77 §7, 1977; Ord. 6-78 §5, 1978)

## **Chapter 13.38 Bulk Rate Water Customers**

### **13.38.010 Bulk rate water users.**

A bulk rate water user is a person or an entity controlling or owning and maintaining its own water distribution system, which system is connected to the Town's water system by a single connection through a single meter. Only such systems in existence on April 1, 1987, shall be eligible for acceptance as a bulk rate water user, unless otherwise approved by the Board of Trustees. This rate structure is not intended to apply to developments served by private service lines that are master-metered.. (Ord. 4-87 §1(part), 1987)

### **13.38.110 Distribution system.**

It is understood and agreed by the applicant and all persons receiving water through the master meter that the Town has no control of or has not approved the distribution system from the master meter to the ultimate user of the water. The Town shall not be responsible for the repair or maintenance of the distribution system. No claim shall be made against the Town on account of the breaking of any part of the distribution system or for the failure of supply of water to same. The applicant and all others receiving water through the distribution system under the terms and conditions of this chapter



understand that the Town does not warrant at any time an adequate supply of water to the system and/or the design and workmanship of the distribution system. Any change in the quality of the water after delivery to the master meter is not the responsibility of the Town. (Ord. 4-87 §1(part), 1987)

DRAFT



# Report

To: Town Board  
Town Administrator Lancaster

From: Reuben Bergsten, Utilities Director

Date: April 9, 2013

RE: **Water Leak Adjustment Policy**

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## **Background:**

For years the Town has provided bill adjustments to customers who experience water leaks. At the present time, leaks are forgiven at 100%. Staff is recommending this practice be reconsidered by the Board before a formal policy is adopted.

This issue touches areas of fairness, financial responsibility, conservation responsible maintenance and administrative simplicity. A draft policy was brought to the February Public Safety/Utilities/Public Works (PUP) Committee and now the subject comes before this Study Session for additional discussion.

There is no standard for leak policies. Policies vary from utility to utility. Variations appear to be driven by a variety of values, for example:

- availability of water / conservation;
- tolerance/leniency of the board, i.e. responsibility to maintain your home or building vs. the compassion toward rate payers who face an unexpected plumbing failure;
- balancing the fairness as to who pays, i.e. the customer account with the leak or distributed to all rate payers
- different expectations between residential customers and commercial customers
- supporting a principle of taking responsibility for the incident

The consensus of staff objectives are: keep it simple to explain and understand; keep it simple to compute; provide enough detail to avoid being arbitrary and capricious; provide room for interpretation on a case-by-case basis; avoid procedural details; and be fair to both the leak applicant and all other customers.

A 2011 Master's Thesis by Rick Selin titled "WATER LEAK BILLING ADJUSTMENT POLICY: CITY OF AUSTIN & GENERAL GUIDELINES" surveyed 112 utilities around the country. The "Recommendations" section of this Master's Thesis is attached for your review. Additionally, the past ten years of Estes Park customer leak credits has been summarized for your reference.

The following table contains the six categories from Mr. Selin's thesis with staff's recommendations in the second column.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Staff Recommendations</u>
Eligible/ineligible leaks	<p>Leak shown to be repaired with receipt of repair bill</p> <p>In cases where insurance is covering property damage, the customer must provide proof the insurance company will not cover the utility bill</p> <p>Adjustment requested within six months of the leak discovery date</p> <p>Subsequent consumption returns to normal levels</p> <p>Leak consumption must be a minimum of three times higher than the class average</p>
Eligible/ineligible accounts or customer class	Bulk water accounts are excluded
Adjustment period	Two billing periods maximum
Adjustment frequency	One every sixty months
Adjustment credit cap	No cap
Adjustment credit calculation (who pays how much)	<p>Three options presented for discussion and consideration limits the leak payment to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. raw material costs/incremental costs</li> <li>2. split the leak 50/50</li> <li>3. 100% leak credit</li> </ol>

For all adjustments the normal usage would be the class average.

A typical example: a residential urban customer receives a call from Utility Billing alerting them to a leak. Their consumption is 104,000 gallons (gal).

The bill to be sent will be: \$21.08 (base fee) + \$0.00444/gal x 104,000 gal = \$482.84

After leak adjustment the bill would be:

#1. \$21.08 (base fee) + \$0.00444/gal x 4,000 gal + 100,000 gal x \$0.00087/gal = \$125.84

#2. \$21.08 (base fee) + \$0.00444/gal x 4,000 gal + (100,000 gal x \$0.00444/gal)/2 = \$260.84

#3. \$21.08 (base fee) + \$0.00444/gal x 4,000 gal = \$38.84

Larger leak example, a residential urban customer receives a call from Utility Billing alerting them to a leak. Their consumption is 304,000 gallons (gal).

The bill to be sent will be: \$21.08 (base fee) + \$0.00444/gal x 304,000 gal = \$1,370.84

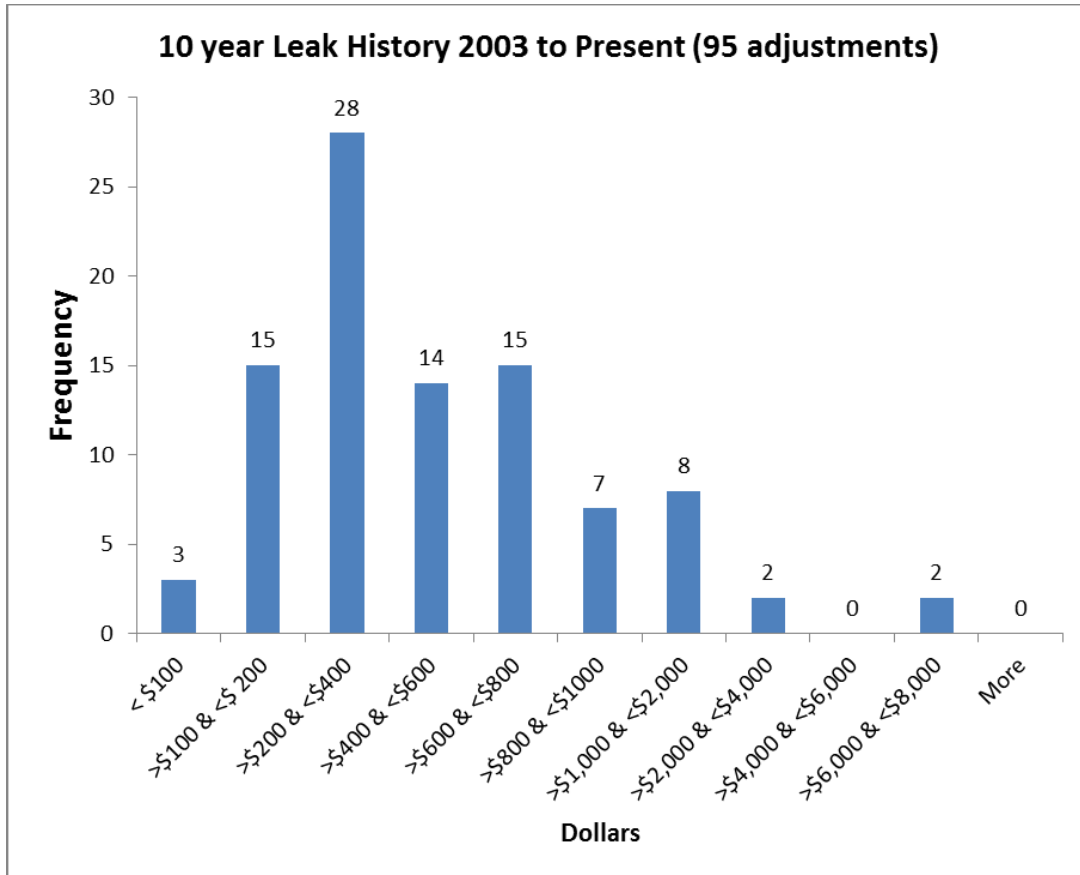
After leak adjustment the bill would be:

#1. \$21.08 (base fee) + \$0.00444/gal x 4,000 gal + 300,000 gal x \$0.00087/gal = \$299.84

#2. \$21.08 (base fee) + \$0.00444/gal x 4,000 gal + (300,000 gal x \$0.00444/gal)/2 = \$704.84

#3. \$21.08 (base fee) + \$0.00444/gal x 4,000 gal = \$38.84

The following chart shows a breakdown of the leak adjustments the Town has credited over the last 10 years. It shows that the majority of leak adjustments absorbed by the Town fall within the \$200 to \$400 range. The root cause of leaks is not readily accessible. Based on experience, the largest leaks are caused by frozen pipes, broken irrigation system and a broken pressure reducing valve. The more typical toilet flapper valve leaks, hot water heater failure and leaking exterior valves account for smaller leaks.



The following table summarizes the total dollar amounts credited to customer accounts by year:

Year	Annual count	Total Credits Given (\$)
2003	3	\$ 1,262.56
2004	3	\$ 1,413.54
2005	1	\$ 597.56
2006	4	\$ 957.84
2007	9	\$ 11,770.61
2008	16	\$ 8,283.36
2009	12	\$ 15,342.18
2010	16	\$ 9,391.89
2011	16	\$ 7,758.96
2012	9	\$ 3,569.62
2013	6	\$ 4,717.43

A copy of the proposed policy is attached. Additional materials are added for your information to show how we try to help residents avoid water leaks.

Excerpt From  
2011 Master's Thesis by Rick Selin  
**"WATER LEAK BILLING ADJUSTMENT POLICY: CITY OF AUSTIN & GENERAL GUIDELINES"**

### **Recommendations**

The following section prescribes recommendations for water leak adjustment policies based on the conducted research. For the City of Austin Water Utility, the researcher suggests specific recommendations that are tailored to the existing policy and operating environment. This research additionally proposes a series of general water leak adjustment policy guidelines and considerations that can be utilized by other utilities that are editing their existing policies or by utilities seeking to implement a water leak adjustment policy for the first time.

#### **Recommendations for the City of Austin Water Utility**

This research project recommends multiple policy change options for the City of Austin Water Utility water leak adjustment policy. There are two key principles underlying the recommended policy changes: (1) to minimize the number and magnitude of changes to the current policy's construct while creating the largest financial impact and (2) to accommodate the City of Austin Water Utility management's desire to model all or portions of any new policy after the policy of the San Antonio Water System (A. Flora, personal communication, April 13, 2010). The primary reasons for the City of Austin Water Utility management's desire to model its policies after those of San Antonio Water System are its proximity to Austin<sup>12</sup>, the size of the population base it serves<sup>13</sup>, and its policies and practices that are heavily oriented toward water conservation<sup>14</sup>. The City of Austin Water utility can implement the following recommendations individually or in any combination, but ideally it would implement all of the recommendations to maximize its financial impact.

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<sup>12</sup> San Antonio is roughly 74 miles from Austin (Coordinates + total distance: Austin and San Antonio, 2010b).

<sup>13</sup> San Antonio Water Systems serves 325,944 water and 354,878 wastewater connections (San Antonio Water System, 2010); Austin Water Utility serves 200,000 water and 187,000 wastewater connections (City of Austin Texas, 2010b).

<sup>14</sup> San Antonio Water Systems has some of the most extensive water conservation policies in Texas (Texas Water Resources Institute, 2002) due to its limited water supply options (Texas Water Matters, 2009). Its conservation policies save an estimated 1.3 billion gallons of water per year (San Antonio Water System, 2010a). Between 1982 and 2007, its conservation efforts decreased daily per capita water usage by nearly 38% from 225 gallons per person per day to 140 gallons per person per day (Texas Water Matters, 2007). The other major metropolitan Texas cities of Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Austin, and El Paso have daily per capita water usages of 264 gallons, 218 gallons, 159 gallons, 173 gallons, and 172 gallons respectively (San Antonio Water System, 2003).

**Eligibility criteria.**

The following are the recommendations for the policy's eligibility criteria:

- The leak adjustment must be requested within six months of plumbing repairs to fix the leak.
- The water usage must return to a normal level of usage or drop to a level of usage that is less than the usage that was attributed to the water leak.
- The customer must provide receipts or proof of repairs and proof of a valid plumbing permit for those repairs.

**Eligible leaks.**

The utility will only consider leaks occurring on domestic water use portions of lines and appurtenances for an adjustment.

**Ineligible leaks.**

The utility will not consider leaks occurring on dedicated irrigation water use portion of lines and appurtenances for an adjustment.

**Eligible accounts.**

The utility will only consider leak adjustments on residential water accounts<sup>15</sup> and commercial wastewater accounts when charges are billed on a gallon-for-gallon basis based on domestic water consumption<sup>16</sup>.

**Adjustment period.**

The utility will only consider a maximum of two months of leak usage for adjustment.

**Adjustment frequency.**

The utility will only consider an account eligible for one leak adjustment per fiscal year.

**Adjustment credit caps.**

The utility will enact leak adjustment credit caps of \$600 per adjustment for residential water accounts and \$1,000 per adjustment for commercial wastewater accounts<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> There will be no residential wastewater adjustments. Residential wastewater billing is based on an average that creates a billing cap. Residential wastewater will only be adjusted if a qualifying leak affects the averaging period.

<sup>16</sup> There will be no commercial wastewater adjustments for accounts billing on a wastewater average as it creates a billing cap. Commercial wastewater for accounts billing a wastewater average will only be adjusted if a qualifying leak affects the averaging period.

<sup>17</sup> These credit caps are modeled after the most liberal caps implemented in the leak adjustment policy of San Antonio Water System, which caps residential leak adjustments at \$600 per adjustment and commercial leak adjustments at \$1,000 per adjustment (San Antonio Water System, 2009).

### **Adjustment credit calculations.**

The utility will provide a credit adjustment for each of the eligible account types based on different calculation formulas. The following are descriptions of each credit calculation:

- The utility will credit residential water adjustments 50% of the difference between the "normal usage" and the leak usage multiplied by a special rate<sup>18</sup> that is established and effective October 1<sup>st</sup> of each fiscal year plus normal usage multiplied by the actual billing rate deducted from the leak usage bill. The credit formula appears as

$$\text{credit} = \text{leak usage} - (\{[(\text{leak usage} - \text{normal usage}) * 50\%] * \text{special rate}\} + \text{normal usage bill}) \text{ (City of Austin Water Utility Customer Service Division, 2007).}$$

- The utility will credit commercial wastewater by using the difference between the "normal usage" and the leak usage multiplied by the actual billing rate. The credit formula appears as

$$\text{credit} = (\text{leak usage} - \text{normal usage}) * \text{actual billing rate.}$$

### **General Policy Guidelines and Considerations**

The researcher created the general policy guidelines and considerations based on this study's findings, which attempt to establish an industry norm based on the cross-sectional sample population of utilities.

#### **Eligibility criteria.**

The following are the recommendations for the policy's eligibility criteria:

- The customer must request the leak adjustment within six months of completing plumbing repairs to fix the leak.
- The water usage must return to a normal level of usage or drop to a level of usage that is less than the usage that was attributed to the water leak.
- The customer must provide receipts or proof of repairs and proof of a valid plumbing permit for those repairs (if applicable in the implementing municipality).

#### **Eligible leaks.**

The utility will only consider adjustments for leaks occurring on domestic water use portions of lines that are outdoors, underground, or not visible.

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<sup>18</sup>The special rate provision allowed by city ordinance is carried over to minimize the changes of any proposed policy from current policy.

**Ineligible leaks.**

The utility will not consider adjustments for leaks occurring on dedicated irrigation water use portion of lines and appurtenances. Likewise, the utility will not consider adjustments for leaks caused by indoor fixtures, pools, or owner's neglect of maintenance.

**Eligible accounts.**

The utility will only consider adjustments for leaks occurring on residential water accounts and commercial wastewater accounts that bill on a gallon-for-gallon basis based on water consumption.

**Adjustment period.**

The utility will only consider adjustments for a maximum of two months of leak usage.

**Adjustment frequency.**

The utility will only consider an account eligible for one leak adjustment every 24 months.

**Adjustment credit caps.**

The utility will cap residential water account credits at a maximum of \$600 per adjustment and commercial wastewater account credits at a maximum of \$1,000 per adjustment.

**Adjustment credit calculations.**

The utility will provide a credit adjustment for each of the eligible account types based on different calculation formulas. The following are descriptions of each credit calculation:

- The utility will credit residential water adjustments one half of the excess usage (with excess usage defined as the leak usage minus "normal" usage) multiplied by the actual billing rate. The credit formula is  $\text{credit} = [(\text{leak usage} - \text{normal usage}) \times \frac{1}{2}] \times \text{billing rate}$ .
- Residential wastewater will not receive an adjustment.
- Commercial water will not receive an adjustment.
- The utility will credit commercial wastewater adjustments the excess usage (with excess usage defined as the leak usage minus "normal" usage) multiplied by the actual billing rate.

The credit formula is  $\text{credit} = (\text{leak usage} - \text{normal usage}) \times \text{billing rate}$ .

**Triple Bottom-Line Impacts: City of Austin Water Utility Recommendations**

All public policy decisions can have multiple impacts. The recommended water leak adjustment policy changes for the City of Austin Water Utility are no different. Public policy decision impacts should be but are not often evaluated using the triple bottom-line approach. Under this approach, adopting agencies analyze the areas of economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and quality of life. The following sections are specific to the recommendations for the City of Austin Water Utility.



Effective Period:  
Review Schedule:  
Effective Date:  
References:



## UTILITIES

### Water Leak Adjustment Policy

### UTILITY BILLING

- 930.## Purpose**  
To balance a customer's financial relief with stewardship of our natural resources and the cost of treating water; to set forth the conditions under which a leak adjustment request will be considered; to establish repair expectations; and to ensure the consistent application of leak adjustments.
- 930.## Policy**  
Water leaks can generate very large utility bills. A leak adjustment can be provided contingent on a review of the circumstances. A leak is defined as an unintentional water loss from a customer-owned plumbing fixture or pipe that, within reason, will not reoccur because repairs and other applicable counter measures have been put in place.
- 930.## Water Shut Off Service Call Charge**  
Under certain circumstances, the Water Department may operate a customer's valve to shut their water off, in order to mitigate damage from leaks. If this occurs, the customer may incur a service call charge.
- 930.## Restrictions**  
The application for leak adjustment must be made within six months of the leak.  
The account may receive only one adjustment during a 60-month period.  
The adjustment can include up to two billing cycles.  
No adjustments will be made for bulk water accounts.  
No adjustments will be made to high water bills that cannot be explained or vandalism  
No adjustments will be made to accounts for properties under construction  
Consumption must be a minimum of three times higher than the class average.
- 930.## Qualification**  
In order to be eligible for a water leak adjustment, customers must:
- a) Complete an application for leak adjustment
  - b) Demonstrate that action has been taken to repair or resolve the issue that caused the extraordinary water consumption;
  - c) In cases where insurance is covering property damage, the customer must provide the Town with proof that the customer's insurance company will not cover the excess water consumption charges on their utility bill

Revisions:

**Effective Period:**  
**Review Schedule:**  
**Effective Date:**  
**References:**



**UTILITIES**  
**Water Leak Adjustment Policy**  
**UTILITY BILLING**

**930.##**

**Responsibility**

After review of the application the customer will be notified of the amount of credit to be applied to the account or the reason the adjustment was not granted.

The credit amount will be calculated as follows:

Credit = To Be Determined

The class average consumption will be calculated as part of our rate study.

The marginal cost of water production will be calculated as part of our rate study. The marginal cost used until that time is \$0.87/1000 gallons.

DRAFT

**Revisions:**

### One-in-Five Year Leak Adjustment Application

It is a simple act to turn on a faucet but the infrastructure that delivers drinking water to your home or business is complex. Water from streams and/or reservoirs must be treated, tested and piped throughout the Estes Park area. The operational and capital costs associated with the treatment, testing and delivery of drinking water are substantial. Every day of the year, 24 hours a day a team of highly trained personnel are operating and maintaining the Town's water system. Unfortunately the same isn't true of our homes and businesses.

It seems to be a law of nature that problems happen when no one is around. That's when pipes freeze, water heaters leak, or a washing machine hose breaks. Arrangements should be made for homes and buildings left for extended vacations or for seasonal shut downs. **This can include winterizing, active water leak monitoring systems capable of shutting the water supply off and hiring a caretaker service.** It is the customer's responsibility to ensure the protection and safety of their property. Figure 1 is provided to clearly communicate the delineation of ownership and responsibility.

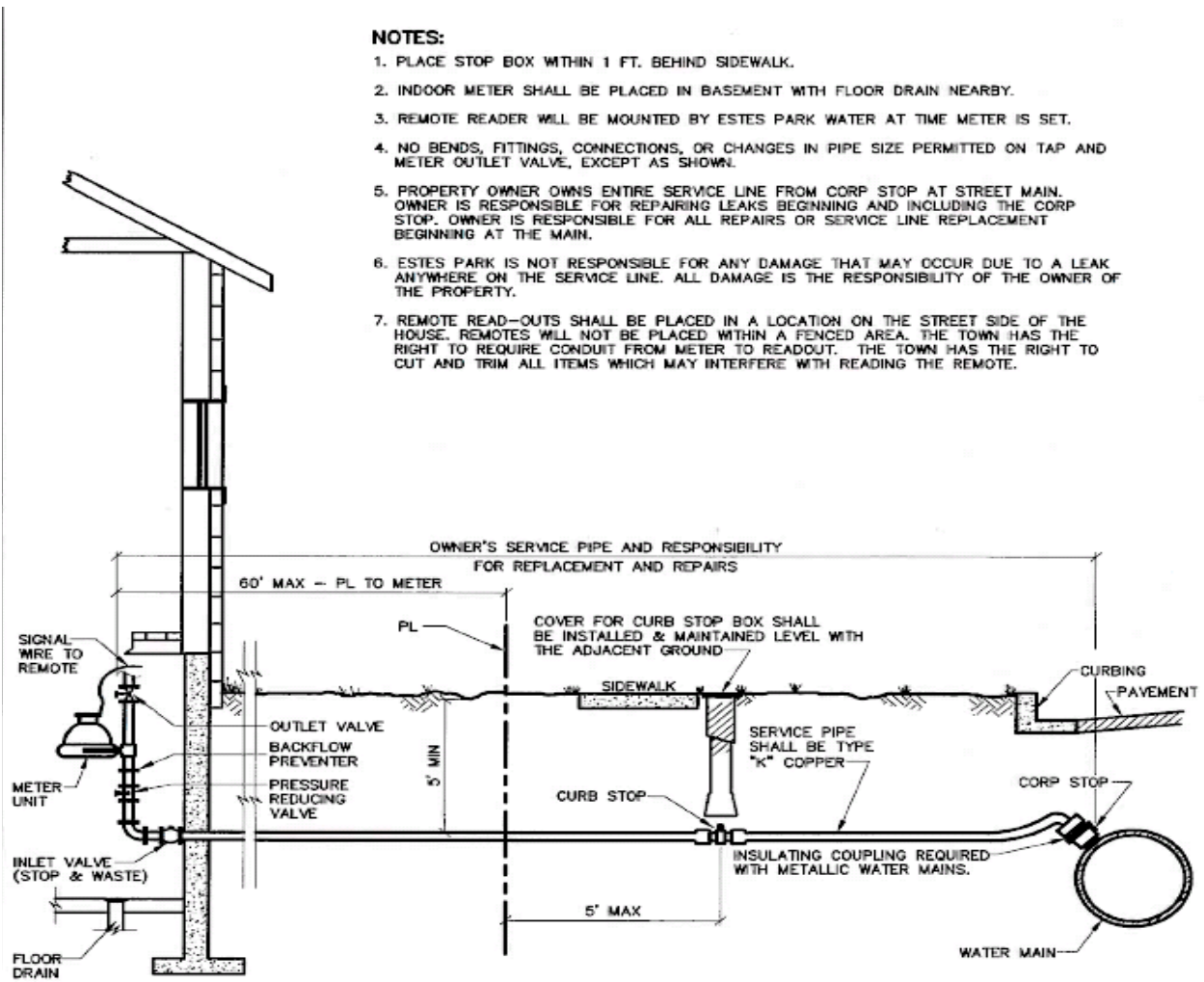


Figure 1, Town of Estes Park Water Standards

### **To apply for a water leak adjustment:**

1. Prepare a letter formally requesting a water leak adjustment. This letter must include:
  - a. Your name
  - b. The address of the property where the leak occurred
  - c. Whether you are the owner or a tenant of the property
  - d. The utility account number to which the consumption was billed
  - e. A description of the leak – when it happened, when it was fixed
  - f. Copies of the repair bills or receipts for parts purchased to fix the leak
  - g. Your current contact information (preferably an email address)
2. Submit the letter to:
  - a. Town of Estes Park, Attn: Water Leak Adjustments; PO BOX 1200; Estes Park, CO 80517
3. When this letter is received, a claim will be opened. Until you hear whether your request has been approved or denied, you may elect not to pay the WATER USAGE line item on your utility bill. All other charges contained in the utility bill must be paid to keep your account in good standing.
4. It may take several months to process your leak adjustment; by following these procedures, you will help expedite the process.
5. All requests must be accompanied by the required paperwork, including a formal request for the adjustment, or it will be denied.
6. If approved, a credit adjustment of 50% of the water consumption covering up to two billing cycles for the leak will be made to your account. When there is leakage of more than 500,000 gallons, further investigation will be required to determine the amount of the credit.
7. Questions? Please call Susie at 970-577-3588, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Leak Adjustment Form

Date:	
Name:	
Owner or Tenant	
Property Address:	
Account Number:	
Monthly Bills to be Adjusted (max of two):	
Phone #	
Leak Discovered:	
Leak Repaired:	

The applicant understands and agrees, as a condition for receiving the requested leak adjustment, that a leak adjustment can only be made on the subject property once in sixty (60) months.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(To be completed by The Town of Estes Park Water Department)			
<table border="1"><tr><td style="text-align: center;"><i>Total Credit( \$ )</i></td></tr><tr><td> </td></tr></table>		<i>Total Credit( \$ )</i>	
<i>Total Credit( \$ )</i>			
NOTES:			
Request Approved by: _____			
Date Approved: _____			



## TOWN OF ESTES PARK

### **Preventing (and Handling) Frozen Water Pipes**

Cold spells can have unfortunate consequences when it comes to home plumbing. The three main causes of frozen pipes are quick drops in temperature, poor insulation and thermostats set too low. Homeowners should be alert to the danger of freezing pipes whenever outside temperatures reach 20°F or lower. Most of us take a few measures in the fall to prepare our homes for winter, like disconnecting outside water hoses. But what should we do now that really cold temperatures are here?

#### **When the Mercury Drops**

- A trickle of hot and cold water may keep pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall. Opening a faucet relieves excessive pressure that builds between the faucet and ice blockage when freezing occurs. If there is no excessive water pressure, there will be no bursting pipe, even if the water inside the pipe freezes. If the dripping stops, leave the faucet(s) open, since a pipe may have frozen and will still need pressure relief.
- Keep thermostats set at the same temperature both day and night. Many people have a habit of turning down the heat when they sleep, but further drops in the temperature – more common overnight – can freeze pipes.
- Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to uninsulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.

#### **Going on a Trip?**

Traveling to warmer climes may be good for the soul, but don't forget to think about your pipes before you leave:

- Set the thermostat no lower than 55°F. A lower temperature may reduce the heating bill, but could lead to a disaster if extreme cold causes your pipes to freeze and burst. Ask a friend or neighbor to check on your house daily to make sure it's warm enough to prevent freezing. Or...
- Drain the system by shutting off the main valve and turning on every water fixture (both hot and cold) until water stops running. It's not necessary to leave the fixtures open, since the system is filled mostly with air at that point and not subject to freezing. When your return, turn on the main valve and let each fixture run until the pipes are full again. Be aware that if you have a fire protection sprinkler system in your house, it may deactivate when you shut off the water.

#### **What if your pipes freeze despite your best efforts?**

- Don't panic -- Just because they're frozen doesn't mean they have burst.
- If you turn on your faucets and nothing comes out, leave the faucets open and call a plumber.
- You may be able to thaw a pipe with the warm air from a hair dryer. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible, working toward the coldest section of pipe.
- Never try to thaw a pipe with a torch or other open flame because it could be a fire hazard. Water damage is preferable to burning down your house!
- Never use electrical appliances in areas of standing water. You could be electrocuted.
- Be sure you know where and how to turn off your water supply in case your pipes ever burst; call a plumber if needed.



Town of Estes Park  
P.O. Box 1200  
Estes Park, Colorado 80517  
[www.estes.org](http://www.estes.org)

Kate Rusch  
Public Information Officer  
[krusch@estes.org](mailto:krusch@estes.org)  
970-577-3701

November 19, 2012

## **Be smart: Prepare for winter weather, know who and when to call for help**

Winter is a magical time of year in Estes Park, but it comes with its risks. “Severe winter weather can arrive with little warning, and one concern is its ability to knock out our heating, power and water,” explains Kate Rusch, Public Information Officer for the Town of Estes Park. In addition, high winds, ice, snow and freezing temperatures can make travel dangerous. Rusch continued, “If we all take time to do a few simple things now, it can make all the difference later, when it matters most.”

### **Prepare at home**

It is important to communicate with neighbors during severe weather, checking in on those who are elderly or disabled. Always call 9-1-1 during a medical emergency. And, all households should have the following provisions:

- A mobile phone with an extra charged battery, if possible
- A corded telephone in case telephone lines are not disrupted during a power outage
- A non-electric heat source such as a wood-burning or gas fireplace with plenty of fuel
- Emergency supplies including non-perishable food, water, a battery-powered weather radio, flashlights, medicine and first-aid supplies, a fire extinguisher, smoke alarms, and extra batteries for phones, flashlights, radios and other necessary equipment
- A back-up plan for powering any necessary medical equipment

### **Prepare vehicles**

During severe weather, it is important to restrict travel to only the trips that are absolutely necessary. For necessary trips, drivers should not travel alone and should share a travel plan with others in advance. Fuel tanks should be kept nearly full at all times, and vehicles should be equipped with appropriate tires. Stow emergency supplies including a mobile phone, flashlight, extra batteries, warm blankets and clothing, first-aid supplies, a knife, water, high-calorie non-perishable food, tissues, paper towels, sand for traction, a shovel, a windshield scraper, basic tools, a tow rope, battery booster cables, a compass and road maps.

### **Report power outages; steer clear of downed lines**

So crews can respond quickly, the Town of Estes Park Utilities Department provides a dedicated phone number for reporting electric and water outages – 970-586-5335. This number is staffed 24 hours a day.

**MORE**

## CONTINUED

Utilities staff are immediately alerted when issues are reported. Always call 9-1-1 in the case of downed power lines.

Estes Park Light and Power responds immediately to power outages. Multiple outages are prioritized by the types of services affected, such as schools and hospitals, followed by the number of people affected. Light and Power cannot base its response on one individual's medical situation. Crews will respond as soon as possible, but residents who require oxygen or other electric-powered medical equipment should have a 24-hour backup plan. Always call 9-1-1 during a medical emergency.

If a downed power line is discovered, Utilities Director Reuben Bergsten advises citizens to immediately call 9-1-1. "Never touch a power line or anything that is in contact with the line," he states. Overhead power lines are not insulated and are very dangerous. The Town's trained Light and Power professionals will move the line; all others should stay clear of the area.

### **Reduce the risk of freezing water pipes**

Most water outages during winter are caused by frozen lines on private property. Private lines begin at the service tap on the water main. They are most likely to freeze at the entry point of the building where there is less ground insulation. Property owners are responsible for handling these issues, as with any other household maintenance issue. Water outages determined to be related to the Town's water distribution lines will be addressed by the Town of Estes Park Water Division. Report concerns to the Town's 24-hour utility line 970-586-5335.

Residents should ensure they have adequate insulation and heating for water pipes in their homes and businesses. Pipes along exterior walls are particularly vulnerable to freezing. Disconnect hoses and cover spigots with an insulated cap for the winter. If pipes freeze, open cold water faucets to provide an escape for water as it thaws. The Water Division can help locate the water shut-off so property owners can shut off their water service when pipes thaw, to reduce risk of flooding.

Extensive resources on preparing for winter weather and other emergencies are available at [www.ready.gov/winter-weather](http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather). For general information on the Light and Power and Water utilities, visit [www.estes.org/utilities](http://www.estes.org/utilities) or call the Town of Estes Park Utilities Department at 970-577-3588. To receive Town news and/or meeting agendas by email, please email [townadmin@estes.org](mailto:townadmin@estes.org). For this and other Town news, visit [www.estes.org/news](http://www.estes.org/news).

END