# Memorandum 11-143 Water Meters

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MEMORANDUM 11-143

TO: Mayor Hornaday and Homer City Council
FROM: Walt Wrede
DATE: October 24, 2011
SUBJECT: Water Meters

Introduction
The City Council recently adopted Ordinance 11-26 entitled “AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA, REPEALING SUBSECTION (C) OF HOMER CITY CODE 14.08.035, WATER CONNECTION AND EXTENSION PERMIT FEE; AND ENACTING HOMER CITY CODE 14.08.037, WATER METERS; REGARDING THE NUMBER OF WATERS METERS REQUIRED PER LOT.” This ordinance was adopted upon the recommendation of the city administration when the Council was setting water and sewer rates this summer. The intent was to increase the customer base, increase revenues, provide equity among residential users, and reduce rates in multifamily dwellings from commercial to residential.
While the intent behind this ordinance was good, some unintended and practical consequences were fully appreciated when we geared up to implement the ordinance. In hindsight, we could have thought this through a little better before bringing it to Council.
The Issues:
There are a number of cost related and practical implications for both the property owner and the City. Property owners of multifamily units would be required to install separate water lines to the street for each unit in the dwelling or install elaborate plumbing fixtures either in the building or at the street so that each unit could have a separate shutoff valve and water meter. Not only would this be expensive, but the maintenance costs would increase as well over time.
The City would have to install and maintain 400 plus new shut-off valves and meters. The City wants these valves to be in the street because it does not want to enter buildings to do this, for a variety of reasons. It is important that the City has the ability to shut water off. This greatly increases the workload for Public Works staff; because there will be more maintenance and more shutoffs and turn-ons due to payment delinquency, changes in renters, people leaving in the winter, etc. In addition, the added administrative burden on the Finance Department will be significant. Anytime you have 400 plus new customers, the workload increases.
What Does This Ordinance Do?
This ordinance eliminates the need for each unit in a multifamily dwelling to have a separate meter. However, it keeps the same concept. Each unit will be charged the same customer charge as any other residential building. However, this charge will be levied administratively through the fee schedule. So, instead of the City interacting with individual renters, it will continue to interact with the property owner, as it does now. The property owner is ultimately responsible. Residential rates will apply. Finance will conduct another analysis when Regina returns, but we believe this raises enough money to balance the budget, similar to the ordinance passed this summer.
RECOMMENDATION: Approve Ordinance 11-43.

Related Ordinances**Memorandum - Related Ordinances:** Ordinance 11-43 Amending Homer City Code 14.08.037, Water Meters; Regarding the Number of Water Meters Required Per Lot

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