

REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Date: 4/7/14
Item No.: 14.b

Department Approval



City Manager Approval

Item Description: Discuss Frozen Water Service Line Survey Information

BACKGROUND

Staff discussed the severe winter impacts on water service laterals with the Council most recently at the March 24, 2014 city council meeting. At that time 124 properties had experienced frozen water service lines. As of Wednesday April 2, 2014, 130 properties have notified staff regarding frozen water service lines. They are summarized in the following table:

Wednesday, April 2, 2014

2013 - 2014 Winter Season

Total Services frozen to date	130
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Total still froze as 3:30pm today	52
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Notifications Called In To City	
January	3
February	56
March <i>(Through ONLY April 2 at 3:30 PM)</i>	71
Total	130

Staff discussed the status of the frozen lines with the Council and how we might manage the additional 100 plus new freeze accounts that were not on the historic freeze list and notification program. Staff also discussed the cost of thawing frozen service lines based on information we had received as feedback from residents who had contracted thawing their service lines. The Council requested additional information on what other cities were doing with the freeze issues and whether they were participating financially in the thawing of the lines. Staff sent out a survey to other communities and had a fairly good response in the short timeframe. The results are attached (Attachment A).

Staff is requesting the City Council discuss their interest in providing any additional assistance to the property owners that have incurred contractor costs for thawing frozen lines. Staff has received feedback from residents that have contracted thawing services that the cost to thaw the lines averages \$300-\$600. There have been difficult to thaw lines that have incurred higher

charges. A high percentage of the lines have been frozen under the roadway. This is where frost is driven deeper by traffic as it is uninsulated by snow.

Ownership of service laterals

The current policy has been in place since the 1960's. Ownership of laterals has been the property owner from the building to the city main. Many properties have replaced or repaired their service laterals as part of our road reconstruction projects over the past 25 years at their cost. We also have a number of property owners who have corrected deficiencies at their own cost outside of our pavement program annually. The Council should consider equity to property owners when considering revision of this policy. Another issue is total liability and impact on capital improvement programs and utility rates. Long term liability would be in the millions of dollars over time if the city were to assume ownership to the property line. There may be some middle ground to study on the ownership issue that could result from additional study and analysis.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

The City operates and maintains a water system to provide a continuous supply of safe drinking water to its residents. Current city code establishes ownership of the utility service lines with the property owner.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

The city established the water utility to ensure safe, clean drinking water availability to all properties in Roseville. The water enterprise is funded through user fees to cover the cost of this service. All costs associated with assisting residents with frozen water service lines are funded through the water enterprise fund.

Changing policy on service lateral ownership would be a long term financial liability and have a significant impact on future water and sewer rates.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council discuss whether to provide any financial assistance to residents who have incurred contractor thawing costs resulting from frozen water services.

Staff also requests the Council provide direction on further study of service lateral ownership policy.

REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION

Discuss financial assistance to property owners regarding frozen service laterals and provide direction to staff on desired service lateral ownership policy.

Prepared by: Duane Schwartz, Public Works Director
Attachment: A: Survey of cities

Frozen Service Survey

City Name	Total Services	Number Frozen	City Lateral Responsibility	Resident Assistance	Reimbursement	Thawing Damage	Re-freezes	Neighbor Hookup	Continuous Flow Credit?
Roseville	10,230	130	None	Attempting to thaw w/ City Magikist, uncover curb boxes	No Reimbursement, but there will be further Council discussion.	Yes, neighbors home.	8	5	Yes, \$20 per month.
Shoreview	8,800	41	ROW to Main	Reimbursement	50% of thawing cost, up to \$500	No	2	No	No Credit
St. Paul	94,000	700	ROW to Main						Adjust sewer to regular rate without water running.
Columbia Heights	5,500	43	None	Nothing	No Reimbursement	No	Residents on their own	No	No Credit
Crystal	7,950	66	ROW to Main	Attempting to thaw w/ City Magikist	No Reimbursement	No	Attempt to thaw again at City expense.	Yes	No Credit
Little Canada	2,500	7	ROW to Main	Provide resident w/ list of contractors.	TBD. Considering 50% of cost, but waiting on council.	No	Only 1 - it was a commercial property - they will not get reimbursed.	No	Yes, not sure how much - possibly just the extra usage (they have a fixed AMR base system)
Arden Hills	2,630	10	ROW to Main	Nothing	No Reimbursement	No	1 re-freeze - located curb box to assist resident	No	No Credit
Fridley	7,800	80	None	Locate standpipe, trace service line, work w/ contractor.	No Reimbursement	Yes, neighbors home.	Residents on their own	14	No, but there are on-going discussions.
Inver Grove Heights	7,100	29	ROW to Main	Taking care of everything!	Do not allow homeowner's to thaw on their own, only a few are frozen in the property owner notion of the service	No	Thaw again and invoice homeowner.	No	They will receive an "avg city usage" billing amt of 16,000 gal for winter qtr.
Richfield	10,820	24	ROW to Main	Taking care of everything! Attempting City hot water machine and welders.	Has not been any b/c they are thawing.	No	Attempt to thaw again at City expense.	No	Comparing to previous usage and adjusting accordingly.
Coon Rapids	21,000	180	ROW to Main	Taking care of everything!	N/A	No	Residents on their own	20	Still discussing
Maple Grove	23,000	16	None	Nothing	No Reimbursement	No	No	1	Charge lowest tier & no sewer
Plymouth	21,000	50	ROW to Main	Gave welder info - paid for welders.	Paid for welders	No	2	3	Yes, only for ones that were frozen and thawed - not everyone that just wants to run water.
Minnetonka	16,400	184	None	Verify line frozen, located shut off valve(s). Gave list of contractors. Helped set up neighbor hookup, gave access to fitness club for showers	No Reimbursement	No	Residents on their own	15	No Credit
Andover	6,373	3	ROW to Main	Give resident contractor names only.	No Reimbursement	No	Residents on their own	No	No Credit
Apple Valley	15,500	21	ROW to Main	Taking care of everything - when City responsibility. Investigate/confirm, but City does not do any thawing.	Case by case basis - have paid 100% on 2 of the cases.	No	Attempt to thaw again at City expense, if City responsibility.	1	Adjusting their bill and basing usage on previous year's winter water usage.
Brooklyn Park	22,500	130	ROW to Main	Took care of everything, but back-charged if it was frozen on their side.	N/A	No	Put on the bottom of the list, thawed, then charged them.	3	Yes, 360 gpd includes the sewer charges.
North St. Paul	4,575	52	ROW to Main	Taking care of everything!	Full Reimbursement, no matter the cost.	Yes, neighbors home.	Attempt to thaw again at City expense.	No	Using January consumption as the monthly billing charge until safe to shut water off.
White Bear Lake	9,000	132	House to Main	Contractor with City assisting, as needed.	No Reimbursement	No	Residents on their own	3	No Credit
Burnsville	16,400	70	ROW to Main	Taking care of everything ROW to main.	No reimbursement for private service line.	No	Quite a few - no count.	Yes, quite a few	Billing at the lowest tier for usage.