



CITY OF ST. ALBERT

5 St. Anne Street,
St. Albert, AB T8N 3Z9

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TAMRMS#: B06

Bylaw 35/2019 Non-Standard Meter Reading

Presented by: Kate Polkovsky, Director, Sustainability Initiatives

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Community Growth & Infrastructure Standing Committee recommend to Council that Bylaw 35/2019 be given all three readings.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The proposed bylaw amendments have been prepared for Council consideration to establish a fee structure surrounding a Non-Standard Meter Reading Alternative and other fees associated non-standard remote reading device charges.

The report also identifies the communication process being undertaken with customers surrounding the current water meter upgrade program.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority #4: Infrastructure Investment: Identify and build needed capital assets.

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Water Supply and Distribution Management

Supply, operation and maintenance of the distribution of drinking water to all properties within the City of St. Albert that are connected to the municipal water system and facilities.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL (OR COMMITTEE) DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

On May 6, 2019 Council passed the following motions:

CM-19-018 - That Administration bring to Council recommended amendments to the water bylaw that includes an automated or smart water meter opt-out program, with an opt out fee that does not actually exceed the cost to provide this service.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Administration has completed a costing analysis to determine the recommended attributed value for a non-standard meter reading to best represent a cost recovery model. The recommended program is a \$35 bi-monthly meter read with a submitted read on alternating months, options described below. Both components have attributed fees to account for staff time during both meter read submissions.

The following are examples of Non-Standard Meter Reading fees as applicable in other municipalities/systems:

- City of Toronto - \$90.53 per reading for customers not on new automated meter
- City of Kamloops - \$25 per reading for customer requested manual or special meter read
- City of Red Deer - \$65 for requesting meter read or manual meter read
- City of Lloydminster - \$60 Water Services assistance: a) Consumption Investigation b) Meter accuracy testing c) Manual meter read for billing purposes d) No access to meter, metering equipment or Service Valve e) Temporary Turn Off f) Customer as a “no show” for an appointment g) Other request
- Town of Stony Plain - \$45 for special meter read
- Strathcona County - \$35 for special meter read
- City of Vancouver - \$102 for special meter read

To alleviate expressed concerns from customers and individual members Administration had proposed the concept of an opt-out (non-standard meter reading alternative) for manual meter reading.

Non-Standard Meter Reading Alternative

Currently there are 124 properties that are not receiving a Standard Meter Reading with 32 of those being a hard refusal (meaning that they do not want the new Standard Meter Reading on their property). The balance of properties is mainly comprised of residences where the owner has not been able to be reached.

For those properties that are not upgraded to date:

- the property will still require the water meter upgrade and/or an alternative meter reading device installation
- a Non-Standard Meter Reading Fee will be imposed on accounts that do not have an RF transmitter installed (subject to Council approval)
- Administration will request the customer to book an appointment for a Non-Standard Meter Reading installation with Neptune

Based on analysis of the estimated costs involved with providing these additional services, administration is proposing the following amendments to the Water Bylaw.

These fees are consistent with current fees of attending a customers' property such as the “Reconnection Fee”.

Schedule "A"

Fees, Charges and Indemnities

13. Non-Standard Meter Reading If multiple meters (touchpads) exist only a single read charge will be applied: \$35.00 per read
14. Customer online bi-monthly meter reading submission (for alternate months - non-standard meter reading fees applied): \$10.00 per submission
15. Customer online - bi-monthly mail in meter reading submission (for alternate months non-standard meter reading fees applied): \$10.00 per submission
16. Billing estimate for missed submission (not received by the 15th of the month): \$20.00 per estimate
17. Billing adjustment for incorrect read submitted: \$20.00 per incorrect submission
18. Touch pad inaccessible during visit: \$45.00 per occurrence
19. Replace Standard RF Remote Read Transmitter and replacement with a Water Meter with Non-Standard Remote Read Touchpad: \$50.00

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:

To ensure fair and equitable water rates to customers, it is the opinion of Administration that customers whom expect and receive additional services (non-standard services) should pay for said services based on the current estimated full cost recovery amount applied on a fee-for-service basis. Otherwise, in the absence of such fees the costs incurred to provide the additional services would be applied to all customers through the established water rates.

The Bylaw is to be updated to per month read to reduce liability to the City for outstanding accounts, provide timely response to continuous flow issues and allow for a more accurate billing in line with the Standard Meter Read.

The City will allow for 2 options of per month reads:

1. Option 1: The City will provide a Non-Standard Meter Read every second month at a cost of \$35.00 per read with the customer choosing between submitting the alternate month at:
 - (a) a cost of \$10.00 per submission online or
 - (b) a cost of \$10.00 per submission through the mail. The mail submission requires a form to be picked up or downloaded from the website for submission.
2. Option 2: The City will provide a monthly Non-Standard Meter Read at a cost of \$35.00 per read.

The customer will be billed a \$20.00 estimate charge if their submission is not in receipt by the 15th of

the month.

The customer will be billed a \$45.00 fee if the reader is inaccessible during a Non-Standard Read visit. This fee will cover the cost of the visit from operations as well as the estimate time required from Utility billing.

The customer will be billed a \$20.00 billing adjustment for an incorrect submission.

Administration has reviewed a phone option for Option 1 alternate month submission, this would require technology to allow for entering information through a touch pad. Administration would source costing of technology to support if Council requests the addition of this option.

For those properties that do not currently have a fixed network Advanced Infrastructure Meter Reading System to support a Standard Meter Reading there will be no cost to upgrade.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

In contemplating the alternatives and respective implications Council may:

1. Direct Administration to ensure all customers have an RF Remote Read transmitter installed as part of the approved Fixed Network Automated Meter Infrastructure project and in compliance with Water Bylaw 5/2001.

Implication - Administration shall fulfill direction of Council whereas continued communication with all customers through the approved project, applicable notifications and where necessary enact applicable fines, charges or disruption of service to customers in contravention of the Water Bylaw 5/2001.

2. Establish alternative fees for amending Bylaw 5/2001 (based on Council discussion) in the amounts as proposed by Administration.

Implication - An approved alternative to any of the fees as proposed by Administration would equate to potential fee excess revenue or fee revenue deficiencies as compared to the current estimated full cost recovery amount for providing the respective service.

Report Date: November 12, 2019

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Committee/Department: Sustainability Initiatives

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer: Kerry Hilts

Chief Administrative Officer: Kevin Scoble