



# **Town of Clifton Forge Water Meter Installation Project**

## **What Customers Need to Know**

**February 2008**

*The Town of Clifton Forge is currently in the process of installing water meters throughout the Town. It is important for you to read this document to understand how the installation of water meters might impact you.*

### **What are we doing?**

*The Clifton Forge Water Meter Project includes the installation of water meters for measuring drinking water usage to all residential, commercial, and industrial water users throughout the Town. The meters have been purchased by the Town, and will be installed by a licensed contractor using a grant and interest free loan from the Virginia Department of Health.*

*While water meters are new to Clifton Forge, they are widely used in most other utilities throughout the state. In fact, it is rare for a community of our size to be unmetered. Water meters will enable us to have access to water usage data to help us detect leaks and understand system characteristics, such as seasonal water use, which helps us efficiently manage our water and sewer systems.*

### **Why are we doing it?**

*Water meters are devices used to measure the amount of water delivered to customers and will help ensure that the Town can accurately track both individual usage for billing purposes and also monitor and evaluate the community's water demands. The installation of these water meters is necessary for the following reasons:*

- *To bill all customers on a fair and equitable basis. The Town wants to ensure that everyone is paying their fair share of the system expenses based on how much water is actually used.*
- *To encourage conservation and reduce system leaks. This will result in a reduction in the amount of water the Town needs to produce (and the related costs). It will also allow the Town to sell any of the excess water produced to increase revenues.*
- *To allow the Town to better manage the utility. The Town will use the data collected to begin to reduce the amount of water that is "lost" or unaccounted for in the system. It is estimated that the Town is currently experiencing approximately 50% - 60% water loss. At this rate, more water is being wasted than being used. With our past and current experiences with regional drought issues, this simply cannot continue.*

- **To receive financial assistance from outside funding sources. In order to implement much-needed improvements and upgrades for both the water and sewer systems, the Town usually needs outside assistance in the way of grants or loans. State and federal agencies that provide funding for major infrastructure projects will no longer provide low-cost loans and grant funds to communities that do not meter their customers' water usage.**

## **How do water meters work?**

***In general, water meters will allow the Town to collect consumption, or usage, data from each connection or customer unit (home, apartment, business, etc.) in the community and then turn that data into a monthly water and sewer bill based on how much water is actually used at each connection.***

***A water meter is a mechanical device with a series of internal moving parts. These parts move as water flows through the meter, recording your usage. This process is similar to how an automobile odometer records the miles as the tires rotate. All meters are factory calibrated to industry standards prior to being shipped and are very accurate in measuring the amount of water used. The meters being installed by the Town use the latest available technology to allow them to be read electronically and remotely.***

## **How long will the project take?**

***The meter project has actually been underway for well over a year. After helping the Town secure funding through the Virginia Department of Health, the Town's engineers, Draper Aden Associates, assisted with the procurement and selection of the metering equipment and completed the design and specifications necessary for the installation of the meters.***

***The Town is currently in the process of finalizing negotiations with the meter supply company that will provide the meters and reading equipment and software support. We have also completed a competitive bidding process, and F.L. Showalter, Inc. of Lynchburg has been awarded a contract for a portion of the meter installation work.***

***Installation of the meters will occur in two phases. Phase 1 will include the installation of approximately 600 meters. This is scheduled to begin in March 2008. Phase 2 of the project will consist of installing the remaining water meters and is scheduled to begin in September of 2008. It is anticipated that installation of all meters will be complete by July 2009.***

## **How will the individual meter installation be completed?**

***Town staff has already begun the process of marking existing service lines and designating the location of individual connection points and valves. The Town will continue marking service lines and intends to stay about two weeks ahead of the Contractor's crews. Therefore, once you see that your lines have been marked, you may anticipate the actual meter installation to occur in your area within the next 2 weeks.***

***Once the Contractor moves into the area, you will be notified at least one day in advance of your individual meter installation. If you are not home, a notice will be posted on your door to let you know the day this will occur. Your water supply will be temporarily unavailable during the actual installation. Each installation will take anywhere from 2 – 5 hours depending on many factors, such as soil conditions, terrain, weather, and main water line conditions.***

*The water meter will be installed near the shut off valve located in your yard (typically located near the street) and connected to the existing service line running to your home or business. In some cases the service line from the new meter to the water main will be replaced, but the service line that runs to your home will NOT be replaced. However, if the service line to your home needs to be replaced, you will be notified.*

## **What will Town staff be doing during this time?**

*Throughout this process, Town Public Works Staff will continue marking service lines, but will also be coordinating with the Contractor to be sure all meters are installed as quickly and efficiently as possible. Public Works Staff may also be needed to help replace some existing service lines as the Contractor is tapping these lines for the individual meter connections.*

## **What can citizens do to help facilitate the process?**

*For a more efficient process, it would be helpful for customers to direct all questions and concerns to Town personnel rather than the Contractor. (See contact information below.) This will help keep the process moving smoothly and quickly.*

## **What are some of the problems that may be encountered?**

*Though the following problems may be encountered, the Town is committed to assuring the proposed installations are performed as quickly and efficiently as possible with as little disruption as possible with minimal disruption.*

- *Temporary service disruptions: A portion of the Town's water service lines and main water lines may need to be repaired or replaced during this project if excessive line deterioration is discovered during the meter installation process. If Town service or main water lines require replacement, your water service may be disrupted for longer periods of time than anticipated for individual meter installation. Please be patient during these unavoidable disruptions while your overall water service is improved.*
- *Line flushing: As a result of temporary service disruptions, especially if line replacement is necessary, discoloration or rust may appear in your water. Your water lines will need to be flushed for a few minutes to remove this discoloration.*
- *Landscaping or site restoration concerns: Most of the installation work will occur within Town right-of-way, and the Town will help the Contractor determine the connection point for each meter. The Contractor is responsible for restoring the connection site to safe and stable conditions. However, some routings may require the removal of unavoidable obstructions, such as extraneous vegetation due to roots. In these cases, care will be taken to restore the site as best as possible to good condition.*

## **What about the connection line from the meter to my house?**

*The customer is responsible for the repair or replacement of defective plumbing or pipes on the customer side of the meter. When such conditions prevent the meter placement, the customer will be advised of the repairs needed and meter installation may be postponed until repairs can be completed.*

## **Will a new meter affect the plumbing in my home?**

*There is a possibility that it will. Each meter installed will have a backflow prevention device. This device protects the water system from contamination from the individual connections. As a result, there is a need to assure that your plumbing system contains an expansion tank or pressure relief valve. This is needed due to the expansion of hot water in your home by the water heater. Most water heaters are equipped with protective devices. However, if your home does not have either of these devices, it is strongly recommended that you have a licensed plumber install the appropriate device in your home to avoid any future problems. Absence of the appropriate device can result in leakage or serious damage to your water heater.*

## **Will my water service be interrupted during the installation?**

*Yes, there will be a temporary interruption while the meter is being installed – it is anticipated that this will be no longer than two hours. However, this could be longer if installation takes longer than anticipated or if additional work is needed for a service line repair or replacement.*

## **Do I need to be home for the meter replacement work?**

*No, and appointments are not needed for the work to be done.*

## **How will the water and sewer billing process change?**

*Currently, customers are charged a monthly flat rate for water and sewer services. In the future a new rate structure will be established to begin billing customers based on their actual water usage.*

*A rate structure for this new type of billing has not been established. The water and sewer rates will not be set until usage data has been thoroughly analyzed. This analysis will enable the Town to establish rates that will bring in the amount of money needed to continue to operate these vital community services as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.*

*It is anticipated that the new water and sewer rates will go into effect during 2010. The new rates will be adopted by Town Council only after the rates have been published in the newspaper and after a public hearing. Rates will need to be reviewed annually thereafter for necessary adjustments based on future system expenses including needed improvements.*

## **Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?**

*Town staff is always available to address your questions. The Town's primary contact and project manager will be Derrick (Deke) Hatcher in the Public Works Department. He may be contacted at the numbers listed below. Please direct any questions or concerns that require the Town's attention to Deke.*

**Public Works Office: 863-2517 or 862-5935**

**Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_**

*If you are unable to reach Deke, you may also contact LeeAnna Tyler at the Town Manager's Office at 863-2503.*

***Your cooperation, patience, and understanding  
during this project are greatly appreciated!***