



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Carlos P. Baía, Deputy City Manager – Development

DATE: October 20, 2016

SUBJECT: Incentive Program to Eliminate Water Cross-Connections

Recommendation

Accept this report and set the attached ordinance for public hearing.

Background

There are currently over three dozen properties in Concord that have a water connection that traverses a neighbor's property rather than being directly accessed from a City water main. These cross connections, commonly known as "piggy-back" services, typically date back decades and many times were the result of actions by an owner who may have built a separate structure on the same lot and extended his/her existing water service to also service the new building. Over the years, those new structures were then subdivided off but the water source remained running through the original property.

Discussion

The challenge with cross-connections is that the shut-off is generally located in the public right-of-way adjacent to the original building near to where the service line enters the property. Although the "piggy-back" property may today have its own water meter, without a separate shut-off if the owner of the original property fails to make payment on his/her water bill and is shut-off for non-payment, the piggy-back service is also cut off. This can be extremely disruptive. In an effort to remediate this situation in residential cases, the General Services Department has, in the past, provided temporary hoses to supply water into the secondary home. However, this is a labor-intensive action and is not feasible in winter when temperatures would freeze the hose.

In September of last year, letters were sent to all the owners of both primary and secondary properties linked via a cross-connection in Concord formally notifying them of the cross-

connection's existence and strongly encouraging the owners to rectify the situation. However, making a service connection to a city water main can cost several thousand dollars as it requires digging in the right-of-way and possibly re-plumbing one's home depending on where the new service enters the structure. In an effort to increase compliance, staff is recommending a three-fold approach: 1) the implementation of a financial incentive to encourage direct connections; 2) the City's recording of an official notice with each affected property at the Merrimack County Registry of Deeds; and 3) the establishment of a charge for the practice of providing temporary hose connections to the water main.

Incentive

Under this proposal, the City would install, at the request of a secondary property owner, a service connection from the nearest water main to the property line of the secondary parcel at no upfront cost to the owner. The expense for this work would, instead, be spread over a period of up to 10 years and re-paid by the property owner over that time. A lien would be placed on the property to secure the City's investment pending repayment.

Notice

Combined with the roll-out of this program, official notices of the existence of a cross-connection will be recorded with all the pertinent properties at the Merrimack County Registry of Deeds. This will make the cross-connection liability evident to any party interested in buying the property or lending on the property. Impacted property owners will be advised by regular mail as well as certified letter of the recording of the notice as well as of the availability of the aforementioned incentive program.

Implementation of a Charge for Temporary Hose Service

The use of temporary hoses in instances where a piggy-back service is shut-off due to a primary property owner's non-payment of his/her water bill is a challenge from a labor perspective, will not work in winter and is not a permanent remedy. To date, this service has been provided at no charge to impacted residents with the City assuming all labor and equipment costs. With the notices sent last year and the planned recording of notice at the registry and via letter under this proposal, all property owners will now be clearly aware of the existence of the cross-connection. In order to address the expense associated with the installation of temporary hoses, staff is recommending a \$200 charge per occurrence for the use of temporary hose service and a 60 day maximum per occurrence. The 60 day limit should typically provide sufficient time for the property owner to obtain the necessary work to eliminate the cross-connection. This non-ordinance fee would be periodically adjusted for inflation in the future. Should a resident need to maintain the hose for longer than 60 days, the City Manager would be authorized to review the matter to determine whether such an extension is appropriate.