



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: February 16, 2010
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Shana Epstein, Environmental Utilities Manager
Noel Marquis, Assistant Director of Administrative Services -
Finance
Subject: Community Outreach – Utility Billing Workshop

INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2010, at 7pm, the City will be sponsoring a Utility Billing Workshop to initiate a dialog with our customers and provide information regarding utility bills. The event will take place in Study Room A in City Hall and will be taped by Cable TV to be broadcasted.

DISCUSSION

Since fall of 2008, the utility bills have been delayed due to the installation of the smart automatic water meters. The installation of the meters is almost complete. Less than 100 meters still have issues. The problems with radio interference and radio transmission through the steel lids have been addressed and corrected. Incorrect installation data has been addressed and corrected. Presently, less than 2% of the meters are not transmitting and that issue is being addressed.

The utility bill includes water, wastewater, solid waste and storm water. For residents, the only portion of the bill that is not a flat charge is water consumption. For commercial customers, water and wastewater are volumetric charges. The confusion with untimely bills is customers' summer consumption bills, which tend to be greater, are arriving in the winter. The delay is causing confusion and anxiety for some customers, but the numbers of calls into customer service are not abnormally high.

This past month, Administrative Services has been able to catch up in the delayed bills so customers are beginning to receive bills every 20 days. Prior to this occurring, the City informed customers through advertisements in the newspaper, communicating with the press, letters in customers' bills and shared information with the homeowners association leaders who attended a meeting about the water conservation stage B that this would be happening. Administrative Services has been working with customers who may need additional time because of the compacted billing cycle.

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The City is planning a Utility Billing Workshop on February 24, 2010 at 7pm to initiate a dialog with our customers to explain current bills and how the City is willing to assist customers. Staff is asking customers to RSVP to this event so information may be prepared for each customer about their water usage. For those who cannot attend the event the opening remarks and questions and answers will be recorded and broadcast on the City's cable channel.

The structure of this workshop is being developed by staff from the City's Administrative Services, Public Works and Policy and Management Departments as an interactive meeting between the City and concerned customers. The intent is to hear what our customers have to say and then to address their concerns. We are providing a working environment where customers can, in a private setting, discuss their individual bills and request assistance if they need additional time to make payment. Further, staff will be including educational and instructional segments during which our customers, who are interested, can learn more about how utility rates are developed and the real cost of operating the City's various utility businesses.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is informational only.



Scott Miller
Approved By