



## AGENDA REPORT

**Meeting Date:** September 10, 2015  
**Item Number:** H-1  
**To:** Honorable Mayor & City Council  
**From:** Trish Rhay, Assistant Director of Public Works Services,  
Infrastructure & Field Operations  
Caitlin Sims, Senior Management Analyst  
**Subject:** MEASURES TO SUPPORT WATER EFFICIENCY AND  
CONSERVATION  
**Attachments:** None

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff is requesting direction on the following:

- 1) Pursuing an amendment to the Beverly Hills Municipal Code (BHMC) to make updates to the water efficiency standards for indoor fixtures;
- 2) Pursuing an amendment to the BHMC to require a separate meter or submeter for each unit in multi-family building; and
- 3) Amending the BHMC to require a dedicated outdoor irrigation meter.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report transmits recommendations for changes to the Municipal Code to promote water conservation and reduction in overall consumption. On April 1, 2015, the Governor issued an Executive Order mandating a 25% reduction in statewide water use through February 2016, compared to the amount used in 2013. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) imposed reduction targets on each urban water supplier to help the State meet its overall reduction goal. The City of Beverly Hills is required to reduce its water usage by 32%.

The Governor's Executive Order also directed State agencies to revisit and update State laws, guidelines, and policies in light of the drought. For example, the Department of Water Resources was required to update the State Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, which provides water efficiency standards that landscape projects must meet, and requires cities to adopt an ordinance that is at least as stringent as the Model Ordinance. State legislation is also being passed to increase water efficiency and decrease water usage statewide.

The City has made water conservation a priority and has developed and implemented numerous policies, programs, and outreach materials to promote conservation and education. The Public Works Commission is continuing to identify opportunities to help the City meet its 32% reduction target. At its July 9, 2015, meeting, the Public Works

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Commission recommended that the City Council amend the Municipal Code to require future structures, including single family and commercial dwellings, to have separate meters for indoor and outdoor use and for multi-family dwellings to have a separate meter for each unit. At its August 11, 2015, meeting, the Commission further directed its Conservation Subcommittee to identify additional Municipal Code amendment recommendations in support of the City's water conservation efforts. The Public Works Liaison Committee also recommended these amendments to the Municipal Code.

The Public Works Commission's Water Conservation Subcommittee's and City Council Public Works Liaison recommendations are presented in this report, and staff is requesting direction on (1) pursuing an amendment to the Beverly Hills Municipal Code (BHMC) to make updates to the water efficiency standards for indoor fixtures; (2) pursuing an amendment to the BHMC to require a separate meter or submeter for each unit in multi-family building; and (3) amending the BHMC to require a dedicated outdoor irrigation meter.

**DISCUSSION:**

The following sections further elaborate on the existing and proposed regulations related to water efficiency standards for indoor fixtures as well as submetering for multi-family and commercial buildings.

**WATER EFFICIENCY STANDARDS FOR INDOOR FIXTURES**

Beverly Hills Municipal Code Section 9-4-106, as adopted in 2009, mandates that prior to a change of ownership or within one hundred eighty (180) days following a change of ownership of residential and commercial property, the transferor shall retrofit all existing indoor plumbing fixtures to prescribed maximum allowed fixture flow rates. Since the BHMC was last amended in 2009, new more efficient plumbing fixtures using lower flow rates have been developed. State law mandates these new fixtures be installed in all new residential (since 2011) and commercial buildings (since 2014).

The Conservation Subcommittee reviewed the City's current requirements and the standards and thresholds required by the State and are recommending that BHMC Section 9-4-106 be updated in order to take advantage of the latest water conservation technology. Requiring more efficient fixtures to be installed for a change of ownership will reduce water usage by twenty percent or more.

	Maximum Allowed Fixture Flow Rates				
	Toilet (GPF)	Urinal (GPF)	Lavatory Faucet (GPM)	Kitchen Faucet (GPM)	Shower (GPM)
Existing BHMC 9-4-106	1.6	1.0	2.2	2.2	2.5
Updated	1.28	0.5	1.5	1.8	2.0

Staff recommends the Council direct an amendment to the BHMC updating the water efficiency standards and thresholds as recommended by the Conservation Subcommittee.

**MULTI-FAMILY AND COMMERCIAL BUILDING SUBMETERING**

The City bills customers for water usage based on meter readings (in addition to a fixed base charge). For multiple dwelling housing units, such as apartments and condominiums, the City does not require meters for individual units. Instead, there is a master meter for a group of dwelling units.

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As a result, multi-family residents are not aware of their individual water usage and, because they typically do not pay a water bill, do not have an incentive to reduce water usage. With the drought, there has been significant discussion statewide as to whether owners of multi-family residential buildings should be required to have separate meters for individual units or to install sub-meters for each unit in their building. Previous studies have shown that multi-family residential units that were sub-metered have water usage that is up to fifteen percent lower than properties in which water is billed as part of the rent.

To support the City's water conservation efforts, the Public Works Commission Conservation Subcommittee and the City Council Public Works Liaison recommended the Council amend the City's Municipal Code to require new multi-family and commercial buildings to install a separate meter or submeter for each unit.

The BHMC currently does not require multi-family or commercial buildings to install individual water meters for each unit, and there is no City policy that addresses the installation of individual water meters. In practice, a project developer submits a request for a water meter (or separate meters) as a part of the development project. One challenge in requiring individual meters for each unit is that each meter must be installed in the public right-of-way to facilitate maintenance. This can cause potential tripping hazards, and it has a negative neighborhood aesthetic. Since 1990, the City of Santa Monica has required each multi-family residential dwelling to install individual water meters for each unit in a manner approved by the City's Utilities Manager. In practice, the City has allowed many buildings to forgo this requirement because the City does not have adequate space in the public right-of-way for the installation of individual meters. Other challenges may include neighborhood aesthetics and potential tripping hazards.

One alternative to installing individual meters is sub-metering a building. A sub-meter is connected to the master water meter – installed on the customer's side of the meter – and provides water readings for each individual unit. The property owner typically pays for the installation of a sub-meter and is responsible for its maintenance. Some cities require the installation of a sub-meter for new multi-family buildings and substantial remodels. The City of San Diego requires that all new multi-family buildings with three or more units and existing multi-family buildings that are replacing more than sixty-five percent of the interior water supplies be sub-metered.

Also in the State Legislature, Senate Bill SB 7 (Wolk) is moving through the State Assembly after passing the Senate. If approved by the legislature and the governor, the bill currently would require that water purveyors ensure that individual water meters or (sub-meters)-be installed on all new multifamily residential units or mixed-use units that receive water-service connections after January 1, 2017. This bill would not require an owner of an existing multifamily dwelling to install sub-meters, retrofit existing sub-meters, or use existing sub-meters that are currently unused.

The Conservation Subcommittee recommends that the Council amend the BHMC to require submeters in all new multi-family and commercial buildings and for remodels to existing multi-family and commercial buildings of over fifty percent. Staff seeks direction from Council on the following:

- 1) Should the City require owners of multi-family and/or commercial buildings to install individual meters or sub-meters for each unit?

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### **DEDICATED LANDSCAPE WATER METER**

The current State Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo) and the 2013 California Green Building Standards (CalGreen) do not require separate landscape water meters for residential landscapes. Submeters are required for commercial landscaped areas of at least 1,000 square feet but not more than 5,000 square feet, where a new or upgraded water service is being provided. Submeters are measuring devices installed after the primary utility water meter. California Water Code Section 535 requires a separate public water meter for commercial landscaped areas over 5,000 square feet, where a new or upgraded water service is being provided. Effective December 1, 2015, the state has revised the MWELo and added a requirement for submetering residential landscapes of over 5,000 square feet or greater.

The Public Works Commission's Conservation Subcommittee and Public Works Liaison recognize the ongoing importance of assisting property owners in becoming aware of their landscape water usage. Studies have shown that water submeters are associated with decreased water usage. As a result, the Subcommittee recommends that the City require dedicated landscape water meters for new landscape projects. It is anticipated the owner/applicant would be required to pay all connection charges for the installation and use of a separate landscape meter or sub-meter.

The benefits of requiring a separate dedicated water meter for outdoor watering are that it would allow customers to have a clear understanding of how their water is being used, and potentially reduce customers' wastewater fees by identifying and deducting the amount of water used for landscape irrigation. It would also allow the City to clearly measure and, in extreme circumstances, control outdoor watering. The disadvantages of requiring the installation of a separate meter is that there would be additional costs to the customer for installation, and the City would have increased costs related to the installation operation and maintenance of the meters.

Staff seeks direction on the following:

- 1) Should the BHMC be amended to require all new residential and nonresidential projects and residential and nonresidential remodel projects over fifty percent to install a separate dedicated water meter for outdoor watering?

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The cost of complying with the revised water efficiency standards for fixtures and the installation of additional water meters or submetering would fall on the project applicant. There will be an additional cost for the maintenance and operation of the water meters, a cost that is factored into the general water rate charged to customers.



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Approved By  
George Chavez