



TOWN OF HINTON

Administrative Report

☒ DIRECTION REQUEST ☐ REQUEST FOR DECISION ☐ INFORMATION ITEM

DATE Committee of the Whole Meeting of July 23, 2024
PRESENTED BY: Trent McLaughlin, Director of Development and Infrastructure Services
SUBMITTED BY: Jordan Panasiuk, Chief Administrative Officer
RE: **WATER METER IMPLEMENTATION**

Recommended Action

That Committee reach consensus for Administration to draft Utility Bylaws that implement a voluntary residential water meter strategy with meters paid for with a meter fee, a mandatory meter vault for trailer courts or similar properties, and the elimination of vacancy reports.

Background

Currently, Town of Hinton commercial properties have meters installed and consumption rates are charged for usage exceeding 50 m^3 in addition to the flat rate of \$77.60 (bimonthly). Residential units do not have meters.

Implementing water meters is important for several reasons. Firstly, it aligns with environmental sustainability objectives and follows provincial norms. Secondly, it promotes fairness among different user types, including multi-residential buildings and households of different sizes, thereby ensuring equitable billing based on actual usage. Thirdly, provincial funding for Water Treatment Plants (WTP) is contingent on water usage per capita, so water consumption needs to be decreased to qualify for the potential funding. Lastly, water meters with leak detection capabilities can identify and address water wastage, contributing to conservation efforts and cost savings.

Analysis

Council could consider three different directions for meters with residential customers. The first is the status quo, which does not have meters. The second is a voluntary installation option, where a flat rate is still available to those who do not wish to have a meter. The third is mandatory meter installation, where all residential connections would be required to have a meter installed.

The voluntary installation option means that residents have the choice to install a water meter. Residents who choose to have water meters installed will be charged based on their water usage. Residents who do not choose to install water meters will be charged a flat rate plus an assumed unmetered consumption flat rate.

The mandatory meter option requires all residential units to install water meters, meaning every residential connection must have a meter installed.

Council could also consider three different payment options for water meters. The first option is that the Town pays upfront, the second option is that the homeowner pays upfront, and the third option is that the homeowner pays through a monthly meter fee.

Written by: Trent McLaughlin, Director of Development & Infrastructure Services

There will be unique challenges that must be addressed with the implementation of meters. The trailer court properties would be one challenge. Council will need to decide if individual meters would be installed on each trailer or if one meter vault would be installed for the entire trailer court. Administration recommends that a meter vault be used for the Trailer Courts. If the Trailer courts have leaks in their lines, the Town could capture this usage with the meter vault.

The second unique challenge is secondary suites or properties with more than one water connection. Administration recommends that each service connection have one meter and be charged one flat rate. A property with two services would receive two meters and be charged two flat rates. It is recommended that every meter provided trigger one flat rate charge plus consumption.

The third unique circumstance in Hinton is vacancy reports. Currently, the owner of a multi-family residential building and the owner of a commercial building having more than one business or more than one unit can submit a vacancy report for the units that are not occupied. Unoccupied units are not charged the flat rate for utility services. Administration has no way to confirm the accuracy of the vacancy reports received. Through Administration's research, we did not find any other community which offers this bill reduction for vacant units. It is recommended that the new utility bylaws not include any allowance for vacancy report deduction.

Implications of Decision

Level of Service Implications

- N/A

Communications/Public Engagement Implications

- Create a web page on the Town of Hinton website,
- Media releases and social media posts
- Develop and maintain a FAQ through the engagement process
- Engage in a public survey
- One Open House
- Completing a "What we heard Document" before first reading of new Utility Bylaws.

Risk/Liability Implications

- If changes are necessary to meet the Towns contractual obligations and to ensure long-term water and sewer services to the Town

Legislative Implications

Conforms with:	Yes/No/Partial/NA	Comments
Council's Tactical Plan	Yes	4.2.3 Develop a Water Meter Strategy
Municipal Policies or Bylaws	Yes	Bylaw no. 859-25, Bylaw no. 858-19, Bylaw no. 933-6
Provincial Laws or MGA	Yes	The Town must meet provincial laws for water services.
Long Term Capital Plan or Adopted budget	Yes	Water and Wastewater Services Agreements with Mondri

Options / Alternatives

1. That Committee reach consensus for Administration to draft Utility Bylaws that implement a voluntary residential water meter strategy with meters paid for with a meter fee, a mandatory meter vault for trailer courts or similar properties, and the elimination of vacancy reports.
2. That Committee reach consensus for Administration to draft Utility Bylaws that implement a mandatory residential water meter strategy with meters paid for with a meter fee, a mandatory meter vault for trailer courts or similar properties, and the elimination of vacancy reports.
3. That Committee reach consensus for Administration to draft Utility Bylaws, with no implementation of residential water meters but still eliminating the vacancy reports.

Attachment(s)

None.