



# Waterlines

FEBRUARY 2017

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MEDFORD WATER COMMISSION



## Smart meters

Starting this month, we will begin transitioning approximately 8,000 previously-installed meters that currently collect readings by vehicle, to sending the reads electronically to our office.

This is made possible through FlexNet®, an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system. The system consists of electronic "Smart Meters" and radios that communicate to an antenna base station, which securely transmits the data to our office.

We hope to expand the AMI program in the coming years until all meters are read this way, providing more detail on water usage and adding alarm capacities such as leak detection. This will help to not only conserve water, but also to provide better customer service.

### Committed to:

- Excellence in Water Quality
- Professionalism
- Customer Satisfaction
- System Reliability

### Contact us:

200 South Ivy Street, Room 177  
 Medford, OR 97501  
 541-774-2430  
 water@cityofmedford.org  
 www.medfordwater.org

## E-BILLING AVAILABLE

*Get your water bill in your inbox, not your mailbox.*

You can now help the environment and reduce paper consumption by receiving your water bill electronically.

To change your billing preference from paper bills to eBills, go to [medfordwater.org](http://medfordwater.org) and click on *My Account* to be directed to our services website.

If you have not already done so, create a registered account. Registered users can log in and change the profile settings of their account by selecting the *Manage Profile* tab; check the *Receive eBills?* box at the bottom and make sure to click on the *Update* button.



You will be notified by email when your water bill is ready for viewing.

Your account also gives you 24-7 access to:

- Billing, payment and consumption histories
- Rate information
- Make online payments (Payments made online will post to your water account the next business day)

Note that you *can* pay your bill without creating a registered account on our services website using the Quick Pay feature. If you do not wish to pay online, there are other options: 1) Sign up for our Automatic Payment Plan to have a regularly scheduled payment transferred from your checking account, 2) Pay by phone 24-7 at 541-774-2430, 3) Mail a check, or 4) Pay in person at our office.

## CHANGES ON THE BOARD

Although the Medford Water Commission is chartered by the City of Medford, its operations are directed by a separate board appointed by Medford's Mayor and approved by the City Council. Members of the Board of Water Commissioners serve five-year rotating terms, with one member being selected each year. These individuals devote countless volunteer hours and often serve multiple terms.

One such person is Vice Chair Lee Fortier, the General Manager for Rogue Waste Systems' Dry Creek Landfill, who recently stepped down from the Commission after serving a full term.

Mr. Fortier has been active in numerous organizations, including serving on the boards for Cogswell College and EMCON. A graduate of the University of Washington in civil engineering, he managed many engineering projects throughout the Pacific Northwest, holding positions at the EPA and with



Lee Fortier

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## BOARD

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engineering consulting firms EMCON and R.W. Beck. He brought this wealth of relevant knowledge with him to the Commission.

Filling the open position on our board is former Medford City Councilman Daniel Bunn. In addition to previously serving



Daniel Bunn

on the City Council, he serves on the board of ACCESS and has been involved with the City's Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Joint Transportation Sub-Committee. Mr. Bunn has a B.A. in Economics and Political Science from Pepperdine University and is currently President at Rubicon Investments.

We offer our thanks to Lee for his guidance and service to our organization, and welcome Daniel to his new role.

## LEAD INVESTIGATION WRAPS UP

In June of 2016, Medford Water Commission crews began investigating all meter boxes served by water mains installed before 1946 for short pieces of lead pipes known as "pigtailed."

While they were not used extensively in our distribution system, they were sometimes used between the early 1900s and up to World War II, when record keeping was minimal if done at all.

Cold and snowy conditions slowed the process down, but the Commission has now completed the inspection of 4770 meter boxes with indications that there might be a lead pigtail. Of those, 331 required digging to allow us to see underground, and 27 lead pigtails were found and removed.

This is believed to be the majority of the lead pipes hidden underground, but the Commission's job is far from over.

The data from the search will be re-evaluated in order to check all possible scenarios in which a lead pigtail might be present, and maps will be updated for tracking purposes. We are committed to ensuring that our great tasting water remains compliant with all state and federal regulations and is healthy for the customers we serve.

entire gallon of our tap water costs only about 1/16 of a cent.

### *What to expect*

The upcoming rate change from a dollar-and-cents perspective is not significantly large; in fact, our charges both before and after the increase are low compared with water providers across the region.

For an average household with a monthly usage of 7,000 gallons per month, the Medford Water Commission charge effective March 1 would be \$15.87. Other cities in the region are a bit higher: \$52.39 in Ashland, \$39.87 in Bend, \$23.70 in Central Point, \$31.92 in Eagle Point, and \$32.41 in Eugene.

### *What you're paying for*

We receive no funding from taxes, so these charges support the construction, repair, and replacement of important treatment facilities, the vast network of pipes, and the complicated system of

components required to safely and effectively deliver water and provide fire suppression to the growing population of the Rogue Valley.



Delaying infrastructure

projects increases the possibility of inadequate water supplies, ruptured pipes, and equipment failures that may lead to service disruptions. This is where the highest percentage of expenses go, although keeping costs down as much as possible is always an objective of the Commission.

Ultimately, we and our customers are the lucky recipients of valuable water infrastructure paid for by prior generations of Medford citizens, and are now the stewards responsible for assuring that it remains a strong lifeline for our community long into the future.

## RATE CHANGES IN MARCH

### *What's happening*

At the end of each calendar year, the Medford Water Commission conducts a cost of service study, completed by an independent consultant. This year's study found that changes are needed for revenues to keep pace with costs, and consequently, water rates will undergo a small increase beginning in March.

In most Medford households, water charges are one of the lowest of the monthly bills paid, typically being far less than power, phone, internet and cable. And while it's not unusual to pay over a dollar for a bottle of water, an

## Waterlines

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### **Medford Water Commission**

Established in 1922 and governed by the Board of Water Commissioners.

### **Commissioners**

John Dailey • Jason Anderson • Bob Strosser  
Leigh Johnson • Daniel Bunn

### **Interim Manager**

Eric C. Johnson, P.E.

### **Serving these cities:**

Medford, Ashland, Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Talent

### **Also serving:**

White City area and the following water districts: Elk City and Charlotte Ann