

Village of Corinth
Water System Improvements
Project DWSRF No. 17623

Water Meter Project
Additional information and FAQ's

Last Revised July 19, 2017

Below please find water meter project questions and answers. Questions 1-31 were published on July 6, 2017. Questions 32 - 39 were added on July 19, 2017.

1. Why am I getting a new water meter?

You are receiving a new water meter as part of a larger water system improvement project which is being funded by grants and 0% interest financing. This project is being undertaken by the Village in order to provide you with safer and more reliable water service. The installation of new water meters will aid the Village in accounting for the water it produces and the water consumed by water users. In addition to being able to more accurately bill its users, the Village will also be able to more evaluate how much water is being lost through leaks and other means.

2. How does the new radio read device work?

The radio transmitter will be connected to the water meter and will be able to transmit the meter reading to a radio read device that can receive the radio signal from the road. Under normal circumstances, water personnel will not have to enter your house or even your property to read the meter. The radio transmitter will also be able to transmit alerts to the meter reading device to indicate a possible leak in the house plumbing or possible tampering of the meter.

3. Where will my water meter be located?

The meter will be located on your water service line near where it enters your house (basement or crawlspace). Typically, the water line enters your house on the wall closest to the street. The Village has contracted with Laberge Group, the Village's engineering firm, to perform approximately 300 pre-installation inspections to determine typical installation requirements as needed for installation contracting. Selected owners will receive a notice in the mail and will be called to schedule an appointment. Inspection personnel will be clearly identified by a name badge.

4. What exactly is going to be installed at my property?

The installers will install a new water meter and hardware as close as possible to the location where the water service pipe enters your home. The installers may place the transmitter in the basement or alternatively may install a small, battery powered radio unit to the exterior of your home and a wire to connect the water meter to the radio unit. The radio unit will be used to remotely read the water meter.

5. Do I have to receive a new water meter?

Yes. All users who are receiving water service are required to have a new water meter installed. This part of the water system improvements project is intended to help the Village monitor water use and control costs, including costs associated with reading the meters.

6. What if I don't want a new water meter?

This is not an option. New meter installation is mandatory and is required as part of receiving water service.

7. How much will the new meter cost me?

Residential users will not receive a separate bill for the new water meter and you will not be required to pay the installer for the water meter installation. This project is an infrastructure improvement project that will be paid for by all of the users in the water district through normal billing.

Commercial users will be required to pay for the cost of the meter installation if the service is greater than 1-inch in diameter. Commercial users can either pay the Village to have the meter installed by the selected Village contractor, or retain an independent contractor to complete meter installation to Village specifications.

8. Do people need to come inside my house?

Yes. The water meter will usually need to be located inside your dwelling, near the location where the water service pipe enters your home. The installers will need to come into your house to complete the installation.

The Village Engineer will also be requesting access about 300 properties to review installation requirements for competitive bidding purposes. Property owners selected for pre-installation inspections will receive a notice in the mail to schedule an appointment.

9. What will engineers do inside my house?

The engineer will be reviewing installation conditions to identify the types of installations that may be required. Properties without convenient access to a water line will require special installations that will increase project costs. The pre-installation inspections will attempt to estimate the number of special installations that may be needed for budgeting and bidding purposes.

During the pre-installation inspection the Engineer may also look for connections to the water and sewer systems that are not allowed. If found, the Village intends to work cooperatively with the landowner to identify any corrective action that may be required.

10. What will the installation Contractor do inside my house?

The Contractor will install the water meter, setting hardware, and radio transmitter. The building owner will be responsible for clearing access to the installation location.

The installer will be instructed to clean up the work area once they are finished with the installation. The installer will also record important information such as the meter reading at the time of installation. They will also take photographs of the meter installation and the area immediately surrounding the meter before and after the installation.

11. Do I have to be present for the installation?

Yes. An adult (18 years or older) must be present at the time of the installation. The installers will not enter your home without the permission of an adult. This applies to residential services as well as commercial services.

12. What if I am a tenant and I do not own this property?

If you are a tenant, you will be asked to provide access to the water meter to allow for the installation to take place.

13. I am an owner and have tenants, but I do not reside at the property. What should I do?

The installer will contact you to schedule the meter installation. You need to make sure that the installer has access to the water meter at the scheduled time. You are also encouraged to inform your tenants of the water meter installation.

14. Who will install the new water meter?

A professional contractor, hired by the Village, will perform the water meter installation. The contractor will be selected by competitive bid.

Property owners will receive a separate notice from the Village with the name of the installer that will be scheduling appointments. Installer personnel will be clearly identified by uniform and/or a name badge. If you have any questions, please call the Village offices.

15. When will the new water meter be installed in my home?

Once the installation contract is bid and awarded, you will receive notification through the mail, by phone, or by direct, door to door contact. The purpose of this notification will be to schedule an installation time that is convenient for you. It is expected that the contract will be awarded during the Summer of 2017 and should be completed by the end of December 2017, but work may extend through Spring 2018.

16. What if I need to reschedule an appointment?

If you need to reschedule an appointment, you will be asked to contact the Contractor by phone. The contact number will be provided to you once the project is awarded. More information regarding the contractor will be available at the Village office or on the Village website.

17. Will my water service be interrupted during the installation?

Yes. Your water service will need to be interrupted for a short amount of time during the installation. A typical installation is expected to take about 30-60 minutes to complete.

18. How much room do installers need?

The installers will need an area that is at least 3 ft by 3 ft where the water service enters the building. Access to this 3 ft by 3 ft area is also required.

19. What if there is something in front of or blocking the meter?

Please plan to have the obstructions removed for the meter installation. Also, please be aware that the water meter remains the property of the Village. Access to the meter at all times is required. It is the property owner's responsibility to make sure the meter is accessible. If for any reason you think access will be a problem, please call or email the Village prior to August 1, 2017 to schedule a pre-installation inspection at (518) 654-2012 or clerk@villageofcorinthny.com.

20. What if there is a leak at the meter or any other problem after the meter is installed.

The installer will explain the process of reporting a problem before leaving your location. You will be provided emergency contact information in the event that a problem arises.

21. Can I cover up my meter after the installation?

As stated above, the water meter needs to be accessible at all times. However, it may be covered with a removable panel.

22. Is there any special care or maintenance that I need to do to my new water meter?

No. The Village is responsible for all maintenance aspects of the meter regarding ordinary wear and tear. However, you are responsible to protect the meter from being hit and must prevent the water meter from freezing. You will be charged for replacing the meter if it is damaged by negligence or freezing.

23. Will I pay more for water because of the installation of the new meter?

Water Rates are expected to change as a result of budgeting decisions necessary to pay the debt being used to finance the overall water system improvement project which includes the metering project, the recently constructed water filtration plant, and replacement of several deteriorated drinking water mains throughout the Village. Therefore, any increase in your rates will not be solely because of the new meter installation project.

The water meter project will allow the Village to more equitably allocate water charges based on usage. Currently, users are charged a flat fee for water usage since without meters there is no way to measure water consumption.

24. Will the appearance of my bill change?

Yes. Currently all properties pay nearly the same amount for water and sewer service regardless of the amount of water consumed. The 2017/18 base water rent will be \$317/year and base sewer rent will be \$330/year. Most commercial properties are charged an additional \$26 per year, with laundromats and schools being charged an additional \$14/year per fixture, and these additional charges are complicated to calculate. People that shut off their water for periods of time are not billed at all. This current method means that some may not be paying their fair share of the infrastructure upgrades that are needed to service the demand, nor are they paying for the fire protection benefit that exists because the main is available. Also, with the current method there is no incentive for people to fix leaks and conserve water

which means the Village is wasting money to furnish and treat water that is wasted.

Once meters are installed throughout the Village, the Board will establish a “Usage Charge” and “Minimum Value Charge”. The “Usage Charge” will be used to calculate the invoice based on total water consumed during the billing period. The user will be charged the lesser of either the “Minimum Value Charge” or based on the water consumed as registered by the meter and computed at the applicable “Usage Charge”.

Except for vacant parcels, all properties that have the ability to be serviced by water and sewer mains are benefitted by these utilities, and will be responsible for a “Minimum Value Charge” to make sure that all benefitted properties pay their fair share to operate and maintain this infrastructure. This new billing approach will provide for a more equitable basis for billing, and will promote water conservation. It is anticipated that quarterly billings for a typical home that conserves water will not exceed the “Minimum Value Charge”.

25. What if I have a lawn sprinkler or pool that does not discharge into the sewer?

If a dedicated water line feeds the irrigation system, the property owner may purchase a separate meter that will be used to “deduct” irrigation flows from the sewer billing. The “deduct meter” would need to be installed and paid for by the owner to Village specifications and will not be installed as part of the Village metering project.

26. How accurate are the readings from the radio transmitter?

The meters reading from the radio transmitter are considered to be as accurate as a reading shown on the meter. As water meters age, they typically report less water than is actually delivered which means overcharging because of meter readings should not be a concern.

27. What if I need a meter reading between regular readings?

You may read the meter yourself at any time by looking at the register on the meter. If a meter reading is needed for a property sale, users will need to notify the Village Clerk-Treasurer and the meter will be read and a bill will be generated. Users should be prepared to notify the Village in writing in advance of property transfer to allow time for meter reading and bill preparation to be scheduled. It is the property owner’s responsibility to notify the Village in writing thirty (30) days prior to property transfer.

28. Do the new meters have any other benefits for me?

The meter will indicate flow through it. You may use this feature to check to see if there are any slow leaks in your house plumbing such as a leaky toilet. This feature can help you save water and reduce costs. Periodically, the Village may utilize this feature to generate leak detection reports and may notify users that a leak may exist that should be corrected to avoid elevated billings.

Most importantly meters will encourage water conservation which will help the Village reduce costs associated with supply and treatment of wasted water, leading to lower bills. In the long term, the anticipated overall reduction in water consumption will reduce the cost of having to invest in unnecessary storage tanks and upsizing of mains and treatment

systems.

29. Will the radio interfere with my television, cordless phone, pacemaker, or cell phone?

The radio transmitter fully complies with all FCC regulations and should not interfere with other wireless equipment such as television, cordless phones, pacemakers, and cell phones.

30. Why did the Village choose the radio read meters?

Radio read meters are the latest in technology. Radio read meters allow for efficient meter readings without having to enter homes. They also provide useful leak detection information that can be helpful to the water department and to you, the user.

31. What if I am unavailable to provide access for water meter installation?

Water meters will be required for all properties receiving Village water. The installation Contractor will make an effort to schedule installation for a time that you are available. If for some reason access is not granted by the landowner, the property will be charged a much higher utility rate, and installation costs may be borne by the landowner.

32. Was there a previous public meeting or posting where residents were told a water meter project was being initiated?

The water meter project was first identified in a 2008 Engineering report which was used to plan water infrastructure improvements. The water infrastructure improvement project was discussed during several public meetings and in addition to water meters included a new water filtration plant and reconstruction of water mains along Walnut Street, Pine Street, Oak Street, Ash Street, West Mechanic Street and Saratoga Avenue. Public meetings were held to discuss these projects in 2008 and again in 2012 when the Engineering Report was updated. The Village also held a special public meeting on October 27, 2015 to provide a status update on water infrastructure projects, and to discuss necessary sanitary sewer projects.

33. Do you have an example of what future water bills will look like?

Final water billing format has not been decided. It is possible that the Village may be using postcards for future bills to reduce postage and labor costs associated with mailing water and sewer bills.

34. Who is the Water Superintendent?

The Water Superintendent is currently Mr. Arthur Lozier III, Superintendent of the Village of Corinth Department of Public Works.

35. When will the new billing method take place and what will happen to accounts that have already paid in full?

It will take time to install water meters throughout the Village. It is likely that new billing procedure would apply to the next fiscal year (June 2018) to avoid the need to prorate bills.

36. What will the impact be for Village taxpayers in reference to municipal facilities such as Village Hall, School, Town Hall, Fire House, etc., that will now get a water bill?

The rate change as a result of the new meter program is not expected to be significant for any user that conserves water. If water use is properly managed, future bills are expected to be similar to existing water bills.

37. During drought emergencies, who will enforce water conservation requirements that will prohibit excessive use of water like lawn sprinkling?

Law Enforcement and Zoning Enforcement Officer are responsible for enforcement of Village Laws.

38. Can you explain in more detail the meaning of “Minimum Value Charge” and “Usage Charge” and how they will be calculated?

The Minimum Value Charge (MVC) is the base amount charged for each home or residential unit, and will include a usage allowance established from time to time by the Board. The MVC is similar to the per unit charge that the Village currently collects except that the current rate includes unlimited water usage, and in the future it will include a defined amount of water. The MVC will provide the Village with the revenue needed to cover costs associated with providing and maintaining a water source, maintaining drinking water mains, and operating and maintaining water facilities year round.

The Usage Charge (UC) is the charge for the amount of water used each month that exceeds the MVC allowance. This charge is intended to promote water conservation which in turn will help the Village avoid having to make substantial investments to upgrade infrastructure to supply and treat water that is being wasted.

Once enough meters have been installed, the Village Board will be able to estimate average usage, set a Usage Charge, and adjust the MVC as required. The rate setting goal will be for the average water customer to see a reduction in their quarterly water bill when compared to water customers with heavy usage.

39. I have a commercial property, how many meters will I need to pay for? Who will install the meter

Typically each building has a single water service, and only a single water meter would be required.

If the water service is 1-inch diameter or less, the meter will be installed as part of the Village water meter replacement project. If larger than 1-inch, the landowner can either have the Village Contractor install the meter, or retain their own plumber to install the meter to Village specifications. Because the Village’s contractor will be installing over 1,300 meters, it is likely that the Village’s meter installer will be the less costly option.

The number of meters installed will not change the way MVC is calculated. MVC will be calculated based on type of use similar to the existing billing method. For example, a single family home would be charged as a single MVC, and a four family house will be charged 4 times the MVC rate.