

CITY OF AUBURN PLUMBING BOARD
TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2014 5:00 PM, MEMORIAL CITY HALL

Present: Frank Siracusa, Greg Gallinger, Steve Bianco, William Orman

Staff: Carl Castiglione, Plumbing Inspector; Brian Hicks, Sr. Code Enforcement Officer

Guests: Tom Gabak, Public Works

Chair calls the meeting to order. Minutes of February 11, 2014 approved.

Tom Gabak: Speaks of the Inline Service meter replacement program. 1800 meters have been replaced, 1000 are scheduled, 300 had bad piping that precluded replacement, 570 require curb shut offs that have not been done yet, 1700 clients did not respond.

Concerning the clients with bad piping that disallows the replacement guidance is needed from the City as to replacement options. One option is a 0% interest loan if service requires replacement. There should be a fair way to balance the work load so all will benefit. Council wants three prices for each job at a standard hourly rate. Originally wanted to bid on the job per linear foot. 300 replacements is a lot for one person. Having six or more would make it easier. The City does not have direct control in this. We need it more standardized, with prices similar no matter who gets called. We need to come up with some plan together.

William Orman: Questions the 300 that weren't replaced.

Tom Gabak: The policy is if there is galvanized pipe involved to stop, take a picture and call for a curb stop. They broke two in one week and stopped the program for those types. They are waiting now for 570 curb stops to continue. Our employee, Tom Sawyer, has been going with them.

William Orman: States galvanized not used for over 25 years, it has been changed to copper.

Frank Siracusa: Questions a meeting with all licensed plumbers.

Tom Gabak: We would like to facilitate the process. Council wants three prices, that's a lot of work and hassle. If plumbers can do with City involvement and establish a range that would be easiest and fairest.

Frank Siracusa: Questions loan fund.

Tom Gabak: Per person allowance is not enough. We would like to standardize.

William Orman: Questions verification of numbers.

Tom Gabak: 300 were not replaced, 570 waiting for curb stops, 1800 out of 6000 to date have been completed.

It is in their contract that if they break anything they have to fix it. This falls back on the City. We are trying to get rid of the back log at this time using inside shut offs.

There are different options being discussed. Change the code that if the meter is not switched out the customer will be bill at 1.5 times until it is changed.

We are trying to transition to radio reading and it is difficult to do if any of the meters are still manual.

There is enough work for everyone. We are looking for guidance in how to handle it. We are trying to have oversight but cannot tell you what to do.

Steve Bianco: Questions a cap on pricing.

Tom Gabak: Gives the example of a customer who can't afford anything so what to do in that situation. We will need a loan program of \$1500 - \$2000.

Frank Siracusa: The City charges but you want the plumbers to decrease their prices.

Carl Castiglione: John Rossi has done some research and suggests putting a cap on water replacement at \$2500 and sewer replacement at \$9000. He arrived at these numbers by averaging past jobs.

Tom Gabak: We are only talking about taking the water line from the curb to the house. Sewer is another matter.

Joe D'Onofrio: All situations are different. If the City is having problems with this contractor why didn't they go through local plumbers to begin with?

Tom Gabak: The City hired Wendel to do an energy review. This company was hired from that.

Steve Bianco: Questions the cost.

Tom Gabak: Unknown. Meters are \$150 each. All costs are included in the contract. Replacements without problems take about 15 minutes.

Steve Bianco: Questions the water funding program.

Tom Gabak: It needs to be refinanced.

The company replacing the meters has guaranteed savings. I don't know what you want to do but I want to help everyone. We could have a flat fee with three estimates and set the fee at per foot/hour/etc. Or base the bid on a standard length with clean up afterward. This would be from the house to the street.

Joe D'Onofrio: Questions legality, price fixing.

Steve Bianco: Questions costs for different size piping.

Tom Gabak: Replace what is there.

Carl Castiglione: Suggests charging set fee per linear foot.

Frank Siracusa: Questions if a permit is required and if the fee will be waived.

Carl Castiglione: A permit will be needed.

Brian Hicks: Only Council can waive the fee.

Steve Bianco: States some commercial meters have been recently replaced.

Tom Gabak: Any meters identified as over ten years old are scheduled to be replaced. Anything under ten years isn't.

Frank Siracusa: And this defeats the purpose of radio read, if they are not replaced.

Tom Gabak: All meters will be replaced in the next three to five years. I am trying to convey Council's concerns and what we can do as a group to facilitate any action. The manager will present our findings to Council. The chair could draft a letter to all plumbers that comes from the board.

Set price with restoration would be fair.

Steve Bianco: If the job is over and above what the City allows then the customer has to come up with the remainder.

Frank Siracusa: Problem I have is that some contractors who do outside work have the proper equipment to do so. We have to set a cost for those who do not have the equipment and need to rent it to maintain competitiveness. Money is running out, the sewer fund is depleted already.

William Orman: Questions writing up specification for people to follow.

Frank Siracusa: Thinks the plumbers should do this, not the board.

Carl Castiglione: We will give them what they need to include in the bids.

Frank Siracusa: If service is broken due to shut off who pays?

Tom Gabak: Owner is billed.

Frank Siracusa: That will cause problems.

Carl Castiglione: I will formulate a letter for all plumbers and then discuss at a meeting next month.

Frank Siracusa: Any other matters?

Carl Castiglione: We caught an unlicensed plumber doing business in the City. He was fined \$500 and has to appear in court.

Brian Hicks: I spoke with this person and asked him if he was doing business in the City. He said not at this time but had done in the past. I warned him if he's caught again he would be fined and possibly jailed. The problem with fines is that these plumbers are taking the chance they won't get caught and for larger jobs it's worth it to just pay the fine. We need to increase the fines and give mandatory jail time.

Carl Castiglione: We need to petition Council to increase the fines.

Frank Siracusa: Is there a motion to present a new fine schedule to Council? So moved, all in favor.

Next meeting is April 8, 2011.

Meeting adjourned.

Recorded by Alicia McKeen