

By Tim Linscott

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City officials are still in the fact finding stage of installing meters for local homes and businesses and one key element is needed before moving on: public input.

At the Nov. 12 Grant City Council meeting Grant Mayor Michael Wyatt felt the city council needed to 'do its homework' on the subject of installing meters locally.

"We need to talk to people and ask opinions about this meter subject," Wyatt said. "I have only talked to two or three people on the subject and they have indicated that water meters are proper at this time."

Wyatt continued, "I realize some people will be in opposition of water meters. The first thing will be the cost, and the second will be 'we've gotten along all these years without them.' I think we know there are some disparities in our water charges at this time."

The disparities in water charges, over-consumption by some in town and necessity may drive the city toward water meters, according to Wyatt.

"I encourage us to get out and do our background gathering before we get to the point of making a decision," Wyatt said.

There are still some logistic items that need to be worked out on the subject, such as how to pay for them, where and when to install, how many are needed and what kind of meters to purchase.

The fundamental question Wyatt wants to answer is 'does the public want water meters?'

Council members agreed to continue to talk with the public to gather information on the subject.

Reader input requested

The Grant Tribune-Sentinel is gathering information on the subject as well. There is currently an online Facebook poll, or readers can stop in, e-mail, call or write in to the Tribune-Sentinel with their opinion on the topic. Visit the Tribune-Sentinel's website at www.granttribune.com.

Estimates are being put together on what the cost of putting meters in Grant for businesses and homes would be, then the city will evaluate the situation and act accordingly.

Several questions were raised by the public at the meeting, one being if the water meter project would coincide with the replacement of water mains.

Wyatt felt that decision has not been made yet, but his personal opinion was to do meters all at one time and city mains as a separate project.

City officials are looking at assessing the cost of installation to the consumer through the monthly water bill, however, for those tenants renting a property, the owner would be assessed the bill. The fine points of figuring out those logistics have not been finalized.

Adding the cost to property taxes was another option discussed at the meeting.

Cost estimates for the meters are being done for meters outside of homes and businesses at curb stops, not inside structures.

“This is the only solution the engineers are looking at,” Dana Harris, Grant city administrator, said.

All situations, scenarios and decisions are in the preliminary stages with the project according to city officials and nothing is set in stone at this juncture.

Talks of putting meters in homes and businesses locally re-ignited two months ago when Justin Coats, owner and operator of Grant Packing, asked why his water bill was so high. His business was classified by the city as a high water usage business and when water rates were increased in August, Coats saw a significant jump in his bill.

Coats spoke with council members, pointing out that his business uses under the estimated gallons per year in his classification and asked city leaders to re-classify his business.

City council members agreed to hook up an existing meter at his business and monitor consumption for a set time period, re-evaluating his classification.

It was later revealed that the meter did not work. Coats was at the Nov. 12 meeting to seek information or an answer from city officials on his situation.

Wyatt explained that the city had not done much as far as making headway on his situation but the matter was put on the agenda for Nov. 26.

“We’d like to put this subject to rest, so we will continue to work on this,” Wyatt said.