



CITY OF LA CROSSE

WATER DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Public Works
From: Derek Greebon – Water Superintendent
Tina Erickson – Utilities Finance & Compliance Manager
Date: 7/25/2024
Subject: 1200 Block of Townsend Street- Emergency Watermain installation

In March of 2021, the utility was first made aware of a group of 4 twindos on the 1200 Block of Townsend Street that are non-compliant with the Public Service Commission (PSC) regulations related to service lines and metering when a service leak occurred on one of the two shared service lines. Utility policy requires homeowners bring properties into compliance when either the service line fails and must be fully replaced, or when the property sells. Since the original leaks were repairable, all four homeowners were notified in 2021 that they did not have to separate the shared services at that time but would have to separate in the future when either of these scenarios occurs. Other factors that complicated this situation was that there was no watermain on the 1200 Block of Townsend Street and the shared service lines are fed off Bennett Street, running behind these 4 properties up to 250 feet away, through neighboring property and under the driveway of 1204 Bennett Street.

Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 185.52(2)(b) Single Connections states: "A customer's lateral shall be directly connected to utility-owned facilities, and there shall be no other customer connection downstream from the utility's shut-off valve. This does not apply to multi-occupancy premises, such as apartments, condominiums, and shopping centers." Please note that Public Service Commission staff does not consider "twindos" as "multi-occupancy premises" because each twindo is on its own lot. Schedule X-1 (Page 1 of 10) of the La Crosse water tariff says, "Service will be furnished only if (1) the premises have a frontage on a properly platted street or public strip in which a cast iron or other long-life water main has been laid, or where the property owner has agreed to and complied with the provisions of the water utility's filed main extension rule, (2) the property owner has installed or agrees to install a service lateral from the curb stop to the point of use that is not less than 6 feet below the surface of an established or proposed grade and meets the water utility's specifications, and (3) the premises have adequate piping beyond the metering point."

Typically, the water customer is responsible to pay for new mains and service laterals to serve their property per Schedule X-2 in the La Crosse water tariff.

The Utilities office met with the homeowners on June 27, 2024, to explain requirements of bringing the properties into compliance. Since there is not a watermain on Townsend Street, the Utility initially considered a plan proposed by a local contractor of running a 2inch pipe from the intersection of Townsend St and 13th St S along the public right-of-way to the private alley on Townsend where they would run a 2" private "main" down the alley for 4 private water laterals to connect to. The 2" water pipe on Townsend would then be turned over to the Water Department for future maintenance and replacement, and the remaining private water main running in the private alley would be the joint responsibility of the property owners. That plan needed review by the PSC to determine if they would need to create a condominium association in order to meet code by having a private 2" main with the services connected. The initial quote for this work came in very high and it was determined it would cause undue burden on the property owners.

On July 16th, the utility met with the City Engineering Department to review other options related to extending service to these properties and utilizing the assessment process to spread the burden over time. After further review, it was decided to instead install a 6" main on the 1200 Block of Townsend Street with a fire hydrant at the end of the cul-de-sac, rather than having them install a 2" pipe. This would not only provide better water pressure, improved water quality by having a hydrant to flush the dead end main and prevent stagnant water but would also improve fire protection by installing a hydrant closer to the properties. However, since there is an existing leak behind the properties that could lead to complete failure and loss of water service, and the fact that the leak could cause property damage along the embankment of the river behind the properties, it was recommended we get the watermain installed as soon as possible.

About the same time, one of the property owners filed a complaint with the PSC. Since then, PSC staff have opined that PSC code and tariff language would require the customers to pay for a water main extension in Townsend Street. This public main would extend to the end of public right-of-way. Then each twindo would have to pay to install a water service to the public main (total of four water services).

The Water Department requests approval for an emergency project to install a 6-inch water main on the 1200 Block of Townsend Street, which would be then assessed to the property owners over several years. The property owners would only be assessed for the lineal feet of watermain. The water utility will pay for the cost of the fire hydrant and pavement replacement. Taking this action will not only comply with the PSC requirements but would lower the initial costs of the property owners to bring their properties into compliance. In the meantime, we will continue working with the PSC to clarify the options available to the property owners for their private water lateral connections to the watermain.

We received 3 quotes, but only one quote met the requirements of the quote request. The water utility recommends awarding the quote proposal to Strupp Trucking Inc in the amount of \$58, 225.

We request to allocate a total of \$100,0000 to cover the watermain extension, street replacement, curb & gutter replacement and contingency for unforeseen expenses. Funding will be paid for by the Water Utility cash reserves.

Thank You