



Village of Franklin Park Board Meeting Statement Regarding Estimated Water Bills

John Johnson, Village Trustee

“As you may know, Mayor Pedersen recently underwent surgery. He is recovering at home and making tremendous progress. He has been in regular communication with the Board and is working with village staff. Although he would like to be here, he is listening to his medical team’s advice and will not be attending tonight’s meeting.

He is also very aware of the recent phone calls to the village hall and the discussion on social media about the confusion surrounding estimated water bills. He has asked that I convey this message:

“First, I appreciate the frustration a resident must feel when he or she receives an unusually high-water bill, I would be upset too. These are charges you did not plan on, or budget for, and it may seem like it is coming out of nowhere. No one likes these kinds of surprises, me included.

Please be assured that the village will continue to work with every individual to rectify the situation. In fact, the Village has been working with many residents who raised concerns about their bills, including establishing a payment plan, waiving late fees or penalties, and reducing some of the charges.

I have asked the utilities commissioner and assistant utilities commissioner of the village’s water department to address some of the issues raised on social media and to reiterate the many ways in which the village can assist you.” **Mayor Barrett Pedersen**

John Johnson, Village Trustee

I want to explain the public comment process. Anyone who would like to make a comment can do so, each person will have two minutes to speak, but individual questions will not be answered at this time. If you sign in and provide your contact information, staff will look into your issue and get back to you later this week but please note the village is closed on Wednesday for the holiday.”

Joe Thomas – Utilities Commissioner

“For the past two years, the village has been working hard to replace or repair water meters. The Village has already repaired or replaced over 2,600 water meters. The Village has two crews working to repair or replace water meters. Progress on this has been steady even though a shortage of parts has slowed us down. The Village averages 25–30-meter repairs or replacements a week. As of today, there are 337 meters left that need to be repaired or replaced out of approximately 6,200 water accounts. The Village is hoping with the cooperation of residents to finish this project by the end of August.

At the top of every water bill, it indicates if a resident is receiving an actual or estimated meter reading. The bill also states that if it says estimated that you should contact the water department to schedule an appointment to obtain an actual reading.

Last week alone the Village mailed letters and posted notices at 208 houses asking the resident receiving an estimated bill to call the water department to schedule a meter repair or replacement appointment. The Village only received thirty calls back. The water department will continue to send letters, notices and go door to door to contact the remaining residents that need their meters repaired or replaced.

From the very beginning of this process, staff at the Village has explained to any resident that calls or visits village hall that their meter needs to be repaired or replaced if their bill says estimate. This information has also been in our newsletter and e-blast.

Unfortunately, some residents may not have understood that by delaying this request, they were still incurring costs for water and sewage based on their actual usage. That amount is recorded in the meter head and the costs are cumulative.

When the new meter is installed or repaired, it will calculate the usage back to the date when the meter began estimating. That is why some people have received an unusually high bill after the new meter is installed and others have received reimbursements from the Village. In fact, in the last 30 days the Village has reimbursed over \$26,875.00.

We realize this can come as a shock when you open your bill and that you are frustrated about the situation. We all lead busy lives and may miss a notice on the bill, may not have time to read the newsletter or forget to open a letter until many months later.

So, please know that we are sorry for the confusion, and we are available to work with you to develop a budget plan that works for everyone.

Please contact Ewelina Kubkowski and she can assist you. Her business cards are on the table.”

Nick Weber – Deputy Utilities Commissioner

“There are typically three reasons why a water bill may be significantly higher than expected. First, an actual bill is issued after being estimated for a period of time. Second, there is a missed payment or delinquency on the account. Third, it could be a leak. In fact, the village often reaches out to residents that have unusually high-water consumption to let them know they may have a leak. We let them know that we are available to come to their home and check for a leak and to help them fix the problem. Unfortunately, we do not always get a response from the resident, even after multiple attempts, until it results in a large water bill.

If you suspect you have a leak causing high bills, please contact Ewelina Kubkowski by phone or email. If you don’t get through, please leave her a voice mail and she will get back to you in a day or so.

Also, on the Village’s website there is a highly informative video that discusses how you can avoid unusually high-water bills and how you can enroll in the online program Water Smart. The program provides information on ways that will help reduce your water bill and will contact you when your water usage changes.

One final thought, some people who received a high bill, we learned it was not due to receiving an estimated bill but rather because they had a prior delinquency in payment or a water leak. The Village will continue to work with any resident who is unable to timely pay or needs assistance with identifying a water leak in their home. The Village is always willing to review or explain an individual’s water account with any interested party.”