

# SOUTHBRIDGE WATER DEPARTMENT AUTOMATED METER READING PROGRAM

February 28, 2011



# Thomas E. Daley, P.E. Director of Public Works

Thomas Cutler

WWI

Water Dept. Division Manager



#### GOAL:

To install drive by reading technology water meters for approximately 4,200 accounts.

The new system will:

- Improve productivity
- Eliminate estimated reads
- •Provide more equity for our customers
- Provide an efficient billing system interface

The installation process will commence on April 01, 2011 and is expected to take 18-24 months to complete.



#### WHY:

- 1. Current average age of meters: 15 years
- 2. DEP recommended maximum age: 10 years



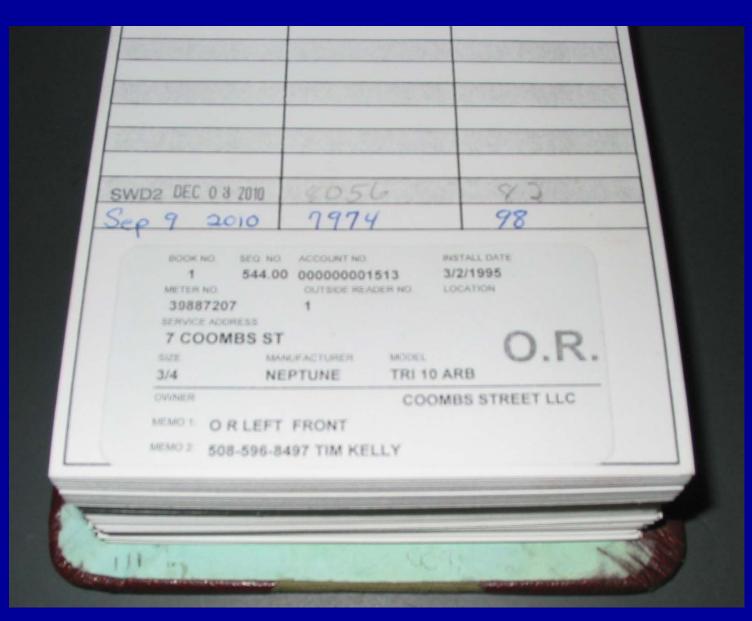




#### WHY:

- 1. Current average age of meters: 15 years
- 2. DEP recommended maximum age: 10 years
- 3. Four hundred accounts have no outside access
- 4. These accounts are called in by the owner
- 5. Customer Equity

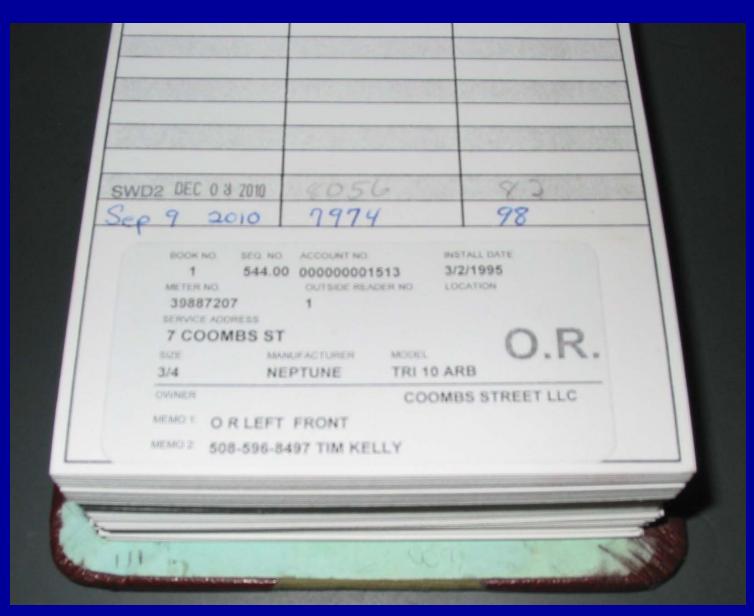














#### WHY ELSE:

#### SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

#### Currently:

- 2 staff -4 to 6 weeks reading, handwritten
- touch pad / pin probe technology (70's)
- equipment failure/inaccuracy issues
- 1 person, 2 weeks to check all readings
- 1 person in Assessing 2 weeks to input



## WHY ELSE:





#### PROGRAM CHALLENGES:

The program was to commence in September 2010. The following items delayed the start of the program:

- Feb. 2010 the Attorney General's Office opined that prevailing wages had to be paid for all meter change outs
- •Summer 2010 Three(3) meters prematurely failed at Juniper Hill and one (1) on North Street
- The Town requested WWI to create and issue an RFP for the equipment purchase to ensure the highest level of competiveness and quality



#### PROCESS TO DATE:

• A request for proposals, in accordance with the requirements of MGL 30B, was advertized in October 2010.

- Five (5) proposals were received. The three (3) most advantages vendors were selected to provide presentations and demonstrations to the review committee.
- •Contract has been awarded by WWI to Elster AMCO for the meters and Itron for the communication hardware / software



#### ADMINISTRATION:

A temporary Administrative Assistant started on 1/31/11 to assist with this program. The position will be part time for approximately 18 months.

#### Duties Include:

- Scheduling
- Inventory control and requisition forms
- Database updates
- Email / phone inquiries and responding to new accounts
- Answer and schedule appointments
- Any other duties approved by the division manager



#### MANAGEMENT:

- The Southbridge Water Department Division Manager will handle the management of this program.
- The current Southbridge water administrative assistant will be utilized to supervise the temporary administrative assistant.



#### STAFFING:

Licensed, qualified individuals:

WhiteWater, Inc. will provide two additional staff members to the Southbridge Water Department to perform regular daily duties while Southbridge members are working on the meter program.

The advantage to this approach will make the program more efficient since Southbridge staff members know the system and customers.

Additional staff will be provided by WWI as needed to service this program.



#### SCHEDULING:

Installations are tentatively scheduled to begin April 01, 2011.

Flyers will be mailed out to customers two weeks in advance by geographic area.

The temporary administrative assistant will process and schedule all the appointments.



# Meter Replacement Program

#### **Dear Customer:**

Over the next several months, the Southbridge Water Department will install Radio Frequency automated meter reading devices in homes throughout Southbridge, Charlton and Sturbridge. By sending a low powered radio signal from a device connected to your water meter to a computer-equipped vehicle as it drives through the area, the Radio Frequency device will accurately read your water meter without the need for house calls and meter reading cards.

The new meter is <u>FREE</u> to you and will be installed by the Southbridge Water Department's contract operator WhiteWater, Inc. Installation generally takes less than an hour. It is critical that the Southbridge Water Department receive a response from every customer who receives this notice. Customers who ignore repeated contact attempts may have their water service discontinued.

In order for Southbridge Water Department to install the Radio Frequency device, either yourself or someone you designate who is at least 18 years old, must be at home to admit the installer.

The water meter installers will be uniformed in clothing with the appropriate WhiteWater, Inc. logo. They will be carrying two forms of identification: a WWI badge and a Massachusetts driver's license. The vehicles will either be white with a blue WhiteWater, Inc. logo on both sides or yellow with Town of Southbridge Department of Public Works logos on both sides and also have a blue strip along the sides. Please refer to the example pictures. The Southbridge Water Department encourages all customers to ask for identification from anyone who comes to their door. The policy is "No Identification-No Entry". Customers can call the Southbridge Water Department at (508) 764-3207 to verify that technicians are in the area. All installation activities are registered with your local police department.

Southbridge Water Department technicians will be knocking on doors for those customers that have not scheduled an appointment. They will leave a door hanger with instructions on how to schedule an appointment for those customers that are not home.

The sooner you call for an installation appointment, the sooner we will begin to enjoy the benefits that Southbridge Water Departments Radio Frequency Drive By offers. For more information please visit the Town of Southbridge's website at

Sincerely,

Southbridge Water Department

Operated by: WhiteWater, Inc.



It is important that you call the Southbridge Water Department at (508) 764-3207 Monday through Friday from 8AM to 1PM to make an appointment to have your new Radio Frequency Water Meter installed FREE. You may also e-mail the Southbridge Water Department at southbridgewatermeters@southbridgemass.org

Installation appointments will be Monday through Friday from 7AM to 2PM





#### SCHEDULE cont.'d

• *March 2011* 

Purchase meters and materials
Prepare letters and outreach
Input meter info into database
Update Town's web-site
News Release
Begin sending out letters by book to customers
Begin scheduling appointments
Training

- April 2011 to end
   Update databases / inventory
   Setup appointments
   Begin installing meters
- 18 month project



### **QUESTIONS**

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