

Comment Submitted by Ken Martin on 7/20/2015

Letter to Mayor Rebecca Casper

Dear Mayor Casper

I was born and raised in Idaho Falls and one of the things I most admired was the forward thinking and planning that the elected officials did. They created a rainy day fund and planned wisely for the future. A current example of that is the water storage that was put in on York road for the future. Upgrading the sewer station is another.

I was deeply disappointed in the article on "Water" in the July 16 Post Register. I always looked at Ammon as a city that was always behind the eight ball trying to play catchup. On this topic I feel the shoe is on the other foot and the Idaho Falls officials are burying their heads in the sand hoping the issue of water shortage will go away. I know it's expensive and politically not correct.

I attended a seminar several months ago where a gentleman from the State Water Resource Board gave a presentation on the aquifer and how since the 1950s the water level has been steadily going down. He mentioned several ways that the state is looking at recharging the aquifer which at best might stabilize it. The clear choice to help the aquifer is conservation, especially with the projected growth. I'm pretty sure that you and the council saw the same or similar presentation.

I lived in Seattle Washington for several years before returning home. Seattle had metered water and I can assure you that when you get a bill for summer usage of \$150+ you think long and hard on what is best and how to water. My understanding is that the current bill for usage of water in Idaho Falls is around \$25 per month. Do you think anyone is going to conserve? I see way too many homes where the water runs for days and days before it's moved or turned off. Or they water every day!

I also understand the new housing additions in Idaho Falls are having meters installed. That's wonderful but that's not enough. I know that raising the water bill would be a huge political no no. But you ran on, "I committed to solve existing problems, grow our economy and enhance our community." What bigger problem is looming out there? Without sufficient water the economy can't grow and clearly the community can't be enhanced. The comment by Clive Strong that "the time will come when it will be too expensive not to meter water." Are you kicking the can down the street as our legislatures in Washington DC love to say? It will be somebody else's issue.

Be bold and do what's right for the citizens even if they won't like it today. In the long run they will and you'll be remembered for it; not the Mayor who buried her head in the sand. Raise the water rates to match Ammon and heck even higher. You could raise the rate of several years. Fund the meters and start putting them in. The cost is only going to go up the longer you wait and by then it may be too late; just like California. Be proactive on water conservations and help save the one resource that we are so lucky to have, for now!

Respectfully

Ken Martin

Mayor Casper's Response to Ken Martin

Mr. Martin,

I wish to express my appreciation to you for following city water-related issues so closely. I also want you to know that we are currently accepting public comments regarding the Water Facility Plan, which can be found online via a link right in the center of the city's homepage at www.idahofallsidaho.gov. The public is encouraged to review the document and comment on its content. Your letter will be included with other public comments we have received. I believe the public comment period is open through August 3, 2015 and comment sheets are available following the same link mentioned above should you wish to submit additional commentary.

Contained within the plan are several recommendations for managing the city's water for the next several decades. I believe you will appreciate the work done by the engineers who conducted the study. As you already mentioned, the city also requires the installation of a water meter on all new non-residential development. Additionally, in compliance with state regulation, the city is requiring the installation of meter pits (without meters) on all new residential construction as well as on all water main and service line replacement projects. This requirement has been in place since 2007, yet I agree that this alone is not sufficient.

In addition to the above actions, city leaders also recognize that the city itself is the largest water user on the culinary water system. We are currently conducting audits to identify internal changes that I believe should be implemented first in our efforts to help conserve the city's supply of culinary water. As you noted, private conservation is also necessary. To help introduce water metering, the City of Idaho Falls will be dedicating \$250,000 per year for the installation of water meters on the city's largest non-residential water users. This is where the next largest potential exists for conservation—the low-hanging fruit, if you will.

I quickly learned that conversations about residential metering are full of strongly-held citizen opinions. And because it is the City Council that sets city policy, citizen opinions matter. Councilmembers carefully weigh the feedback they receive. The facts contained in engineering studies are helpful in making the case for what our water policy *should* be, but opinions are also factored in. Yet, adopting the Water Facility Plan is a vital first step. If you have friends or colleagues who share your opinions, please encourage them to weigh in on this most vital decision.

Finally, I wish for you to know that water policy is a personal passion of mine. I can assure you I am tracking both city water policy and aquifer management policy statewide. I have been involved with ESPA policy for several years. Much can and must be done to recharge this vital aquifer so it may continue to sustain Eastern Idaho growth and vitality. Throughout my years of involvement, I have learned that identifying the actual solutions is relatively simple. But much to my chagrin, implementing solutions is quite a challenge. Paying for the solutions is yet another hurdle. And so is getting folks to agree on the science. I am working all fronts—from Idaho Falls, to all of the Mayors in the upper valley, to water-interest groups, to engineers and hydrologists, to the Association of Idaho Cities, and to legislators in Boise—all to the best of my ability as my current position allows.

You may be pleased to learn that our city's Public Works Director, our Water Superintendent, and our City Engineer, all support the findings of the Water Facility Plan. I believe it needs to be adopted so that we

may move forward with shoring up the city's and others water supply (culinary, irrigation, industrial, and commercial) for decades to come.

Once again, I very much appreciate your comments and invite your vigilance throughout the process.

Comment Submitted by Alan Jones on 7/24/2015

Letter to the editor: Water welfare; Posted: July 24, 2015 3:52 a.m.

Water welfare
Received July 17

I have lived from the Puget Sound to Long Island Sound. Idaho Falls is the first city in which I've lived that water meters are not installed at residences and businesses. I grew up in Pocatello which has had water meters for over 60 years.

I commend Ammon for having the political courage and common sense to install meters, something which seems to be lacking in Idaho Falls. As reported in the Post Register July 16, the Idaho Falls public works director stated "after looking at metering, the city decided it was too expensive." That is a short-sighted view. It will be too expensive if water conservation and meters are postponed.

I have observed daily water waste, both residential and commercial, in Idaho Falls when it comes to keeping the grass green. I think if people were to speak with land care professionals they would learn watering every day is not required except in a prolonged duration of extreme heat. I have also seen too many sidewalks and streets being watered by poorly adjusted sprinkler heads.

My other complaint is that small families are paying the same amount for water each month as families two, three or four time as large. I don't feel I should have to subsidize the water used by large households. I guess you could call it "water welfare" in an area that prides itself on conservatism. Water should be treated just like gasoline, natural gas, heating oil and electricity. You pay for what you use. (Word count: 250)

ALAN JONES

Response to Alan Jones

Mr. Jones,

The City of Idaho Falls would like to express its appreciation to you for following these water-related issues so closely. Your letter will be included with other public comments we receive regarding the City's recently completed Water Facility Plan. The public is encouraged to review the document. A link to the plan can be found on the City's website at www.idahofallsidaho.gov.

Within the plan, the City of Idaho Falls proposes dedicating \$250,000 per year for the installation of water meters on the City's largest non-residential water users where the largest potential exists for conservation. The City also requires the installation of a water meter on all new non-residential development. Additionally, in conformance with state regulations, the City is requiring the installation of meter pits (without meters) on all new residential construction as well as on all water main and service line replacement projects.

The City also recognizes itself as the largest water user on the culinary system. Audits are currently being conducted to identify changes that can be implemented in-house to conserve culinary water.

Water use is determined by numerous factors, of which family size is one. Others include unattended leaks, size of landscaping, length of time water is left running, overwatering of landscape, etc. Water conservation is largely a state of mind and public education will play an increasing role in the City's future conservation efforts.

Thank you again for your comments.

Comments Hand Submitted by Jim Pletscher on 7/24/2015 (in black text)

Response to Mr. Pletscher (in red text)

Mr. Pletscher,

The City of Idaho Falls would like to express its appreciation to you for following this water-related issue so closely. Your letter will be included with other public comments we receive regarding the Water Facility Plan and incorporated in to the appendices of the plan. Responses to your individual comments are included below:

Comment 1: Page 1-17, Change 3rd bullet to read "implement metering of all water customers and... reduce overall water demand; water metering experience in other similar cities has shown a 30% to 40% reduction in usage."

Response to Comment 1: A new bullet has been added between the 2nd and 3rd bullets which reads, "Dedicate \$250,000 per year to the installation of water meters on the City's largest, non-residential customers as indicated in the CIP." Additionally, the phrase "water metering experience in other similar cities has shown a 30% to 40% reduction in usage." has been added to the end of the 3rd bullet of the plan.

Comment 2: Page B-8, Change item 3) to read "implement as many conservation measures as feasible." Reason: current statement of "Pursue conservation measures" is generally a bit weak. It also matches what was stated in 4th bullet on Page B-1.

Response to Comment 2: The phrase "Pursue conservation measures" indicated in item 3) on page B-1 is not a recommendation, but rather an option used to categorize water right alternatives. The word "Pursue..." has been changed to read "Implement water..."

Comment 3: Page A-17, First action listed. Delete "Recommendation left to City leaders; due to implications." Replace with "Recommend implementation of metering as soon as feasible." Reason: All the recommendations listed on Table 2 that has budget implications will be evaluated by Mayor & City Council, and not just the first recommendation.

Response to Comment 3: Staff recognizes that metering water use would yield the largest amount of water conservation. It is also true that other conservation recommendations have budget implications,

but the magnitude of those budgetary implications pale in comparison to the City-wide installation of water meters. As mentioned on page A-1, the Conservation Plan presents facts regarding conservation actions. Recommendations were made to implement specific actions that could feasibly be supported through budget levels established in the Water Facility Plan's recommended CIP.

Comment 4: General Comment: It is imperative that the City of Idaho Falls demonstrate that strong water conservation measures be taken/shortly to be put in place. This will strengthen the City's position in dealing with the leaders in the agricultural counties over the Snake River Aquifer in requesting that they take equally significant water conservation measures since the 2005 study indicates that for Eastern Idaho 97% of this water is used by the ag community and 3% by the cities and towns. The ag community has a huge effect on conservation.

Response to Comment 4: The City of Idaho Falls is taking proactive measures, working with local, regional and state organizations to ensure that water use statistics within the state are not overlooked. These facts are collected by the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) and are displayed in a document referred to as a circular. The most recently published is USGS Circular 1405 for water use in the 2010 calendar year while USGS Circular 1279 looks at regional water use of the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) in the year 2000. There is currently momentum building amongst stakeholders within the region for groundwater recharge projects, of which the City is a proponent to conserve water in the ESPA.

Thank you again for your comments.

Comment Submitted by Tammy Muffler on 8-3-15

Comment: Please NO meters !!!!

Response to Tammy Muffler

Ms. Muffler,

The City of Idaho Falls would like to express its appreciation to you for submitting your comment regarding the City's recently completed Water Facility Plan. Within the plan, the City of Idaho Falls proposes dedicating \$250,000 per year for the installation of water meters on the City's largest non-residential water users where the largest potential exists for conservation. The City also requires the installation of a water meter on all new non-residential development. Additionally, in conformance with state regulations, the City is requiring the installation of meter pits (without meters) on all new residential construction as well as on all water main and service line replacement projects.

Once again, we appreciate your comment.

Comment Submitted by Jill Kirkham on 8-3-15

Comment: I think we should meter water. It's sad when I see residence watering their sidewalks more than their grass.

Response to Jill Kirkham

Ms. Kirkham,

The City of Idaho Falls would like to express its appreciation to you for submitting your comment regarding the City's recently completed Water Facility Plan. Within the plan, the City of Idaho Falls proposes dedicating \$250,000 per year for the installation of water meters on the City's largest non-residential water users where the largest potential exists for conservation. The City also requires the installation of a water meter on all new non-residential development. Additionally, in conformance with state regulations, the City is requiring the installation of meter pits (without meters) on all new residential construction as well as on all water main and service line replacement projects.

Water conservation is largely a state of mind and public education will play an increasing role in the City's future conservation efforts.

Once again, we appreciate your comment.