



UTILITY CONNECTION

Public Utilities — An American Tradition That Works • February 2004

City Cleans and Lines Water Mains in Old Town

The City of Manassas has completed a rehabilitation project to clean and line the nearly 100-year-old water mains on three residential streets in Old Town Manassas: Main Street, Portner and Lee Avenues.

“These are the original unlined cast-iron pipes laid down at the turn of the 20th century,” explained Don Pannell, Collection and Distribution Manager for the City’s Water & Sewer Department. “Over time rust-tuberculation builds up so that it is difficult for the water to flow through them.”

The traditional remedy is to replace the pipes. For about one third of the cost to replace the pipes, however, a City contractor cleaned and lined the existing water mains. This resulted in a \$250,000 savings.

Here’s how they did it:

First, crews hooked up a temporary water system so residents experienced only a brief interruption in their water service. These white pipes, lying along the curbs of each road, were familiar to travelers in the area during the holidays.

Next, one by one, the crews accessed each pipe at both ends and sent a robotic cleaning machine through each pipe. Progressively larger cleaning tools scraped all the rust from the interior of the pipes, leaving a bare metal surface.

Then a spinning grout machine is pulled through the pipe that applies a 1/4 inch thick grout layer on the inside of the pipe.

The existing pipe with the cement grout liner is then equivalent to water pipes being manufactured and installed today.



“The City used the same technology two years ago to clean and line the water mains on Center Street and we were pleased with the results,” said Pannell. “On all our capital projects that involve replacing water mains, we evaluate the merits of cleaning and lining because it saves time and money.”

Water mains on Fairview Avenue (from Richmond Avenue to Tudor Lane) are next on the list for replacement or cleaning and lining in fiscal year 2006-07. After that, the water mains on Center Street by the Courthouse, between Grant and Stonewall, are scheduled for replacement or cleaning and lining.

The cleaning and lining of water mains in these areas is estimated to cost \$170,000. ■

Plug Into the Internet Via Prospect Street Broadband

Zplug, the trademark for Prospect Street Broadband, which is working as a franchisee to the City of Manassas, is bringing high speed Internet access to every electric outlet in homes and businesses throughout the City ... anywhere you can "plug in" your computer. The service was activated in portions of the Wellington and Battery Heights neighborhoods in January, and will soon be available in other areas.

High-speed broadband Internet access is proven much faster than dial-up. Users may connect instantly and stay connected. No more waiting to dial up no more tying up phones or busy signal complaints from friends and family. Talk and connect at the same time!

Your BPL Internet Service includes a 30-day money-back guarantee, unlimited Internet access, 24/7 technical support, five e-mail accounts, with 10 megabytes of e-mail storage per account and 25 megabytes of personal Web space.

For more information, visit www.zplug.com or call 703.365.8211. ■

Manassas Utility Commission Members

John M. Weber, Chairman
Harry K. Bowman
A. Spencer Curtis
Richard B. Milligan
Robert Oliver
James H. Payne Sr.
Dr. James C. Schornick
Allen Todd, Director of Utilities



Please Note: The Utility Commission meets the second Thursday night of every month at 5:30 p.m. at the Public Works Building, 8500 Public Works Drive, Manassas, VA 20110.

Utility Connection is published four times a year by the City of Manassas as a monthly utility bill insert and mailed to the City's 15,000 customers.

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For more information, call 703-257-8276.

City Operations Personnel Keep Constant Vigil

It is 4:00 a.m. on a dark and lonely Saturday morning.

For City of Manassas Operational Dispatchers Randy, Erin, Amy, Kelly, and Sue, each night shift is a battle to clear the mind, stay alert and be prepared for the unexpected.

It's all part of their jobs. Each dispatcher plays an important role as a 24-hour emergency liaison between residents and City personnel, providing essential assistance for all utilities and public works.

Dispatchers handle such problems as power outages, water and sewer problems, damaged signs and general utility concerns. After determining the nature of a reported problem, dispatchers coordinate such corrective action as contacting on-call personnel, as well as additional City personnel, if necessary.

Communication with City crews is provided by the dispatchers through an 800 megahertz radio system and an alpha-paging system. Directing phone calls and providing meaningful information to several departments – and to countless individual employees – is part of their daily routine.

Dispatchers coordinate all switching of the electrical distribution network to restore service following a power outage. They also monitor and can control the six electric substations, operate peaking generation through the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System (SCADA), and monitor the flow of drinking water to the City from the Lake Manassas treatment plant.

Dispatchers monitor activities around the facility via cameras, and control access after normal working hours. They maintain and distribute Miss Utility requests to locate underground pipes and cables, along with answering Miss Utility questions.

Operations Supervisor Joe Brown is also responsible for monitoring the electric load 24-hours-a-day. Most mornings when the phone rings in the dispatch control room at 5:30 a.m., it's Brown calling to check the "load" and make sure the City's generators are available to run if needed.

Our dispatchers are here around the clock to serve you. If you experience an emergency water, sewer or electric problem, observe a malfunctioning traffic signal or notice a street light that's out, give them a call at 703-257-8353. ■



From left, Joe, Erin and Randy



Amy



Sue

Thomas Promoted to Customer Service Supervisor



Trudy Thomas, formerly a Customer Service Representative, has been promoted to Customer Service Supervisor for the City of Manassas Utility Department.

The City has employed Trudy since August 1989. She started her career in the Human Resources Department and then later transferred to the Utilities Department.

“Trudy is a valuable asset to the Utility Customer Service Department,” said Ana Davis, Utilities Services Manager.

As the City’s new Customer Service Supervisor, Thomas oversees a staff of five Customer Service Representatives that provide first line customer contact, handle telephone calls and assist walk-in customers by collecting payments for current and past due accounts, setting up new service connects, transferring of current utilities and general billing questions. Her section also responds to letters that accompany payments and sends out forms, letters, brochures and other information as needed. ■

Reduce Winter’s High Utility Bills

Howling winds. Freezing rain. Inches of snow and ice covering the ground. Recall the Winter of 2002/2003?

That’s why it’s important to remember your meter — a device so essential to your utilities. Despite the weather, meter readers attempt to check meters monthly, however, ice and rain can impede their ability to read yours.

“Although our goal is to read every meter each month, sometimes in severe conditions we’re unable to obtain a reading,” says Meter Services Supervisor Beth Hague.

Linda Hatcher, Utility Billing Coordinator adds: “When this occurs, it’s necessary to estimate consumption ...which is noted on your bill as an estimate.”

Estimated use is based on prior months’ usage. Since actual services used will be more (or less) than estimated usage, the following month’s bill will be affected and a “tru-up” occurs. For example, if the estimated bill is lower than actual usage, your next month’s bill will be higher.

One way to ease the cost of high winter usage bills is to sign up for the City’s Average Bill Plan. With the plan, you pay an average of twelve months’ utility service each month. Although the amount paid will vary some each month, it will eliminate the extreme “peaks and valleys.”

Here are other tips to reduce high winter utility costs:

- **Weatherize**

Check for drafts and places where heat is escaping. Insulating and caulking is a wise investment that pays off in saved energy and lower utility bills.

- **Conserve**

Try to keep indoor temperatures around 70 degrees in the winter.

- **Maintain**

Have your heating system checked and cleaned at least once a year. Dirty systems cost more to run.

Please call our Customer Service Department at 703-257-8219 or 703-257-8245 for information or answers to any questions regarding your utility billing. ■

How to Prevent Frozen Pipes

With the frigid temperatures here, we think of ways to keep the cold air outside our homes, however,



sometimes we forget about the water pipes inside our home.

Here are a few suggestions from our Water Department to avoid frozen pipes this winter:

- **Open cabinet doors**, allowing heat to reach uninsulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.
- **Insulate pipes** in unheated areas. (Check with local hardware or building supply stores to obtain materials for wrapping your pipes.)
- In extremely cold weather, if you can’t get to your pipes to insulate them, **let water slowly drip** from a faucet to keep the lines open.
- **Repair cracks** and close up air vents in crawl spaces so freezing air can’t enter.
- **Shut off and drain** outside faucets.
- **Disconnect and drain** outdoor hoses.

If you’re away...

- **Set the thermostat** in your house no lower than 55 degrees.
- **Ask a friend** or neighbor to check your house daily to make sure it’s warm enough to prevent freezing.

If your pipes should freeze ...

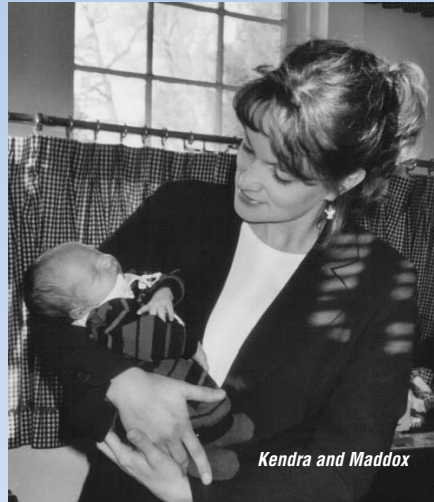
- **Turn off** your master water shut-off valve
- **Wave a hair dryer** at a low setting back and forth across the pipes ... or pour hot water over rags wrapped around the frozen pipe.

Do-it-yourselfers should be careful!

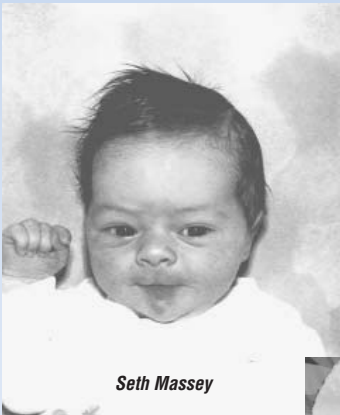
- **Never crawl** through wet areas with electrical equipment.
- **Never use a blowtorch** to try thawing pipes. ■



Heather and Cameron



Kendra and Maddox



Seth Massey

A NEW GENERATION — Congratulations to Brett Massey, Energy Services Manager; Kendra Morelli, Administrative Associate II; Rachel Reubens, Administrative Associate IV and Heather Leutenegger, Customer Service Representative III, and their families on the birth of four healthy babies over the holidays!



William Reubens

Kids' Corner

Put the letters in the right order. Print your name at the bottom and then ask your parents to send your completed Kids Corner in with their next Utility payment. Or bring it by the Utility Department on Public Works Drive off Breeden and Portner Avenues. We'll print the names of the first two kids with correct answers received from each billing cycle in the next issue of Utility Connection (May 2004)!

1. All living things need _____(tawer) to live.
2. When water evaporates, it travels into the air and becomes part of a _____(dlocu).
3. Less than 1% of all the water on earth is _____(sefrh) water.
4. We _____(ikrdn) water in the liquid form.
5. Check for leaks and save hundreds of _____(glloans) of water a day.
6. You'll save water by taking a quick _____(howser).
7. Wash bikes and cars with a _____(kecbut) and a sponge instead of a running hose.
8. Ask your _____(mfaiyl) to look for ways to save water.

Name _____

Third-Party Notification Service Offers Assistance to Our Customers

Have you ever left for vacation ... and forgot to pay your utility bill? Have you ever returned home to find that your utilities have been shut off?

Do you have an elderly relative you worry about?

If so, perhaps our Third-Party Notification service can provide the help you need!

"Under this plan, you can request that a copy of any future bills be sent to the person you indicate," explains Customer Service Supervisor Trudy Thomas. "While the 'third-party' has no obligation to pay your bill, he or she would receive notice of any potential impending action in time to provide help."

This plan is ideal for consideration by retired customers away from home for extended periods, or for those who need help with their bill-paying responsibilities.

To sign up for the City's Third-Party Notification service, simply complete the form on this page and return it with your utility bill to Utility Customer Service, P.O.Box 192, Manassas, VA 20108-0192.

Third-Party Notification Service

YES! Please sign me up for the City's Third-Party Notification Service

Name _____

Account# (on your utility bill) _____

Service Address _____

Signature of Account Holder _____

Please send a third-party notification for my utility to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____