

UTILITY DEPARTMENT METER CONVERSION PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DECEMBER 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Utility Department is in the process of converting water meters that record gallons used to meters that read cubic feet (CF) for the South Sebastian County Water Association (SSCWA).

BACKGROUND

A portion of the South Sebastian County Water Association (SSCWA) (now the James Fork Regional Water District) water distribution system was acquired by the City of Fort Smith in 2006.

The James Fork water rate structure for gallon usage was maintained by the City of Fort Smith which required a separate water volume service charge for the accounts in the SSCWA area. A new CF water volume service charge was added in Munis with the same water rate structure as the gallon usage rate structure.

During an IA walkthrough of the Utility Billing process, the subject of the SSCWA meter conversion was discussed. IA noted that the correct water volume service charge code for CF meters was not being used. The accounts were being updated to the residential water volume charge that is used for all other residential customers and should have been updated to the SSCWA CF water volume charge. Additionally, the water base charge was also being changed from the SSCWA base rate to the residential water base rate that is used for all other residential water customers. This was brought to the attention of the Deputy Director of Business Administration in October 2021.

FINDINGS/OBSERVATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR CORRECTION

101 of the 105 accounts in the initial conversion project had water volume charges that did not bill on the first bill run after the meters had been changed out. Approximately \$5,500 in gallon water volume charges were not billed. Additionally, The City of Fort Smith makes a monthly payment of \$7,592.11 to James Fork. The unbilled water volume charges could have offset the monthly payment to James Fork.

The meter install dates do not reflect the actual date that the meter was installed. The gallon meters were changed out between October 11, 2021, and October 14, 2021, as noted from the service order completion dates. However, the meter install dates in the meter inventory now show 09/30/2021 being the install date on 102 of the 105 accounts with the SSCWA CF water volume service charge. The meter install date does not match the actual date the meter was installed on the other 3 accounts. The meter inventory records should accurately reflect the actual meter installation date. The CF water volume service charge start date is also 09/30/2021 on 102 of the 105 accounts with the SSCWA CF water volume service charge. Account records should accurately reflect the actual service start date.

IA asked why 09/30/2021 was used for the service code 13601 start date and the meter install date. The response was: *"In order for Munis to bill the service correctly, we have to use a date for the service start date that is prior to the bill run dates. For Cycle 5, the bill run dates was 10/01/21 to*

11/03/21. If we had used the date the meters were replaced, the services would not have billed out correctly on this bill run.”

IA asked Utility Billing if they knew if the accounts actually billed correctly but has not received a response.

The Tyler-Munis system also has a TEST Database and TRAIN Database where processes can be tested to determine how the system will work for that process. IA queried the service charge 13601 in both the TEST Database and the TRAIN Database and did not find the service code on any of the accounts. IA asserts that without the presence of the service charge 13601 on any accounts in the TEST Database and the TRAIN Database that there could not have been testing in either of those databases on the utility billing process for the meter conversion.

The ITS Project Manager recommended the use of the TEST Database or the TRAIN Database for testing purposes. She also stated that the LIVE Database should never be used for testing as it affects the live data/GL depending on the actions. She also acknowledged that the Utility Billing could be ran and deleted in the LIVE database before generating the AR/GL entries.

The Citizen Services Manager stated that she tested the (SSCWA) services three times before the actual Bill Run process but would not explain where it was tested. When testing different functions in the database best practice would be to document steps taken in order to recreate them correctly/accurately. Additionally documenting those steps helps identify what worked correctly and what did not so that the person knows what to adjust or change in the next testing phase.

NOTE: This memo was completed in December and sent to Management for responses. Due to the holidays, vacation, illnesses, and IA informing management several times that their responses were not correctly addressing the finding the memo was not issued until March 2022.