

August 4, 2022

To Garfield Residents,

The City of Garfield would like to take this opportunity to address some ongoing projects and initiatives related to our water system.

Water Meter Replacement Program

The City has approximately 6,400 water accounts serving our approximate 32,000 residents. Our current meters have outlived their service life and there are numerous meters that are either stopped or inaccurate. Inaccurate meters not only affect our ability to correctly bill our customers, it also impacts our ability to account for all of our water usage and efficiently operate our system. We have been issuing estimated water bills to certain customers that we believe have either stopped or inaccurate meters. However, this is only a short-term solution.

The City is implementing a City-wide water meter replacement program. The project started last year and approximately 2,300 meters have been changed to date. The project will be fully complete, City-wide, in 2023. The new water meters will ensure each customer is billed for their **actual** consumption.

In addition to changing the meters, this project will also provide a wireless meter reading and billing system that will be able to monitor water consumption of every meter in *real time*. Real time monitoring will assist us in identifying unusual increases in water use that may result from broken or leaking fixtures in homes. The new system will assist us in our efforts to operate our system more efficiently, accurately report water use to the NJDEP, and issue correct bills to our customers.

The conversion from the old to the new system is being done as each meter is replaced and it is a time-consuming process. However, once the new system is fully operational, we will significantly reduce the cost of reading our meters and issuing bills.

Some customers may receive water bills that are significantly different than prior bills. There could be several reasons for a bill that is significantly different than prior bills. You may have been receiving either estimated bills or metered bills that incorrectly monitored your actual usage, perhaps due to a stopped meter. The new system will **guarantee** everyone pays for actual usage. Another reason may relate to estimated bills being issued during the conversion to our new billing system that incorrectly estimated your usage. If you believe your bill may be incorrect, please notify us and we will investigate through our billing agent, PVWC.

Water Treatment Systems for PFAs

The City is currently implementing another initiative that provides water treatment to remove recently regulated contaminants known as PFAs. PFAs are found in almost every water system in the region and the City began installing water treatment systems at our Points of Entry (POEs) prior to the enactment of the new NJDEP regulatory requirements. The City has three (3) POEs for our well water. The treatment system for each POE is summarized below:

- Well 1A-Midland Avenue @ Outwater Lane
This Point of Entry services two wells. One is active and one is currently inactive. Temporary and permanent PFA treatment systems for both wells are installed and operational. Treated water currently meets all current NJDEP drinking water standards.
- Well 8C-Laurel Lane
This Point of Entry is for one well. A temporary PFAs treatment system is installed and operational. A permanent system is installed and will be operational within 30 days. Treated water meets all current NJDEP drinking water standards
- Elmwood Park Wellfield-Elmwood Park
The City operates a 47-acre wellfield in Elmwood Park. There are a total of 14 wells which utilizes an automated system to operate efficiently and maximize production. The majority of our water is produced and treated at this facility prior to entering our water system at a single Point of Entry.

The City reported an exceedance of the PFAs standards in July 2021. The City Manager & Mayor and Council immediately authorized a plan to design, permit, bid and install a permanent PFAs treatment system at that time. The project schedule anticipated the system would be operational in February 2023. Our schedule was reviewed and approved by the NJDEP. The City was advised of a 1-year lead time to procure the granular activated carbon filter systems and separately purchased those units in August 2021, prior to recent price surges in said product. The filter units are scheduled to arrive onsite on September 12, 2022.

The NJDEP did not require either the closure of this wellfield or the issuance of a “Do Not Drink” order. There are currently many other water systems, including multiple municipalities, instituting similar response plans for this newly regulated class of contaminants. The City is ahead of many of its counterparts in having this system in place to meet the new NJDEP standards implemented in 2021. We have completed the design, secured the permits, went out to bid and awarded a contractor to install the permanent treatment system.

The project remains on schedule to be operational by February 2023.

The Garfield water system is a valuable asset which provides a vital resource for our residents. Please be assured that I have an unwavering commitment, with support of the Mayor and Council, to protect the health and safety of our residents at all times. We will continue to invest in this asset to improve our water quality and operating efficiencies.

Sincerely,

Erin Nora Delaney
Erin Nora Delaney, MPA, RMC
City Manager/City Clerk