

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Changes in water billing to add convenience, cost-savings for Elkhart utility customers**

**ELKHART (September 12, 2017)** – Mayor Tim Neese announced today forthcoming changes to the way the city invoices water usage in irrigation systems. As a result of these changes, some residents will see a \$50 savings per year.

While many customers have one meter for all water usage, some residents have separate meters for water used inside the home and water used outside the home for irrigation purposes. These separate meters require the customer to have separate accounts with the Water Billing Office, each with an average \$35 minimum monthly charge.

Since 2011, both accounts have been billed year-round. Customers not wanting to be billed year-round for their irrigation system were required to have an employee of the Public Works and Utilities Department come to their home and physically turn the service off in the fall and back on in the spring. A \$25.00 fee was incurred per visit.

“Over the past 21 months, my office has received several calls from residents who had concerns regarding this process,” Neese said. “Often, they would explain that they worked normal business hours and did not have paid time off. The three-hour appointment window provided by Public Works and Utilities meant they had to take time off – unpaid – in addition to paying the \$25 service fee to the utility. After hearing this feedback, I knew many other customers likely had the same dilemma.”

Beginning this fall, all irrigation accounts will automatically be billed from May 1 through October 31. Any usage on the account after October 31 will appear on the customer’s May utility bill. By adding this amount to the customer’s first spring bill rather than billing the charges monthly, the customer will avoid the \$35 average minimum monthly charge, negating the need for the system to be turned off and on seasonally.

“This is an example of constituent feedback bringing about positive policy changes,” Neese said. “Anytime we can make city services more convenient, I feel we have an obligation do so. I appreciate the public’s feedback and want to commend Public Works and Utilities staff on identifying this solution.”

Residents will receive information in the mail notifying them of these changes. The Utility will continue to turn irrigation systems off and on seasonally for any resident who prefers that method. However, the associated fees will still apply.

Anyone with questions is encouraged to contact the Water Billing Office at 264-4273.