



Melinda K. Dejewski, PE
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March 12, 2025

Board of Public Works
West Allis City Hall
West Allis, Wisconsin

Dear Board Members:

In 2024, an ordinance was adopted that outlines the requirements for the replacement of lead water service laterals in West Allis. This ordinance was needed for the City to meet the EPA mandate to replace all lead water service laterals by 2037. The ordinance allows the City to score higher in the ranking for funding and to require private properties to replace their private side lead water service lateral if funding is available.

The City has an existing program where the private side lead water service laterals are replaced a year after the road project and the public side lead water service laterals are replaced. This has been a voluntary program and has been in place since 2018. Property owners that want to participate sign a public hearing waiver so that a public hearing is not needed and are special assessed \$2000 which is payable over 10 years. This is a somewhat successful program with a participation rate of approximately 30% but will not allow the City to meet the EPA mandate. Again, a reason for the mandatory connection portion of the ordinance.

The ordinance helped the City score well for the Safe Drinking Water Loan (SDWL) for Private Lead Water Service Lateral program. We were awarded two loans – one 100% principal forgiveness and one 50% principal forgiveness based upon the census tract the property resides in. This is the funding that was envisioned in the ordinance to trigger the mandatory connection requirement.

Now that the City has the funding, the mandatory part of the ordinance is in effect, however, there have been some changes to the concepts that were envisioned to implement the ordinance. The first is the revaluation of the City. The impact of the revaluation was not known when the mandatory connection was recommended. It could not be known. This along with the road special assessment are a large impact on many properties in the City. The property owners for the 2024 road projects experienced a property tax increase (many substantial) and the special assessment for road work. If the mandatory connection provision is implemented this year, an additional \$2000 lead service water lateral special assessment would be on top of the increases from 2024. We are concerned that this is a burden on the property owners from last year's projects and for this year's projects.

We are proposing that the ordinance be amended to delay the implementation of the mandatory connection requirement until January 1, 2026. The program will remain voluntary for 2025. This will ease the burden of the property tax increase with the special assessments. We are investigating how to levy the road special assessment and the lead water service lateral special assessment at the same time to give the property



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owner the full cost but still do the lateral replacement the following year. We found that trying to do both public and private side replacements with a road project is not effective. The coordination between the different contractors is difficult as well as the cost of the entire project increasing due to the funding used for the private side replacements. There will be some cost to provide testing and additional filters, but it is less than having an entire road project increase due to the federal wage determination that must be adhered to for all portions of the project, not just the private laterals receiving the funding.

I understand that this is a lot of information but it is important that you have the background for the recommendation.

Please reach out with any questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melinda K. Dejewski".

Melinda K. Dejewski, PE
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