

PALM BEACH COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

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Meeting Date:	December 2, 2008	Consent []	Regular [X]
		Public Hearing []	
Submitted By:	Water Utilities Department		
Submitted For:	Water Utilities Department		

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I. EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Motion and Title: Staff recommends motion to approve: the addition of six (6) Meter Reader positions in the Water Utilities Department's operating budget for FY2009.

Summary: The Water Utilities Department (Department) is requesting that six (6) additional Meter Readers be added to the Department's complement in order to read customers' meters on a monthly basis. The Department recognizes the concerns of its customers who have recently received bills with large month to month variations. Much of this problem is due to the current policy of bi-monthly meter reading with the intervening month's bill being based on the customer's average usage over the previous twelve (12) months. Converting to monthly reading of all meters will avoid the problems posed by the estimation procedure. The Department had adopted a long-term policy to move toward monthly reading of all meters. In 2006, the Department began replacing its meters with radio-read meters that are read electronically on a monthly basis simply by driving through the neighborhood. To date, the Department has 19,500 radio-read meters from a total of approximately 170,000. The original plan was to have all of the meters replaced by 2014. The additional staff can be phased out as more radio-read meters are installed. The Department is making cuts in other areas of its 2009 budget; therefore, no budget amendment is necessary. A significant reduction in Excessive Usage Commodity Credits is expected to partially offset the estimated cost of \$325,000. Countywide (MJ)

Background and Justification: The Department has been reading meters on a bi-monthly basis for a number of years in order to reduce costs. However, the current rate structure (with its higher rate blocks to encourage conservation) and water restrictions have made the bi-monthly meter reading process more problematic. Customers do not like the estimation process, and excess usage credits granted by the Department and the Administrative Hearing Board tend to be higher because the high bills experienced by customers are based on two (2) months' usage. Leaks will be detected more quickly, and Customer Service calls should be reduced significantly by reading the meters monthly.

Attachments: None

Recommended By: Burt Beamber 11/4/08
Department Director Date

Approved By: Sharon J. By 11/14/08
Assistant County Administrator Date

