

January 2024

January 31, 2024

I received a call from the Public Works Department informing me that they had detected a leak underneath the sidewalk to the Church by the meter to our older building on the east side of the property.

I met David Estep, the Public Works Director, at the Church at 3 p.m. by the meter and he pointed to the sidewalk and said, "There was a leak on the Church side of the meter under the sidewalk". The water was turned off to give us an opportunity to get a plumber to address the issue. At this time the ground was not wet nor was there any water standing in the street.

February 2024

We received our normal monthly bills for Account No. 02-005400 and 02-000540.

Building I – 02-005400 (where leak was detected)

Building II – 02-005401

These two accounts have been billed and paid each month separately since 1985.

We scheduled for Birge Plumbing to come out where they found a leak under the building rather than under the sidewalk as we were told. The water was immediately turned back off. Building I is not in use for our Church services and all water lines have been cut off from the inside for years to avoid leaks from the inside of the building. Therefore, it is impossible for water to run into the sewer system from the inside of the building.

March 2024

March 5, 2024

When the monthly bill was received for Building I, we noticed that the amount due was \$1,894.93 (copy of bill is provided). We contacted the Utility Billing and Public Works Department for an explanation of why the bill was excessively high.

After several weeks of inquiry, we finally got meter readings and a calculation of how the city determined the amount owed.

March 2024 (cont.)

The source of the problem is the City's calculation that the Church used 187,000 gallons of water and also 187,000 gallons of water went into the sewer system.

Any reasonable person would realize that 187,000 gallons of water would have been noticed by the entire neighborhood. Also, the day that I was called to the scene on January 31, water would have been in the street and mud would be on the ground. David Estep and I walked all around the area and neither of us left with mud on our shoes.

The Church paid the bill on both accounts with the exception of the 187,000 gallons.

April 2024

I called the City Clerk on behalf of the Church to be put on the Board of Alderman agenda to request for a utility bill adjustment. The City Clerk, Katie Harbin, informed me that she would not put me on the agenda. She stated that I needed to meet the Mayor, the City Clerk, the Public Works Director and the Utility Billing Department Supervisor.

I agreed and asked for her to schedule the meeting. The meeting was scheduled for the later part of April.

After a discussion of the 187,000 gallons of water, the meter reading and the Church's request for a utility bill adjustment, the Mayor only offered \$100.00 off the bill and a payment plan option. There was no consideration given to the over charge for water that the Church did not use.

At this point I requested to be placed on the May Board of Alderman meeting agenda for them to make a decision on the Church request.

The Church paid the bill on both accounts with the exception of the 187,000 gallons of water.

May 2024

May 7, 2024

The Church was placed on the agenda and I spoke on behalf of the Church (the minutes of this meeting is enclosed). The minutes left out some important points of the discussion, but it is clear Mayor Graves asked if the Board had any more questions or comments. No one said anything further. No action was taken. When a citizen request an appeal to the Board of Alderman, the Board has a responsibility to either deny or approve the request. I had already met with the Mayor therefore; it was time for the Board to take action. Also the Church offered to pay \$548.11 for the water part of the bill because we found a leak even though the Church did not use 187,000 gallons of water.

The Church paid the bill on both accounts with the exception of the 187,000 gallons of water awaiting the Board's decision.

June 2024

I made inquiries to City Hall about when would the Board of Alderman be making a decision on the Church's request.

The Church paid the bill on both accounts with exception of the 187,000 gallons of water awaiting the Board's decision.

July 2024

I made inquiries to City Hall about when would the Board of Alderman be making a decision on the Church request. The Church paid the bill on both accounts with exception of the 187,000 gallons of water awaiting the Board's decision. The City for the billing period July 16, 2024 thru August 14, 2024 is closing out the account on Building I and transferring the bill to Building II. This actual bill shows up on the September 10, 2024 due date.

August 2024

The City changes out the old meter on Building I and installs a new water meter. For months we have questioned the accuracy of the meter. If the meter used to charge the Church for 187,000 gallons of water was correct, why would there be a need to change it now?

August 2024 (cont.)

The Church paid the bill on both accounts with exception of the 187,000 gallons of water awaiting the Board's decision.

September 2024

The City turns the water off on Building II even though this building's account was not associated with this leak. The City informs me that they would only turn the water on if I signed an agreement to pay the entire bill. I refused to sign the agreement and conferred with the Church's attorneys. I got a call saying they would turn it back on if the Church paid \$315.00. The Church paid the \$315.00 and turned the matter over to the attorneys.

October 2024

James R. Franks, Jr. and William R. Wheeler, Jr. (Wheeler & Franks Law Firm, P.C.) was retained to represent the Church on this matter. The attorneys requested to be placed on the October 15th Board's agenda to formally discuss the issue to see if it was possible to come to an agreement without going to court.

The request was denied leaving no other recourse but to serve notice of the Church intent to take this matter to court. On October 15th, the Mayor and Board of Alderman were served.

On October 23rd, the City turned the water off again even though the matter is before the court.

November 2024

On November 1st, the City removed the two water meters and locked the gas meter.