

I want to express my appreciation of the efforts made by Austin Energy Staff to produce the draft After Action Report on Water Meter Event that AE Staff presented to the Electric Utility Commission on November 19 and to the Water and Wastewater Commission on December 5, as well as the AW/AE High Bill Work Plan presented to the Water and Wastewater Commission on November 14. I speak in my role as a WWW Commissioner both in concern for Austin's water customers, but also in concern for the quality of service that AE has provided to AW as a [monopoly] contractor for meter reading, billing and customer service.

Positive Changes.

I know that these recent Staff reports took a very considerable effort given the changes that were made in the two weeks after I met with Staff on these matters, and the difference in the content and tone of the current reports will move us forward in a very positive manner as we all look at remedies and monitoring into the future. Some examples of those positive changes that I want to acknowledge are:

- It is greatly appreciated that AE Staff has taken responsibility for meter reading management, billing problems and customer service shortcomings over the past year. It is obvious that Staff has used that acknowledgement as a starting point to initiate many productive changes that will lead to better quality service in the future.
- The list of acronyms at the front of the report was very helpful in understanding the text.
- There is a straightforward acknowledgement of the trust/inconvenience effects on many water customers, due not only to the billing errors per se, but also to the manner in which Staff interacted with customers and media regarding those errors.
- The provision of a timeline on completed actions by Staff and upcoming "process improvements" (pages 3-4 of the AW/AE High Bill Work Plan, first released on November 14 to the WWWC). Lack of this type of organized information has caused much distrust between Commissioners and Staff, and these graphics are helpful to going forward in a collaborative manner.
- Including the empowerment of frontline employees to use critical thinking in identifying customer concerns and encouraging them to speak up to supervisors will be a very productive resource.
- Ongoing empathy training, conscious use of respectful tone with customers and analytical thinking in place of scripted conversations should greatly enhance customer experience when the customer encounters service problems or questions.

- Much more collaboration between AE and AW than in the past to identify problems and solutions has already resulted in more comprehensive and effective solutions.
- Routine reporting to the WWWC that is being developed in areas of customer service quality is likely to give valuable feedback to Staff and Commissioners about progress toward service goals that will be defined in the coming months.
- Photographing meter reads and meter ID, and taking GPS readings for the meter read entry and meter ID appear to be excellent quality control and forensic tools.
- Increased sampling of routes and meter readers is likely to result in greater meter read quality control.
- Proactive notification by AE to AW regarding infrastructure issues should avoid some of the more egregious problems encountered by customers.
- Annual cybersecurity training for Bermex employees will keep focus on system security on a continuous basis.
- More detailed analysis of zero reads and abnormally low reads will likely result in more intentional decisions about meter use, will trigger timely meter repair/replacements, and will ensure better revenue recovery as appropriate.
- The new process for communicating with customers to explain the occurrence of multiple bills for the same billing period will be helpful to the customer and perhaps help avoid customer complaints and escalations.
- Ordinance changes regarding administrative adjustments and hearings that were initiated by AW and already passed by Council in May 2018 should eventually reduce the need for time-consuming and expensive hearings and provide faster resolutions for customers.
- Fast-tracking AMI installation will eventually greatly reduce the need for meter reading and hopefully eventually encourage greater conservation and fewer customer service calls.