



June 2013

Issues Brief

City of Yakima e-Newsletter

➤ Project to Modernize Water Meter Reading Underway

In an effort to help control the cost of providing drinking water and to improve the accuracy of meter readings, the City of Yakima has begun a project to modernize and automate the process that records how much water customers are using.

Both City crews and employees from Milwaukee, Wisconsin-based Badger Meter, Inc. have started work that will eventually result in about 19,000 new water meters being installed at homes and businesses throughout Yakima. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The new meters utilize wireless transmitters to send water usage information to a series of 20 data collectors which are being installed on top of street light poles and other City-owned facilities. Once the new system is in place, water usage readings will be recorded electronically several times a day.

“The automated system will eliminate the need for City employees to actually have to go out in the field to manually take meter readings,” said Water/Irrigation Manager Dave Brown. “The new system will give the City the ability to get more consistent and accurate readings and to manage overall water system demands better than it can now. We’ll also be able to identify problems, like leaks, sooner and get them fixed more quickly,” said Brown.



New water meters are being installed in Yakima to improve both efficiency and accuracy.

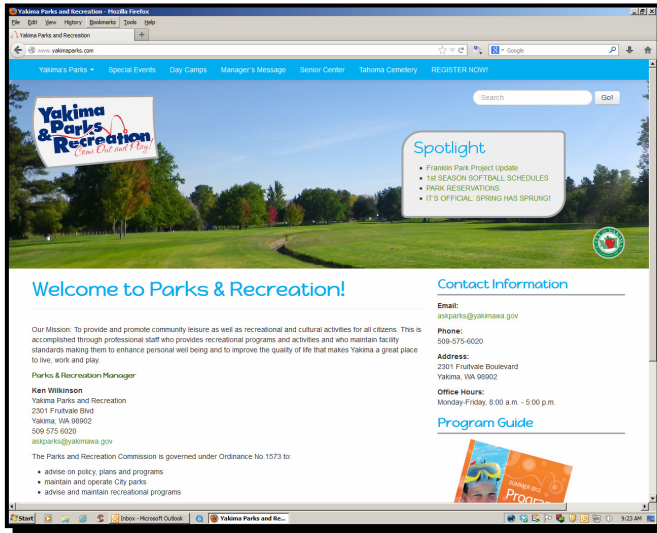
While City water customers will continue to receive bills every two months, as they do now, the new automated system also includes a feature that will allow customers to access their accounts through the City website any time they want to. That capability will give customers more information that they can use to better manage their water usage.

The \$5 million project is being paid for with both a low-interest loan from the Washington State Public Works Trust Fund and money from the City’s Water/Irrigation Division Capital Improvement Fund.

New Online Choices For Yakima Parks and Recreation Users

Learning about parks and recreation opportunities in Yakima has never been easier. Now you can check out the latest offerings for the summer and take advantage of online registration for programs and classes.

The City of Yakima Parks and Recreation webpage - www.yakimaparks.com – underwent some recent upgrades and is now more comprehensive than ever before. Key information, such as the location of parks, a calendar of special events, and the latest Parks and Recreation Program Guide, is easier to find.



The upgraded Yakima Parks and Recreation webpage offers several new features such as online program registration and facilities reservations.

The webpage improvements began several months ago and are still underway. The ultimate goal is to have everything available online that is in the printed Program Guide, which has been published by the City for many years.

Earlier this year, Yakima Parks and Recreation also began offering online registration for several of its programs including youth and adult sports, after school activities, swimming and tennis lessons, classes at the Harman Senior Center, and more. Parks facilities, like picnic shelters, can also be reserved using the online feature.

"We of course still answer questions and handle registrations over the phone or in person," said Yakima Parks and Recreation Manager Ken Wilkinson. "But the upgraded webpage provides a very convenient alternative for people to sign up for classes and programs or to reserve parks facilities. So far, we've gotten good feedback about our online services and people are using them," said Wilkinson. "We'll keep refining the webpage over time and adding new features to make it even better."

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Construction Continuing on MLK, Jr. Blvd Underpass

Progress on the MLK, Jr. Boulevard underpass, which will eventually take eastbound traffic below BNSF railroad tracks, continues to be slow but steady.

Mowat Construction Company, the Woodinville-based firm that is serving as the primary contractor on the roughly \$10.6 million project, has been focusing recently on building infrastructure for retaining walls at both the east and west ends of the underpass. Crews have been using a 70-foot tall, yellow drilling rig to drive steel beams deep underground to provide support for some of the sections of the concrete retaining walls.

Within the last few weeks, another large piece of equipment has also appeared on the underpass construction site. A continuous flight auger, white in color and standing about as high as the yellow drilling rig, will eventually be used to drill shafts and then fill them with a special mix of concrete that will form other retaining wall sections as well as the underpass "bottom seal". The bottom seal will help keep ground water from seeping into the underpass.

Soon, the focus of the project will shift to construction of a temporary track, commonly referred to as a "shoo-fly", that will be used as a detour for BNSF trains while the underpass project is ongoing. BSNF crews are scheduled to begin installing the shoo-fly in the next few weeks and put the new track into service to handle mainline train traffic through Yakima.



A continuous flight auger will drill retaining wall shafts and fill them with concrete.

Once the shoo-fly is finished, major excavation activity will begin on the underpass.

The underpass project is expected to be ongoing until late summer or early fall of 2014. Until then, eastbound motorists on MLK, Jr. Blvd are being encouraged to turn right on 5th Avenue and use Yakima Avenue to continue traveling east. Local access is being maintained on MLK Jr. Blvd between 5th Avenue and 1st Avenue.

You can watch progress on the underpass project by visiting a page on the City of Yakima website - <http://bit.ly/12g70a8>. Two cameras are focused on the construction site and pictures are updated every 30 seconds.

Both the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass and the Lincoln Avenue underpass, which opened in May 2012, have been designed to improve driver and pedestrian safety, reduce exhaust emissions from cars waiting for trains to pass, and speed the response times for police, fire, and other emergency services providers.



**Help
Wanted**

Be Part of the Solution!

If you want to volunteer for one of the many Yakima Community Clean Ups taking place this year, call James Scott at 576-6745.

Yakima is our community – Be Part of the Solution!