

City Officials to Aid Plumbers Cut Meter Permit Red Tape

A committee of city officials and master plumbers will be set up to simplify the procedure of issuing plumbing installation permits, especially for water meters.

The proposal to create the committee was made and approved yesterday at a meeting of city officials and 20 master plumbers, representing five organizations.

The plumbers, who complained heavily of red tape and long delays in issuing permits, arranged the meeting with Frederic D. Garmann, president of City Council. It was held as the result of a claim by Councilman Louis Menna that plumbers have been hitting their charges for water meter installations.

Present, at the invitation of Garmann, were Elbert J. Taylor, chief of the water bureau; Herbert M. Fackler, chief of the bureau of housing and sanitation; Thomas Buckley, director of public works; Buckley's deputy director, Louis Schneider, and Councilmen Cressna T. Green, Clarence K. Crossan and Garmann.

It was agreed that up to five master plumbers will serve with

city officials on the new committee. An effort will be made to work out a permit system doing away with the present method, which requires plumbers to visit as many as six city offices in their search for permits.

C. OF C. PUSHES WATER BOARD

The Chamber of Commerce today pushed its recommendation for a city water and sewer authority by publishing results of a survey indicating that one-third of all cities in the U. S. with more than 5000 population, have such an authority.

Opposition to the move for establishing a water authority has come chiefly from the Greater Philadelphia Movement, an organization of businessmen and bankers, chartered this week.

Others opposed to the authority include the Citizens' Council on City Planning, which directed a letter to Frederic D. Garmann, president of City Council, saying the authority "was no infallible assurance of sound business management of service."

The letter, signed by Walter Peck, chairman of the Citizens' Council committee on Public Improvement declared the "establishment of an authority would be an infringement on the task of the proposed Charter Commission."

It is the contention of GPM and the Citizens' Council that the decision for an authority be left to the commission.

CoC Calls a Water Authority Good Business

The Chamber of Commerce today called for a Water and Sewer Authority, Ralph Kelly, president, said today, because of the current need of business administration by sincere, non-partisan businessmen.

The successful experience of the city with operation of the gas system by the Philadelphia Gas Works Co. was called by Kelly "a practical example of what can be expected from a Water and Sewer Authority."

It will control over water and sewers, universal water metering and a businesslike accounting and billing procedure. Kelly pointed out the advantages of an authority, Kelly said. In Pennsylvania, he added, 78 municipal authorities handle water and sewer facilities.

City to Cut Red Tape On Plumbing Permits

City implementers now taking up "cutting red tape" and otherwise facilitate the issuance of necessary permits for plumbing installations. City Council spokesmen assured Philadelphia plumbers yesterday.

The assurances were given at a meeting of Council members and representatives of the Philadelphia Retail Merchant Plumbers Association in Room 400 City Hall. The conference followed complaints by officials that the association's red marks made last week by Councilman Louis Menna, who claimed the plumbers were overcharging for installation of water meters.

C. OF C. PROPOSED

Coinciding with the introduction of the ordinance to create a water authority, the Chamber of Commerce at a meeting of its board of directors unanimously passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a similar authority.

The Chamber said the authority would permit efficient operation of the water utilities by "taking them out of the hands of politicians and allowing them to be operated by businessmen. This method of operation would not only relieve the city of great portion of its debt burden, but assure needed improvement and replacement without the necessity of borrowing against the city's resources." The city ordinance introduced to Council today provided that the appointment of the authority be effective as of January 1, 1950.

Both the proposed city ordinance and the proposal of the Chamber of Commerce are for an authority limited to five years.

Might Be the Snake Again

A mythical creature that has been around so long he's almost a pet is the "Old Water Snake." It is the name given to proposals to spend city cash by the hundreds of millions to bring water down from the distant mountains.

Under some of the plans tens of millions would go to the owners of upstate land, reputed to be willing to sell if they get their price.

Among the more engaging characteristics of the Old Water Snake is its ability to appear in just about every disguise imaginable. Its versatility in this respect is so renowned that merely to mention a plan for better water is to raise the question in many minds whether that reptile is again.

Is the Mayor's proposal of a Water and Sewer Authority the Old Water Snake, once more trying to pull a fast one? It could be, and the safest course is to study the proposal very carefully before trying to give the answer.

Once created, a Water Authority might find itself going to upland sources for water, and there might not be any way to stop it.

City Council might fear to take a chance with the voters on such a scheme, but the Authority would not be answerable to the voters. If City Council proposed to spend the scores of millions necessary to go upstate for water, the voters might turn down the loans. But an Authority doesn't submit loans to the voters.

The Authority is one of the most amazing devices for evading popular control ever to be held legal under a democratic form of government.

Another WATER SNAKE?



ALAN AUER

Water Meter Ownership

Philadelphia got off on the wrong foot when it began to allow property owners to own their own water meters. The consequences did not become embarrassing for a long time; but now they are here, and the city faces the difficult task of retracing steps that never should have been taken.

One result of private ownership of meters is that when a meter has to be removed for repairs, the city must put back that identical meter instead of installing another.

Because it is impossible to keep up with the repair job, thousands of metered properties go without meters for long periods.

Another complication is that when the purchase of meters is left to the property owners progress toward universal metering is slow. Yet when proposals are made to have the city buy and install meters on the services as yet unmetered, comprising about half the total number of services, the question is raised whether this would be fair to those who have bought their own meters.

If it tackled the problem seriously, City Hall could doubtless work out a reasonably satisfactory answer, even though it had to pay something for privately-owned meters. The solution is not easy, but delay is not going to make it any easier.

The Philadelphia Gas Works Company and the Philadelphia Electric Company would consider private ownership of meters the height of folly.

URGES REMEDY

The city is losing hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, Crawford declared, through improper meter readings. He urged that this condition be remedied at once by providing competent personnel to read meters. Finally, he recommended that plumbing fixtures sold direct to the customer be reported to the city, as a means of checking bootleg installations, assuring additional revenue to the city, and eliminating health hazards.

Councilman Clarence K. Crossan, who attended the session with Garmann, said he agreed with E. Herman Moser, a member of the Retail Merchant Plumbers Association, about the complicated procedure now involved in getting permits at City Hall, and told the group a bill which would have consolidated the various permit-issuing agencies was introduced in the last session of the Legislature, but died in committee.

Elbert J. Taylor, chief of the Water Bureau, told the plumbers of the steps already taken to simplify and facilitate the issuance of permits. In the future, he promised, the city would not hold up permits for water meters because of deficiencies.

Philadelphia Water Department Historical Collection

2004.015 2028B
2004.015 2028B
2004.015 2028B

No Super-Government

Mayor Samuel is a very amiable man, and a good listener. Politeness required him to give a hearing to the authors of the Water and Sewer Authority proposition. But it was time for him to grow indignant when he was asked to surrender his powers as head of the \$100,000,000 municipal corporation and suggest the creation of a super-government to do part of the job he is paid for.

Philadelphia is unable to hire the best brains available in the country to manage its water supply and its sewer system, the remedy does not lie in abdication to an Authority. It lies in Councilmanic action to pay experts whatever their services are worth in the open market.

Resort to the creation of a Water and Sewer Authority would not alone be humiliating to the man who proposes it—it would be an insult to the intelligence of Philadelphia voters and taxpayers. It is equivalent to saying to them: "Look here—you ought to have had gumption enough to elect a Chief Executive who can execute. But since you put me on this spot, I'm going to go out and find somebody who can function."

The Bulletin thinks better of the Mayor than he thinks of himself. He has all the necessary power an Authority would have, and he can get more to fit special requirements upon consultation with Council. In this instance he seems merely to have taken bad advice.

When this City sets about the drafting of a new Charter it won't want to find any artificially erected obstacles in the way, or any part of the functions of City management and genuine Home Rule spirited away and lodged in unreachable hands. The people of this community now have charge of their own water supply and sewer operations, and if they don't like the management they can vote it out.

But a Water and Sewer Authority would be out of reach of the voters.

Everybody who has a vote in Philadelphia would do well to think that one over.

A Civic Duty in Dry Spells: Do Not Waste Water!

Public cooperation in preventing the waste of water is essential during spells of severe heat and long-drawn out drought such as that which has afflicted the Philadelphia area during recent weeks—along with most of the Atlantic seaboard.

Those in charge of water supply, whether in the city proper or in the suburban communities, can do everything possible to conserve water so that everyone receives an adequate share, but selfish waste by a few consumers can upset their efforts.

In weather like this the demand for water naturally shoots up suddenly to abnormal proportions. There is greater daily consumption for drinking and for bathing purposes, and in many cases, especially in the suburbs, for irrigating lawns, flower beds and vegetable gardens dried out because of lack of rain.

In addition more water is used in the many public and private pools to which overheated citizens of the city and vicinity flock to obtain some relief.

those serving the nearby communities are geared for the seasonal jump in consumption and are usually, from the standpoint of capacity, able to take care of it.

But the measures and precautions they may take can be unbalanced by sudden excessive use of water for long periods without a letup, possibly by protracted lawn or garden watering.

The result may be a lowering of pressure that will mean the reduction in water supply available to some householders at the very time they need it most.

It becomes a neighborhood duty to conserve water, especially during heat waves and dry spells, by using it for essentials only, person permitting, his lawn-sprinkler to on full force all day long is "hogging" supply and unfairly preventing others from getting their share.

So that everyone may have enough of this precious commodity in hot weather be sure to see to it that in your household water is not wasted.