Madison Water Utility

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Date: February 26, 2013

To: Water Utility Board

From: Joseph Grande, Water Quality Manager

Re: Fees for Permitting Private Wells

Background

Recently adopted ordinance changes affecting the Private Well Program eliminated the language which explicitly stated the well operation permit fee – previously set at $200 for a five-year permit. Instead the ordinance now states that the permit fee will be set by the Water Utility Board. The table below details the estimated cost to the utility to issue a well operation permit. Following the table are other costs that might apply to a well owner based on the condition of the well (does not meet state code) or the quality of water it produces. Well operation permits will continue to be valid for a period of five years.

Table 1. Itemized costs associated with issuing a well operation permit.

TASK	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	COST
Well Certification / Sample #1	Public Health sanitarian	$112
Sample #1 Analysis	Public Health lab staff	$42
Sample #2 Collection	Water Utility inspector	$86
Sample #2 Analysis	Public Health lab staff	$27
Program Administration	Water Utility admin clerk	$42
	TOTAL:	$309*

*Does not include vehicle mileage or utility manager program administration

Miscellaneous charges

$112 – Re-inspection by Public Health sanitarian if well does not initially meet state code

$95 – Charge to collect / analyze follow-up samples if either of first two samples was “Unsafe”

Proposed Fee Structure

Establish the application fee at $309 which covers the initial inspection / certification, two tests for coliform bacteria, and one nitrate test. This fee covers water testing to approve the five-year permit but does not include water quality tests to meet the annual testing requirement. Charges of $95 per visit for each subsequent sample would apply if either of the initial water samples was found to be unsafe and additional sampling is required to permit the well. The well owner could also be subject to a $112 re-inspection fee if the initial inspection found that the well did not comply with state code.

Alternative Fee Structure

Establish an application fee of $355 to include the initial inspection / certification, one nitrate test, and up to four coliform bacteria tests. This fee would cover only the water quality tests required to approve a five-year permit and would not include any tests to meet the annual testing requirement. If more than four visits were required, an additional charge of $95 per visit would apply until two consecutive safe samples were obtained and the well was permitted. A $112 re-inspection fee could also apply to some well owners based on the initial condition of the well.

The rationale behind the higher initial fee is the assumption, based on previous test results, that one in five well samples will test positive for coliforms. This structure provides flexibility to accommodate the need to return beyond the initial two visits if one or both of the samples test coliform-positive and to not charge the well owner for repeat visits. In the past, the Water Utility has returned on multiple occasions, without any limit and without charge, to collect repeat samples until two consecutive coliform-negative samples were obtained.

Data Supporting the Alternative Fee Structure

Our records, dating back to 1991, indicate that 218 out of 1156 samples (19%) collected from wells with current well operation permits tested positive for coliform. The frequency of samples testing coliform positive is skewed somewhat by wells with multiple coliform positive samples (see table below). For example, thirty-three wells (18%) accounted for 162 (74%) of the samples in which coliform bacteria were present. Sixty percent of currently permitted wells have no history of the presence of coliforms.

Coliform Positive Samples	Number of Wells	Percent of Wells
0	114	60.6%
1	26	13.8%
2	15	8.0%
3	11	5.9%
4	7	3.7%
5	3	1.6%
6	4	2.1%
7	4	2.1%
8	2	1.1%
9	2	1.1%

Note: Some wells have been permitted since 1991 while many only received their initial permit in 2008 or 2009; three wells were permitted for the first time in 2012.