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Councilmember Pat Harris
President of the Board of Water Commissioners
310-C City Hall
15 Kellogg Blvd., West
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October 6, 2011

Dear Councilmember Harris,

This letter is in reference to the proposed ordinance (Ord 11-98) which will impose additional charges on households who choose alternative, non-radio water meters.

First as a resident of Ward 3, I thank you for your conscientious attention to the health and privacy concerns raised by a number of our Saint Paul neighbors.

As you are aware, on May 31st, 2011, the World Health Organization (WHO)/ International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) released a study classifying radiofrequency electromagnetic fields as **possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B)**.

So are items classified as **possibly carcinogenic** harmful? People must use their best judgment to decide. And in deciding, rational people and organizations may come to different conclusions.

If an organization wants to make the point that **possibly carcinogenic** means "not harmful", they might choose to highlight items on the list including coffee and talc-based powders.

While someone wanting to highlight the harmful nature of a **possibly carcinogenic** entity would choose items including pesticide, lead, DDT and gasoline engine exhaust.

In this light, we can easily see that the term **possibly carcinogenic** hands the responsibility for assessing whether or not a listed item is dangerous to the individual or organization considering the potential harm. In this specific instance the Saint Paul Region Water Service (SPRWS) says the proposed radio-frequency water meters (Neptune R900i) are not harmful, while those individuals who are opposed to them say radio-frequency meters will, and do, cause harm.

What does this mean in terms of the Saint Paul Regional Water Services installation of new water meters? It means that people need a viable alternative to the radio meters being installed, as they may come to a different conclusion than the SPRWS.

Saint Paul Regional Water Service and its Board of Commissioners have indicated that there is a choice, but I would argue that it is not a viable one.

The cards are stacked against a household making an alternative choice. First there is the proposed quarterly reading charge of \$12.00 (48.00/year), and the assertion that the owner is responsible for "maintenance of the cable".

In my opinion the proposed quarterly reading charge of \$12.00 is unnecessarily punitive, and cost prohibitive for many families. The new non-radio meters are less expensive than the radio-frequency meters, and it is my understanding that no additional staff would need to be hired to make manual readings for the 300 or so households that want to have a non-radio meter installed.

The fee is unnecessarily punitive because these households have examined the available evidence, and come to a different conclusion than the Saint Paul Regional Water Services. They believe the potential harm to their households outweighs the efficiency goals of the SPRWS.

It seems the proposed quarterly reading charges are more of an inconvenience charge. Rather than being able to drive down the streets of Saint Paul at any hour of the day "reading" radio-meters emitting a signal every 14 seconds from every house, SPRWS would need to have staff occasionally stop (at approximately 3% of houses) for manual reads. Would this inconvenience really cost the SPRWS in excess of the estimated \$14,000 in fees it would collect each year?

In the second instance, the directive that someone choosing an alternative meter would be responsible for "maintenance of the cable" is unnecessarily fear inducing. My husband has lived at our Saint Paul address for 18 years, and in this time, the same cable has connected the analog water meter to the reading device installed on the exterior of our home. It has not ever needed maintenance; and prior to the radio / non-radio meter debate, if it did need maintenance I would imagine that service would have been performed by the Saint Paul Regional Water Service at no additional charge. Does the SPRWS really believe that brand new analog water meters and cables would have a high rate of failure? And wouldn't these products, along with the preferred radio meters, come with a warranty against failure?

I urge you to drop the proposed quarterly reading charge, and the directive that the homeowner be responsible for the maintenance of the cable as conditions of participation in the alternative meter system option.

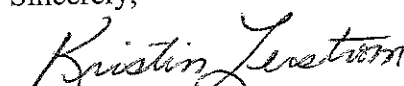
Whether or not anyone or any one entity believes that the new radio-frequency meters are harmful is almost not the issue, because the truth is we don't know. The real issue is choice.

A well respected international organization (WHO/IACR) has published a study indicating that products which emit radiofrequency electromagnetic fields, like the new radio water meters, are **potentially carcinogenic**. That is information each household needs to consider. And as such, and especially considering the unknown potential for harm, households need viable alternatives.

If someone believes the potential harm from cell phones, microwaves or even coffee is too great a risk, then they do not bring those products into their home. We need the same respect for choice with regards to the SPRWS water meter replacement, especially as no one has a definitive answer with regards to the classification of radiofrequency electromagnetic fields as **possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B)**.

I thank you for your attention to this letter, and urge you to help those seeking an alternative water meter option for their homes. Households must be able to make this choice unencumbered by prohibitive costs and unrealistic expectations of "cable maintenance".

Sincerely,


Kristin Lerstrom
Ward 3 Resident

CC: John Zamiller, Vice President of the Board of Water Commissioners
Lee Helgen, Councilmember, Water Board Commissioner
Melvin Carter III, Councilmember
Dave Thune, Councilmember
Russ Stark, Councilmember
Dan Bostrom, Councilmember
Kathy Lantry, Council President
Mayor Chris Coleman