

**TAYLORS FALLS SPECIAL URGENT CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2014 – 8:00 A.M.**

**MINUTES**

The Agenda for this Special Meeting was posted Monday, February 24, 2014 at City Hall, the Post Office and on the City's Web Site. Copies were e-mailed to residents requesting such, and the Press was notified.

The Taylors Falls City Council met for an urgent special meeting on Wednesday, February 26, 2014 at 8:00 a.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall, 637 First Street, Taylors Falls, Minnesota.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mayor Buchite called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

All those present at the meeting recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag.

**ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Buchite, Ross Rivard, Larry Julik-Heine, John Tangen, Mary Jo Murphy

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Clerk-Treasurer Jo Everson, Ron & Darlene Schorr, City Engineer Steve Heth, Public Works Superintendent Mike Kriz, and Paul Ringnell from the Chisago County Press

**AGENDA**

Mayor Buchite explained that the purpose of the meeting was to determine the City's position/policy on frozen water lines and the running of water to prevent possible freezing pipes. At this time Mayor Buchite stepped down from the dais due to a financial conflict of interest. Vice-Mayor Ross Rivard then took over the meeting.

The continuing subzero cold weather this winter has caused an unprecedented number of water line freeze-ups. This means the frost is going deeper than we have had in many years. To date, the City has had eight frozen pipes, six of which were thawed by a professional company, and two that were unable to be thawed. Unfortunately, they will not have water service until the frost is out of the ground, probably not until mid-April. One resident, who is Mayor Mike Buchite, must haul water to his home almost daily, and the other must run water from a hose attached to the neighbor's house.

City Engineer Steve Heth explained that City Ordinance requires the property owner to be responsible for their water service line from the curb stop to the meter in the house. The City is responsible for lateral water lines from the water main to the curb stop. In his opinion, it would be nearly impossible to determine what side of the curb stop was actually frozen, and as such, he recommended that the City consider paying for the cost of thawing these water lines.

He further explained that once the lines were thawed, the property owner must run a pencil thin continuous stream of water to prevent re-freezing. City Clerk Jo Everson reported that she had received numerous phone calls from residents who voiced concern that their water lines could freeze so they are letting their water run as a precaution. The question of who would be paying for the additional water usage was discussed. Everson and Heth explained that the high majority of the cities with this same dilemma are not providing a credit of any kind for the additional water usage, with the exception for the properties that did have frozen pipes. Their utility bill should be adjusted using averages. The other cities offered a discount on the additional gallons and/or gave a flat fee discount.

Council questioned what the cost would be for additional water if residents elected to run their wter. According to Heth's calculations a quarter inch stream would be approximately 16 gal per hour or 384 gallons per day or about 11,500 gallons per month, which would be \$36.20 (water) and \$30.02 (sewer).

Council was reminded of the issue they discussed at their last meeting regarding the Valley Graphic's building. The decision at that time was the same as in all other similar situations, whereby "if water flows through a meter, enters into the sewer system, and the problem/circumstances were not caused by the City, the property owner must take financial responsibility."

Also discussed were how to handle water shutoff's for snowbirds, sewer pond capacity for the additional water entering the City's sewer system (which has a finite capacity), measuring the temperature of water, thermometers, the freezing as an "act of God".

**COUNCIL ACTION**

MOTION BY JULIK-HEINE/MURPHY TO APPROVE THE REIMBURSEMENT OF THE COST TO THAW FROZEN WATER LINES TO THE EIGHT PROPERTIES WHO'S WATER SERVICE DID FREEZE, AND TO AUTHORIZE AN ADJUSTMENT IN THEIR UTILITY BILLS FOR THE ADDITIONAL WATER USED AS A PREVENTION OF RE-FREEZING; AND

IT WAS FURTHER MOVED SEND A LETTER TO RESIDENTS EXPLAINING THE UNPRECEDENTED CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ARE OCCURING STATE-WIDE WITH REGARD TO FREEZING WATER LINES. THE LETTER SHOULD ADVISE IF THE RESIDENT IS CONCERNED THEIR WATER LINE COULD FREEZE, MAY RUN WATER AS A PREVENTATIVE, HOWEVER, THE COST OF DOING SO WOULD BE AT THE PROPERTY OWNER'S EXPENSE; AND

EVEN FURTHER, TO RECOMMEND IN THE LETTER VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES TO THE CONTINUOUS STREAM OF WATER, INCLUDING INSTRUCTION AS TO HOW TO MEASURING ITS TEMPERATURE USING A THERMOMETER WHICH THE CITY WOULD PROVIDE AT NO COST TO THE PROERTY OWNER; AND

MOTIONS CARRIED WITH MAYOR BUCHITE ABSTAINING SINCE HE HAS A FINANCIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

**ADJOURN**

MOTION BY JULIK-HEINE/MURPHY TO ADJOURN THE SPECIAL TAYLORS FALLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON THIS 26<sup>th</sup> DAY OF FEBRUARKY. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Meeting adjourned at 9:17 a.m.

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Michael D. Buchite, Mayor

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Jo Everson, Clerk-Treasurer

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Ross Rivard, Vice-Mayor

**PPROVED:** MARCH 10, 2014



# Memo...

**TO:** City Residents  
**FROM:** Jo Everson, Clerk-Treasurer  
**DATE:** February 26, 2014  
**RE:** Frozen Water Service

The City has received numerous calls with questions regarding recent reports from the news media of frozen water pipes throughout Minnesota. City Council met this morning to determine what the City's policy will be on this issue. The continuing subzero cold weather has caused an unprecedented number of water line freeze-ups. This means the frost is going deeper than we have had in many years. If any portion of your water service is at the depth of the frost, your water line may freeze.

To date, the City has had eight frozen pipes, six of which were thawed by a professional company, and two that were unable to be thawed. Unfortunately, they will not have water service until the frost is out of the ground, probably not until mid-April. One resident must haul water to his home almost daily, and the other must run water from a hose attached to the neighbor's house.

City Ordinance requires the property owner to be responsible for their water service line from the curb stop to the meter in the house. The City retains the responsibility for lines from the curb stop to the water main. We believe it is a partnership of sorts. Since it is nearly impossible to determine where the pipe was actually frozen, the City has decided to reimburse these property owners the cost of thawing their lines.

Once the lines were thawed, the City recommended the property owner run a pencil size continuous stream of water to prevent re-freezing, with an adjustment in their next utility bill for the additional water usage. For those residents who are uneasy with the possibility of frozen pipes, you can help prevent it by letting water run in a pencil width stream. If you should choose to do this, you will do so at your expense. Council believes if water flows through a meter, enters into the sewer system, and the problem/circumstances were not caused by the City, the property owner must take financial responsibility.

This is an example of a pencil width stream. By running water at this rate it would generate approximately 10,000 gallons of water each month, costing an additional \$36.20 for water, and \$30.02 for sewer.

There are alternatives to running a continual stream of water to prevent freezing. A frozen water pipe happens primarily because the water is not circulating enough through the pipes to prevent it. Here are a few suggestions:

- ✿ For those residents who use an average amount of water daily, for laundry, washing dishes, or toilets flushing, etc., they have lesser risk of freezing. Nighttime hours are crucial hour because there are no activities. You may want to run water only during the night hours.
- ✿ You could set the float in your toilet to just above the overflow mark so that it runs extra water each flush, or you could flush it every so often.
- ✿ Another thought is to run your water for 2 minutes every 1-2 hours.

✿ The average water temperature in our city is approximately 40°. If possible, measure the temperature of your water at least morning, noon and night. It may vary three degrees or so. To do this, let the water run three minutes or so, then catch the flow with a cup and insert the thermometer in the water as it fills. If you are not comfortable with the temperature results, then by all means run the continual stream of water or any of the above alternatives. The City is offering a free thermometer to anyone who requests one. They are available at City Hall. If you would like someone to demonstrate how to use it, give us a call at City Hall. 465-5133 ext 21, 22, or 25.