

ROSEVILLE
REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Date: 3/24/14
Item No.: 14.a

Department Approval



City Manager Approval



Item Description: Discuss Winter Weather Impacts on Utility Service Laterals

1 **BACKGROUND**

2 Staff initially discussed the severe winter impacts on water service laterals with the Council at
3 the February 24, 2014 city council meeting. At that time 45 properties had experienced frozen
4 water service lines. As of Wednesday March 19, 2014, 124 properties have notified staff
5 regarding a frozen water service line. They are summarized in the following table:

6

Wednesday, March 19, 2014

2013 - 2014 Winter Season

Total Services frozen to date	124
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Total still froze as 3:30pm today	54
<i>Currently on our list to attempt a thaw with the Magikist Machine</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Unsuccessful thaw attempts, either City, Contractor, or both</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Waiting for Spring to thaw naturally</i>	<i>5</i>

Accounts on original freeze list that were not running water continuously as instructed in original letter sent out in December, and reminder letter in February.	17
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Notifications Called In To City	
January	3
February	56
March (<i>Through ONLY March 19 at 3:30 PM</i>)	65
Total	124

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8 To date this is just over 100 new freeze accounts that were not on the historic freeze list and
9 notification program. Staff feels while this is a significant number of new freeze issues it is
10 attributable to a very unusual winter season that continues to average significantly below normal

11 temperatures. We do not expect this to be the new average condition to design water systems to
12 or to drastically change practices that might limit opportunities to replace infrastructure utilizing
13 newer technologies resulting in significant cost implications. While some modification of
14 standards and practices may be in order, they should be as a result of historic trends and averages
15 and be tied to industry standards and practices for our area. Staff recommends we focus on
16 mitigating the current freeze issues related to this unusual winter and take a broader look at long
17 term ownership and design issues.

18 Staff is recommending the City Council discuss at this time whether the city should provide any
19 financial assistance to the property owners that have incurred contractor costs for thawing frozen
20 lines. The Council requested staff to bring the utility lateral issues including the frozen lines
21 back for additional discussion. Staff has received additional feedback from residents that have
22 contracted thawing services that has indicated the most successful contractors have been able to
23 thaw the lines for \$300-\$600. There have been difficult to thaw lines that have incurred higher
24 charges. A high percentage of the lines have been frozen under the roadway. This is where frost
25 is driven deeper by traffic as it is uninsulated by snow.

26 *Ownership of service laterals*

27 The current policy has been in place since the 1960's. Ownership of laterals has been the
28 property owner from the building to the city main. Many properties have replaced or repaired
29 their service laterals as part of our road reconstruction projects over the past 25 years at their
30 cost. We also have a number of property owners who have corrected deficiencies at their own
31 cost outside of our pavement program annually. The Council should consider equity to property
32 owners when considering revision of this policy. Another issue is total liability and impact on
33 capital improvement programs and utility rates. Long term liability would be in the millions of
34 dollars over time if the city were to assume ownership to the property line. It is possible that
35 there may be some middle ground on the ownership issue however additional research would
36 need to be conducted to vet this out further.

37 *City water main standards*

38 Staff recommends additional study of our current standards related to materials and design of
39 public utility systems. While plastic and high density polyethylene pipe does not allow for
40 electro mechanical thawing, they have other benefits and add to options for replacement of
41 infrastructure. There are significant cost implications if we limit our material options as we
42 replace infrastructure in the future. Staff will discuss the current standards and our initial
43 thoughts regarding further study at the meeting.

44 **POLICY OBJECTIVE**

45 The City operates and maintains a water system to provide a continuous supply of safe drinking
46 water to its residents. Current city code establishes ownership of the utility service lines with the
47 property owner.

48 **FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

49 The city established the water utility to ensure safe, clean drinking water availability to all
50 properties in Roseville. The water enterprise is funded through user fees to cover the cost of
51 this service. All costs associated with assisting residents with frozen water service lines are
52 funded through the water enterprise fund. Financial assistance in the \$300-\$500 per property
53 would result in a total expenditure of \$45-65,000 based on the assumption we may have
54 nearly 150 or more properties that will incur thawing costs.

55

56 The issues of service lateral ownership and revising pipe standards for city mains would have
57 a much greater long term financial liability and have a significant impact on future water and
58 sewer rates.

59 **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

60 Staff recommends the City Council determine whether to provide any financial assistance to
61 residents who have incurred thawing costs resulting from frozen water services. Staff suggests
62 financial assistance in the range of up to \$300-\$500 per property. We feel this would reimburse
63 on average 50-75% of the costs incurred. Some properties have incurred well over \$1000.

64

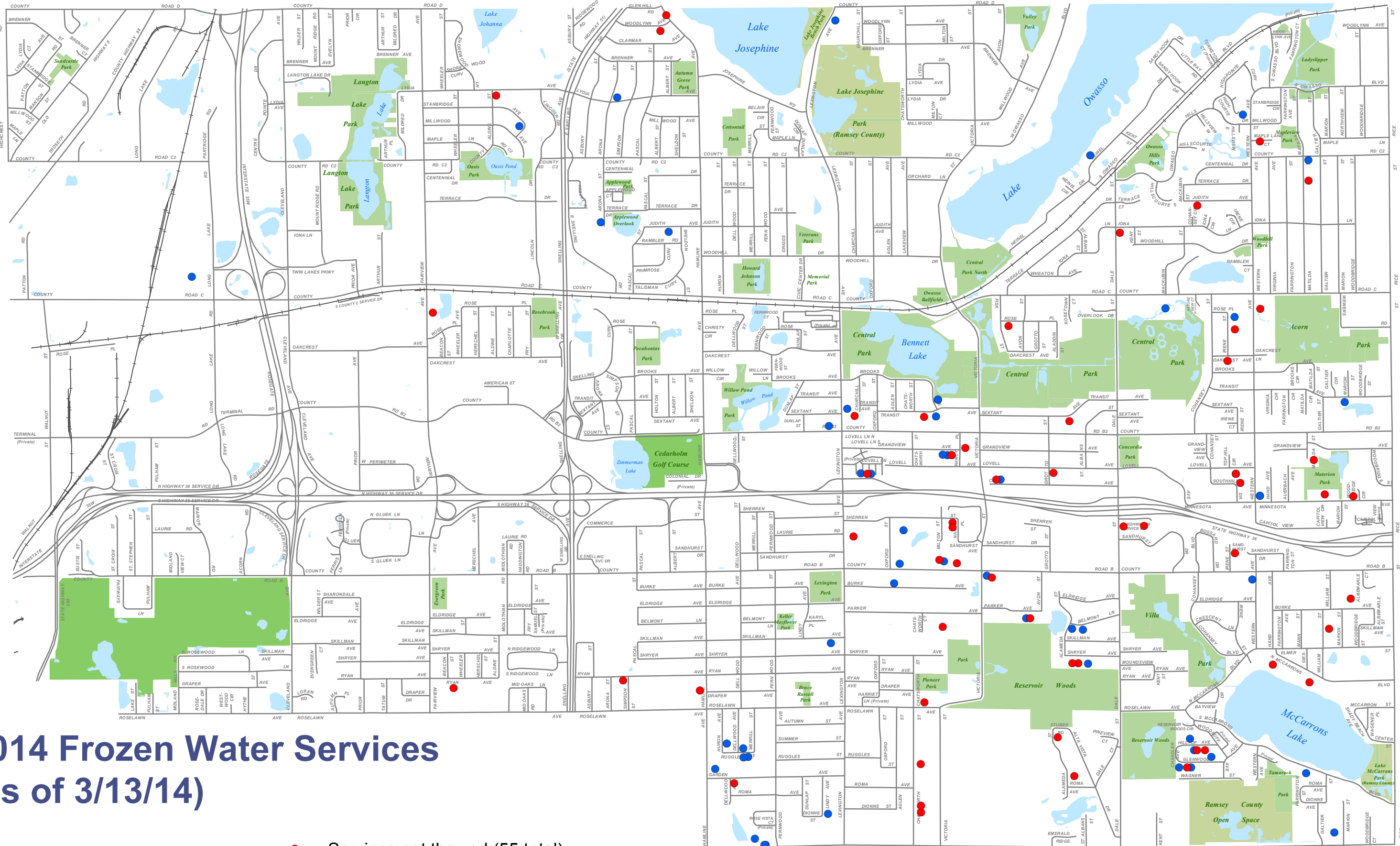
65 Staff also recommends the Council defer any action on the issue of service lateral ownership and
66 city main material standards to allow more time for staff and possibly the Public Works,
67 Environment, and Transportation Commission to study and discuss mitigation of the properties
68 on the new freeze list and present a more in depth recommendation.

69 **REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION**

70 Motion to approve financial assistance to property owners at a level determined by the City
71 Council.

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Prepared by: Duane Schwartz, Public Works Director
Attachment: A: Map of freeze accounts



2014 Frozen Water Services (as of 3/13/14)

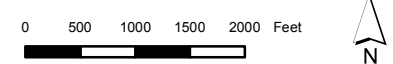
- Services not thawed (55 total)
- Services thawed (53 total)



Prepared by:
Engineering Department
March 13, 2014

Data Sources and Contacts:
 • Ramsey County GIS Base Map (12/03/13)
 • City of Roseville Engineering Department
 For further information regarding the contents of this map contact
 City of Roseville, Engineering Department,
 2660 Civic Center Drive, Roseville MN

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mapdoc: 2014FrozenWaterService_3_10_14.mxd
 map: 2014FrozenWaterService_3_10_14.pdf