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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Little Elm officials kick off summer watering campaign

LITTLE ELM (June 14, 2016) Calling it a simple, transactional exchange much like any other purchase, Little Elm officials are reminding residents that the more water that flows through the meter, the higher the bill will be at the end of the month.

“It’s not unlike the dozens of other transactions that we’re involved in every month,” says Andrew Figueroa, Utilities Superintendent. “If we turn on a light and leave it on for hours, we will have a slightly higher utility bill. Water use is exactly the same, except the costs are significantly higher.”

Compounding the issue is the use of automatic sprinkler controllers that can be set to run automatically. These controllers will operate according to the settings entered, regardless of cost or need. “That’s a real sticking point,” says Public Works Director Kevin Mattingly. “Once we set the automatic controller, we seem to completely put it out of our minds. And, if the controller is set to run at a time when we are less apt to see the sprinklers operate, while we’re at work or overnight, then we are oblivious to the water being used.”

Figueroa adds that not monitoring the system means that sprinklers may be overwatering the lawn, or sprinkler heads may be broken to misdirected, or the rain sensor may not be operating properly. “There are a number of things that may be wrong with the system that are adding to the cost and increasing waste,” he said. “The only way to ensure proper operation is to either look at it closely or bring in an irrigation specialist to do so. On top of that, once the system has passed inspection, the controller should be set to the off position, and watering, when necessary, should be controlled manually.”

The Town of Little Elm is finely attuned to this problem. So much so, says Mattingly, that a committee of employees has been put together to assist homeowners use water wisely and avoid the shock of high bills. “We heard the frustration last year,” he said. “Following the end of the drought and the easing of restrictions, water use spiked. That resulted in improper watering, and more disastrously, an unexpected hike in the monthly water bills.”

Spurred by resident calls to the Utility Billing Department and to elected officials, Town Manager Matt Mueller asked Mattingly and Figueroa to convene an employee group and develop a strategy that would result in a greater level of understanding of the inescapable link between high water use and high water bills. The committee has developed a plan of action that includes traditional and social media to impress upon residents that higher utilization will undoubtedly mean higher costs.

Using the tagline, “Water sense lowers expense,” the committee has pledged to conduct educational and informational campaigns that serve as reminders to residents about the direct connection between sensible watering and lowered costs.

Mattingly says the campaigns will run all summer long. “The committee believes that we cannot over-communicate this message.”

The “Water sense lowers expense” campaign will utilize available resources and is not expected to incur any significant expenses. “Nevertheless, we hope it hits home,” said Mattingly. “The more informed we all are, the more water and money we save.”

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ABOUT LITTLE ELM – Little Elm is one of the state’s fastest growing communities. Nestled on the shores of Lake Lewisville, the Town was incorporated in 1966, adopting the Council/Manager form of government. The population increased dramatically over the last several years, growing from under 4,000 in 2000 to over 30,000 today. Little Elm’s population exceeds the state average in education and income, and is increasingly trending younger and technologically proficient. The Town’s footprint is just over 21 square miles and boasts some 66 linear miles of shoreline within its boundaries.