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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Watering lessons from summer of 2015 take hold

LITTLE ELM (August 16, 2016) A combination of a more thoughtful approach to watering with automatic sprinklers as well as a marked change in climate conditions has resulted in a lower number of calls to Little Elm's Utility Billing Department regarding high water bills this year.

"Our customer service personnel at Utility Billing are fielding fewer calls for high bills as compared to last year," said Public Works Director Kevin Mattingly. "We believe that residents are more attuned to the unbreakable relationship between water usage and its accompanying cost. And, of course, the conditions this year are very different than last summer."

The summer of 2015 saw the end of a five-year drought that had plagued the North Texas area. The drought's end ushered in an easing of watering restrictions for residents throughout the area, including Little Elm households.

"It quickly became apparent that the five-year period during which restrictions were in place was enough to make people forget about the cost of unrestrained water use," said Utility Superintendent Andrew Figueroa. "People turned on their automatic sprinklers systems last year and basically tried to make up for five years of restrictions. Then, the bills started arriving."

The number of distressed calls to Utility Billing during the summer of 2015 was the highest in recent memory, and many of those calls requested a re-reading of meters. Affected residents were in disbelief regarding the size of their water bills.

Mattingly says that, for the most part, meters were read properly last year, and cost calculations were not out of range when considering the amount of water being used. "There were, in fact, very few errors," he said. "The reality was that many people had simply forgotten how much water they were actually using on their lawns."

This year, residents are aided by their experience in 2015, and are taking a more thoughtful approach to watering. People are turning off their automatic controllers, and using the manual "on and off" feature to water only when necessary.

"Others are following the advice from Water My Yard," said Figueroa. Water My Yard is a website that calculates the amount of watering that is adequate for local residents and sends email or text messages to registrants. Registration is free and can be accomplished at www.watermyyard.org.

Spring and summer rains are also contributing to a lowering of watering requirements, as any precipitation counts toward total irrigation needs.

"And, we are also using social media to remind people about their role in containing costs associated with watering," said Mattingly. "Little Elm residents are fast learners, and that helps tremendously."

To further assist residents, the Little Elm Public Library has set aside some literature on water conservation and is hosting an interactive exhibit with live presenters from the Water Division and Utility Billing on Thursday, Aug. 18 from 9 a.m. to noon. The session is free and open to the public.

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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.