

Department of Water Management
2016 Budget Hearing
Remarks of Thomas H. Powers, P.E., Commissioner
October 9, 2015

Good morning Chairman Austin, Vice Chairman Ervin and members of the City Council. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present to you the 2016 Budget Proposal for the Department of Water Management (DWM).

Our mission is to protect the public's health in the most environmentally and fiscally responsible manner by delivering a sufficient supply of exceptional quality water and efficiently managing waste and storm water. We are committed to providing the highest level of professional services to meet our customers' needs now and for future generations.

Through our operations at the Jardine and South Water Purification Plants – the two largest conventional treatment plants in the world – DWM purifies on average about 800 million gallons of water a day. We also operate 12 pumping stations that distribute water through more than 4,400 miles of water mains. On the sewer side, the department is responsible for transmission of wastewater through more than 4,400 miles of sewer mains to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District.

We provide purified water to more than 2.7 million customers in Chicago and 2.67 million customers in 125 surrounding suburbs. On a daily basis, more than 5.3 million customers, or 42% of the Illinois population, depend on our infrastructure for clean, safe drinking water.

When you have that many people depending on you for something as vital as water service, it is essential to make sure that everything is well maintained, operating properly and replaced in a timely manner when necessary. That means anticipating and addressing issues before they become problems and being more proactive than reactive. Ultimately, we have a goal of being a completely proactive department.

To do this, we must continue our aggressive infrastructure renewal and capital improvements while maintaining and improving daily operations and repairs. In 2012, under the leadership of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, DWM embarked on its 10-year Capital Plan that includes:

- Replacing 880 miles of water mains
- Replacing 250 miles of sewer mains
- Lining more than 470 miles of sewers and 140,000 sewer structures to extend their useful life

- Converting three pumping stations from steam to electric power
- Installing 200,000 water meters

No other American city's water and sewer operation has a capital plan of this size and scale. At the same time, we still maintain one of the lowest service rates in the country. Our approach is fiscally conservative and directly related to improving the operations of our services for the long term. The Capital Plan works to replace our aging infrastructure at the original pace of water and sewer main installation. By upgrading and maintaining our facilities, we are conserving water for future growth and creating new employment opportunities for Chicagoans.

DWM has been working in every neighborhood across Chicago this year and will have met or exceeded our annual construction goals. The Department is on pace to install 90 miles of new water mains in 2015, replace 22 miles of sewer mains, line 50 miles of sewers, line 14,000 sewer structures and complete the conversion the Springfield Avenue Pumping Station from steam to electric power. This year, we will also install more than 15,000 free water meters as part of the MeterSave Program.

All of these projects amount to spending more than \$650 million in 2015, the fourth year of the Capital Plan. At the end of our 10-year plan, DWM will have invested nearly \$7 billion in the improvement of our water and sewer systems.

I could not be prouder of the men and women who work for the Department, helping each day to make our plans a reality. In the last four years we have hired and promoted nearly 900 employees. Throughout the Department, we ensure proper training and professional development to ensure the safe and efficient execution of The Capital Plan.

As we near the halfway mark of the plan, we are making concentrated and systematic business process improvements – from labor, to financing, to scheduling and project coordination.

The ability to provide the people of Chicago quality, cost-effective and reliable services requires a multi-faceted administrative effort. That includes: incorporating facility and security assessments; working with the various labor unions to achieve work rule compliance;

executing competitive contracts; coordinating with other agencies, utilities and departments; and implementing creative and traditional funding to avoid overburdening future generations.

We constantly coordinate with other departments, with your ward staff, with utilities and with other agencies to identify opportunities for collaboration. The use of the latest mapping and scheduling technology, as well as monthly coordination meetings between departments and utilities, has contributed to an accelerated and more efficient and cost-effective program.

By improving our processes and using the latest construction technology we have completed more work this year – including major water and sewer main replacement projects – than in any other year the history of the Department.

With all of these efforts, DWM is on track to achieve and complete its 10-Year Capital Plan on time and within budget.

On the operational side, which includes addressing emergency repairs and other calls for service, our open work orders are now completed and closed in shorter times because of the implementation of operational efficiencies. This is due not only to the hard work put forth by the men and women out in the field, but also because of process and technology improvements. Further, this is due in part to the great amount of capital work that is being completed to upgrade the system to eliminate water main breaks and collapsed sewers. Finally, by holding crews accountable to do their work efficiently and safely, we have continued to improve productivity year after year.

We have also increased our productivity this year in terms of water meter installations. In 2015, we will exceed our goal to install 15,000 meters. With your support, we amended the Municipal Code and are now allowed to install up to 25,000 meters each year.

Word of mouth is our best marketing tool and we truly appreciate you and your staff's assistance in this effort as we continue to promote installation of water meters for all properties.

The MeterSave Program saves water, and at the same time, it saves our customers money. The only way to know exactly how much water someone is using is to measure it with a meter. With more awareness of water use, we will all become better stewards of our great natural resource.

In 2016, our administrative goals remain the same: reform and improve where we can; cut or amend our approach where we must; and invest where it matters. Our construction targets for 2016 will include:

- 90 miles of water main installation
- 22 miles of sewer main installation
- 53 miles of sewer main lining
- 14,000 structure linings
- 15,000 MeterSave meter installations

As Commissioner of the Department of Water Management, I pledge to continue to work with all of you as we look at the service needs in your wards to make the improvements necessary to maintain our quality of life. I am committed to being accessible and to improving communications between our department and you and your staff.

We have accomplished much in 2015, and I look forward to continuing to deliver the best possible services to the residents of Chicago next year. Together, we will ensure that Chicago's water and sewer system provides high-quality service to all of our customers.

Thank you.

Department of Water Management

Commissioner

First Deputy

Managing Deputy

Managing Deputy

Deputy Commissioner
Administrative Support

Assistant Commissioner
Meter Services

Deputy Commissioner
Operations & Distribution

Deputy Commissioner
Engineering

Deputy Commissioner
Water Supply

- * Payroll
- * Personnel
- * Labor Relations
- * Purchasing
- * Finance
- * IT

- * Rate Takers
- * Meter Shop
- * Plumbing Shop
- * MeterSave

- * Water Repairs
- * Sewer Repairs
- * Construction
- * Inventory
- * Equipment
- * Tradesmen

- * Water Design
- * Sewer Design
- * Sewer Lining
- * Inspections
- * Construction Management

- * Water Purification
- * Laboratory Operations
- * Water Pumping
- * Intake Cribs
- * Filtration Plant Operations