

**Department of Water Management  
2018 Budget Hearing  
Remarks of Randy Conner, Commissioner  
November 3, 2017**

Good morning Chairman Austin, members of the Committee on Budget and Government Operations and members of the City Council. I am pleased to appear before you today to present and discuss the 2018 budget proposal for the Department of Water Management (DWM).

Our mission is to 1) protect the public health by delivering exceptional quality water in the most environmentally and fiscally responsible manner; 2) efficiently manage waste and stormwater. 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 Sawyer Water Purification Plants – the two largest conventional treatment plants in the world – DWM purifies on average about 750 million gallons of water a day. We also operate 12 pumping stations that distribute water through more than 4,300 miles of water mains. On the sewer side, the department is responsible for the 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 about 2.7 million customers in 125 surrounding suburbs. On a daily basis, approximately 5.4 million customers, or 42 percent 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 --- anticipating and addressing issues before they become problems, being more proactive than reactive.

This past June, you confirmed my appointment as the Department's Commissioner. Mayor Emanuel challenged me to strengthen the city infrastructure and improve city services for residents. Since then, we have hit the ground running by working on a multi-faceted administrative effort that includes: holding our contractors' responsible for their performance; working with the various labor unions to achieve work rule compliance; executing competitive contracts; and increased coordination with other agencies, utilities and departments.

Mayor Emanuel also challenged me to change the culture at the department to reflect the city's values. Since my confirmation, I have been clear that we are committed to an inclusive, welcoming environment at the Department of Water Management, and that the Department will not tolerate racism, sexism, or homophobia. We have worked with the Department of Human Resources to provide additional Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) training for Departmental managers and supervisors.

We created the Bureau of Performance Management to develop, review and revise policies, procedures and directives to improve the level of service provided by our department. We established an overtime management process to streamline requirements and allow for efficient reporting and tracking for our employees. In 2018, the Bureau will review and revise the current dispatch procedures to improve employee accountability, increase communication, enhance recordkeeping, and to provide better customer service.

In addition, we will continue to make other concentrated and systematic business process improvements – from labor, to finance, to scheduling and project coordination. I am proud of DWM's managers because they have worked tirelessly to address the plans I put forward. It is imperative that we ensure that our employees are properly trained and professionally developed to safely and efficiently operate the Chicago Water and Sewer Systems.

In addition, we continually coordinate with other departments, with your ward staff, utilities and 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.

**Department of Water Management  
2018 Budget Hearing  
Remarks of Randy Conner, Commissioner  
November 3, 2017**

We also continue on the path to meet our goals of the Mayor's 10-year Capital Program, which is now more than halfway complete. 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 a long time.

We have been and continue to be in every ward replacing water mains or sewer mains or lining structures and sewers. You see our crews working in the streets; they are working to ensure that we don't have to be there again for decades to come. Today we continue to actively move forward to complete our goals established for 2012-2021 that includes replacing 880 miles of water mains, rehabilitating 699 miles of sewer mains, lining 95,000 sewer structures to extend their useful life and converting three pumping stations from steam to electric power.

And, it is working. 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. In 2017, the Department is on pace to install 90 miles of new water mains, replace 22 miles of sewer mains, line 39 miles of sewers and 5,000 sewer structures. We are proud to state that we have completed the conversion the Springfield Avenue Pumping Station from steam to electric power. And we are working with the Department of Procurement Services to move forward on the conversion of the Central Park Pumping Station.

All of these projects are critical investments in our neighborhoods. At the end of our 10-year capital program, DWM will have invested more than \$6 billion in the improvement of our vital water and sewer systems.

Infrastructure investments are a win-win for Chicago. The investments improve environmental quality for households and businesses; provide middle-class employment for construction workers & the employees of water facilities; preserves our most precious resource; and ripples into other sectors of the economy, a win for those not directly impacted by the investments.

By improving our processes and using the latest construction technology, we are meeting our annual goals and we are on track to achieve and complete DWM's 10-Year Capital Program on time and within budget.

We are also meeting our 2017 goal to install 15,000 meters, as part of the successful MeterSave program.

The MeterSave Program saves water, and at the same time, saves money for our customers. 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 Lake Michigan, our great natural resource. 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.

For 2018, our capital construction targets will include:

- 90 miles of water main installation
- 15,000 MeterSave meter installations
- 22 miles of sewer main installation
- 42 miles of sewer main lining
- 5,000 structure linings

Now, let me turn to our operations and maintenance, which includes addressing emergency repairs and other calls for service.

In the areas of leaks and breaks, no water, water in basement, catch basin repair requests and sewer cave-ins our response times are down, which results in the number of open service requests continuing to decrease as well. This is due not only to the hard work put forth by the men and women out in the field, but is also the result of the capital work that is being completed

**Department of Water Management  
2018 Budget Hearing  
Remarks of Randy Conner, Commissioner  
November 3, 2017**

to upgrade the systems to eliminate water main breaks and collapsed sewers. In addition, by holding crews accountable to do their work efficiently and safely, we have continued to improve productivity year after year.

As Commissioner of the Department of Water Management, I pledge to continue to work with all of you as we look at each ward's service needs and to make the improvements necessary to maintain our quality of life. I am committed as ever to be accessible and to improve communications between our department and you and your staff.

We have accomplished much in 2017, and I am looking forward to 2018 as we continue to deliver the best possible services to the residents of Chicago. Together, we will ensure that Chicago's water and sewer systems provide high-quality services to all of our customers.

Thank you.