



WATER METERING POLICY FOR VACANT LAND GREENING PROJECTS

April 2015

There are more than 27,000 vacant lots within the City of Pittsburgh, 26% of which are City owned. Through collaborations with non-profits, development corporations, government agencies and motivated citizens, some of these lots are becoming community assets. It has long been PWSA's practice to make potable water available to community-driven greening projects such as vegetable and gateway flower gardens. PWSA understands that the long-term viability of these projects depends on seasonal watering and sees this contribution as a way to support the overall health and improvement of the City.

While the process of obtaining water for garden projects has previously been informal, PWSA's involvement in developing the Vacant Lot Toolkit with various City departments and non-profit partners is an ideal time to memorialize this policy. Based on current water usage for greening projects across the City, PWSA proposes the following standards and process for new greening projects classified under the Adopt-A-Lot Program through the City Planning Department.

Process for Adopt-A-Lot Projects to Request Water

1. Leaders of potential Adopt-A-Lot projects first submit an intake form to City Planning's Open Space Specialist (OSS). The OSS reviews the project and has a conversation with the project leader. During this conversation, she will encourage the project leader to consider water access for the project, including rainwater harvesting opportunities whenever feasible (see note below). As needed, as part of the site selection process, the OSS will ask Rick Obermeier at PWSA to determine the feasibility of installing a water access point based on PWSA's maps of existing water lines.
2. When a project is entering into a legal agreement with the City of Pittsburgh and is interested in requesting water, the OSS will send a copy of the Design Package submitted by the applicant to PWSA. The Design Package should include the block and lot number, project description, detailed site plan, and construction timeline. The OSS will ask Rick at PWSA to assess the proposed design, determine whether a water tap is feasible, and calculate the project's assisted water limit for the season. This will be calculated according to the formula below:
 - a. Vegetable gardens are allocated 4 gallons per square foot of planting area per growing season
 - b. Gateway gardens or other flower gardens are allocated 2 gallons per square foot of planting area per growing season
3. At the time of signing of legal agreements with the City, the OSS will give the applicant a Water Access Request Form to sign. This form, developed by PWSA, will include:
 - a. Name, address, phone, and email of person signing the agreement.



- b. Lot and block number and a brief project description referencing the Design Package, which will be attached to the completed form.
- c. Preferred date by which to have water, based on construction/planting timeline.
- d. Calculation of square footage of planting area, based on the site plan.
- e. The volume of water assistance that PWSA will provide based on the formula.
- f. Water assistance agreement, stating that they understand how much water PWSA will offer for their site at no charge, and that the project (whoever is signing the agreement) will be billed at the residential rate (currently \$5.66 per every 1,000 gallons used) for consumption over the assisted amount.
- g. A reminder that PWSA will shut off the tap in the fall (on or around December 1st) and reopen only if requested before the beginning of each planting season.
- h. Signature of person taking responsibility for the project.

When the Water Access Request Form has been signed, the Open Space Specialist will provide it to Rick Obermeier at PWSA.

4. When PWSA receives the request form, PWSA will schedule tap and meter installation for approved projects.

Additional Components of the Policy

1. PWSA plumbing crews will open all taps in the spring (on or around April 1st) and close all taps in the fall (on or around December 1st). Before the beginning of each planting season, garden leaders must request to have their taps opened. The OSS will send out a reminder to garden leaders and create a list of active gardens that request to have their taps opened, and provide this list to PWSA.

2. Rick will work with Antoinette to set up a billing account for each new garden, so that bills will be issued on a monthly basis. The purpose of the monthly bill is to help the project leader keep track of water usage. No fee will be charged unless the garden exceeds its assisted water usage allocation. (Note: When the software is set up for public access (estimated 2016), vacant lot project leaders should be able to have access to records of their water use in real time. Until then, water usage will be monitored by PWSA throughout the growing season. If a garden exceeds its assisted water usage, bills will be issued on a monthly basis.)

3. At the end of the season, a final reading of the meter will occur when the taps are shut off.

4. Adopt-A-Lot projects follow the same process on lots owned by the City and by the URA. The water request process is the same in either case.

5. Vacant lot projects on private property should be directed to PWSA's existing process for requesting a water tap (not free). Detailed info is available on PWSA's website at <http://pgh2o.com/developer-manual>.



Important Notes

- a. PWSA would like to encourage rainwater harvesting whenever possible. This can include rain containers on neighboring buildings, designs that use swales, berms or the natural slope of the land to keep rain on site, or other creative solutions.
- b. If large numbers of requests are received, PWSA may need to restrict the number of new taps. This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure feasibility. Lots that have pre-existing water lines are easier for PWSA to tap than lots where new lines are needed. This could be a deciding factor if new taps must be limited in number.