



CITY OF HOLDENVILLE
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Manager Minute # 2 Water is the Word

All of us know that the most important natural resource to the life of any community now and in the future is a dependable supply of safe drinking water. However, many of us take “fresh” water for granted because when we turn on the faucet, take a shower, wash our clothes, and flush the toilet, we receive an unlimited supply. Recently, changing climate conditions around the world have some of us thinking a little more about whether or not adequate water resources will be available 5-10 years from now. For example, the City of Holdenville has noticed that annual rain fall totals have dropped from 50.2 inches in 2019 to 29.4 inches in 2023. Is this a short- term event or is it the beginning of a prolonged shift in Oklahoma’s weather patterns?

Today, the City is actively evaluating several possible options and remains hopeful that a viable Plan “B” can be developed over the next two years. Some of the first steps, include: conducting a water loss survey, addressing critical plant improvements, replacing leaking water lines and fire hydrants, testing secondary water sources, and exploring water reuse. In 2002, EPA determined that unaccounted water loss in a municipal water supply system ranged from 7.5 percent to 10 percent. Our preliminary estimate is that Holdenville may be experiencing as much as a 30-35 percent water loss throughout the distribution system which is equivalent to 130,000,000 gallons of treated water per year. Translated, that means a lot of lost revenue to the City and eventually lower lake levels over time.

One immediate step to take would be the introduction of a voluntary water conservation program, an odd/even watering program geared to reduce consumption during summer peak demand cycles. The goal of such a program is to demonstrate the true value of water to the residents of the community, manage demand on a failing system, and to encourage lasting improvements to overall water efficiency. There are other steps that the City can take to address the water supply and demand issues, such as: reducing water loss through system upgrades, raising water rates for large residential and commercial customers, identifying secondary water sources, providing incentives for the installation of water saving appliances, selling rain barrels to capture water for flowers, gardens, and patio plants, encourage alternative landscaping techniques to conserve water use, and recycle “gray water” for non-potable applications. We are pursuing all of these options in an effort to arrive at Plan “B”.

Finally, a simple question to reinforce the value of safe drinking water. How much would you be willing to pay for water if you did not have a public water supply? Today, a gallon of milk costs \$4.29, a gallon of gasoline costs \$2.50, a bottle of water (16 oz.) costs \$1.59, and you can purchase **one thousand (1,000) gallons** of water from the City for \$37.00 which is the equivalent of \$0.037 per gallon!