

UTILITY BILLING

BRIEF OUTLINE OF HOW
WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE
TODAY

2013-2016 – Dearing Software Changes

- COA utilized Dearing Software for multiple departments
 - Local resident designed and maintained for multiple entities in the region
 - Availability of Mr. Dearing to keep up with maintenance and changing regulations declined
 - City of Alpine financial software switched during federal investigation
- Utility departments (Gas & Water) operating off two different software systems
- Inability to make required updates/changes to software
- Software unstable - if system crashed – unable to recover
- Decision made to switch to same software as Gas Department

2016 – 2017 Transition Time

- Decision made to convert based on
 - Cost effective
 - Same software as other utility
 - Additional services available
 - Online payments, possible combined billing, mailing options (third party)
 - City of Alpine signs contract to convert Dearing software to Assyst
 - Difficult conversion – required two conversions
 - 1st conversion failed – staff had one week to enter months worth of information into old system in order to provide billing
 - 2nd conversion – slightly better – issues with formatting into new software (names, streets did not line up in required fields of new billing software)
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- First several months of billing from Assyst Software created large backlash from residents
 - Did not like the billing form being identical to Gas department
 - Letter size bills not acceptable – how was a person to know it was the water bill
 - Requested postcard billing be added back
 - Daily complaints from residents in person, by phone, and through emails

2017 - Present

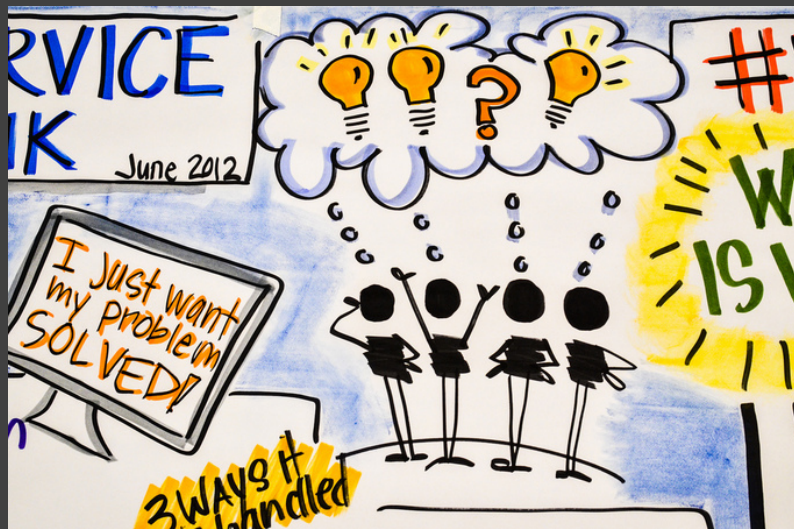
- City recognized resident complaints/concerns and moved back to postcard monthly billing
- First several months billing was processed in house
 - In house problems
 - Staffing and time to print and process 2800 plus postcards
 - Printing machine and software not compatible to process timely and effectively
 - Not cost effective – limited staffing
- Decision made to outsource mailing offered by Assyst
 - Bills processed before noon – mailed same day (Monday-Friday)
 - Bills processed after noon – mailed next day (Monday-Friday)
 - Postcard an option
- Initial switch – positive feedback from residents



Concerns

- Concerns
 - Limited staffing
 - Separation of responsibilities
 - Tools
 - Training
 - Outsourced mailing – growing concerns with delivery
 - Payment options

Addressing Concerns



- Increased staffing
 - Designated Customer Service Clerks
 - Payments
 - Work Orders
 - Tools - Updated computers
 - Additional phone lines
 - Training
 - On the job – Cross Training
 - Virtual – Set for 7/15
 - In person – when available
 - Combined responsibilities
 - Working to combining software accessibility
 - Researching possible credit card services that are compatible with software
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- Working with Software and Postal Service
 - Alpine Postal Service currently short staffed
 - Mailing In House or outsourced required to go to larger city (El Paso) before being returned for delivery in Alpine
 - Billing options – mail and/or email
 - Payment Options
 - ACH
 - Online
 - In Person
 - In Person – Window
 - Drop Box
 - Mail