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Taking a look at how Alliance Water Resources compare to other cities with similar services

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When Alliance Water Resources first came to Elsberry in December of 1999 their contract was simple. They were hired to maintain four departments for the city; water, waste water, street maintenance, parks and cemeteries.

According to Alderman Robert Kindred, the original reason for Alliance being brought into the city was to help meet DNR and EPA standards. As he put it they were supposed to be nothing more than a “back-stopper.”

Since that time Alliance has brought the cities water system up to code and met all DNR and EPA regulations, however, these are not the only responsibilities Alliance has.

As stated in their contract Alliance is responsible for maintaining communications with the city and keeping them informed regarding all aspects of facility operations, maintenance, regulatory requirements, etc. They have to perform corrective maintenance and repair of all facility equipment, provide 24 hour emergency service seven days a week, develop and implement a comprehensive preventative maintenance program in accordance with manufacturer’s recommendations and the system’s operation and maintenance manual and several other items that just fall under the general portion of their contract.

Alliance is also responsible for street maintenance in which they must provide for traffic control and signage, nuisance abatement, cemetery maintenance, street repairs, building maintenance and all the necessary materials needed for snow removal including the replacement of city sidewalks.

Based on the 2010 - 2011 budget report these services cost the city approximately \$592,689 and due to recent hardships and price increases for maintenance and materials Alliance is asking for a potential increase of 3.4 percent and for the city to take over responsibility of the utilities, i.e. electricity.

Looking at this high number has raised some concerns for Alderman and city officials. It has also raised questions on whether or not it would be cheaper for the city to take over these various departments themselves. Kindred said in an interview, based on his calculations he thinks the city could save approximately \$120,000 by doing so.

However, after breaking down the budget expenses as a whole for the four departments Alliance handles, it cost the city approximately \$306.46 a year per populated person or \$.84 a day, which according to the 2010 census report is 1934 people.

But how does this compare to other Lincoln county areas that have some of the same departments, however do not treat their water.

Troy has a population of approximately 10,540, according to the same census report. Their annual expense for maintaining these same four departments is approximately \$5,091,475, which breaks down to \$483.06 per populated person or \$1.32 a day.

Winfield, who only has budgets for water, sewer and minor street maintenance budgets approximately \$304,199.40, which breaks down to \$216.66 per populated person or \$.59 a day.

Finally Old Monroe, who only has a population of 265 people and only has budgets for sewer, park and street sets a budget of approximately \$38,359.88, which breaks down to \$144.75 per populated person or \$.39 a day.

Although these areas have similar departments not all of them maintain the same way. Troy City Treasurer Linda Flinn said, “Our public works staff performs functions for all facets of City maintenance including Streets, Sewer, Cemetery, Parks, etc. Every year we allocate a portion of each person’s salary and benefits to each department based on an accounting of time and effort spent from prior years.”

However, Old Monroe City Clerk and Treasurer Jessica Burkemper said they have no responsibility for their water or billing. Meaning they collect no revenue from water therefore they have no expense. Old Monroes water is operated, maintained and billed by Public Water Sewer District #1.

When looking at these other areas compared to Elsberry it becomes clear that the expense of what Alliance was hired to do verse what other towns do themselves is actually lower in cost. But Alliance has also made themselves an active asset to the community by performing duties not detailed in their contract.

For example: Alliance helped remodel Elsberry City Hall, which included constructing a kitchen area. They have picked up and delivered police cars as needed. Helped with the development at Page Branch Park - bathrooms, walking trails, lighting, horseshoe pits, flag pole, footbridge over the creek and several other time consuming details. Alliance has done miniscule work as well including changing the light bulbs at both the police station and city hall. They constructed the event stage for the Old Glory Jubilee, donated funds for the concrete floor poured in the cemetery maintenance department and the funds to purchase additional trash receptacles for the main park.

Although there are several other duties Alliance is required to perform and even more they aren't, but do, what they have become is a part of Elsberry.

Alliance Manager Ron Conger said, "We have been here for almost 11 years now and have made it a point to be active within the community. For the most part we have helped in everything the city asks us too and have even financed and donated equipment when the city was unable to afford it."

According to Conger there are a lot of things Alliance does here in Elsberry that they don't do with other cities contracted by them.

"We know going in to contract time things are going to get a little hectic and a lot of things are going to be questioned but at the end of the day we know the service we provide and I believe we are liked and wanted, even if we don't agree on everything," Conger said.



Alliance Water Resource employees work on sewer lines at Page Branch Park over the summer. This is just one of the projects done by Alliance.

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