

Post town hall meeting addresses key issues

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Three topics monopolized audience attention during the 2nd quarterly townhall meeting sponsored by garrison commander Lt. Col Janet Holliday and her staff.

Extensive discussions about an equitable plan to bill residents for excess electricity consumption, a safety-first snow removal plan, and the post's redundant plans to communicate about weather were triggered by questions from the residents and workers in Bliss Hall and others who participated virtually and submitted email questions.

Holliday introduced the plan for electric usage billing that will start in July for Carlisle Barracks residents. Most residents have been receiving mock utility bills to help make the residents aware of their usage patterns. Starting in July, residents will receive usage statements.

Until July, utilities are included in the housing allowance that military families forfeit to live in Army family housing. As of July, residents will see a link between utility use and a bill for electric usage. Utility bills will be based on average usage among 'like' residences. Where there are at least 10 to average, such as the Meadows or Marshall housing, average-usage residents will owe nothing, higher-than-average use will generate a bill, and lower-than-average use will earn a rebate.

Where there are not at least 10 'like' residences, the government is not requiring utility billing.

- College Arms, Bouquet Road and Liggett Road will not receive statements and will not be billed due to scheduled demolition
- Coren, Lovell, Pratt, Flower, Wilson House, Quarters 1,2,3,4,28 and Young Hall will not be billed as there are not enough like quarters to determine a baseline
- Marshall Ridge Phase 2 – the new homes -- will start receiving mock bills
- All other homes will begin live billing in July.

Ivan Bolden leads the Army's private initiatives and the program to develop utility billing. He participated in the townhall meeting to explain the Army's intent and express his basic principle – equity.

Residents responsible only for excess consumption

From privates to general officers, 70 thousand Soldiers are included in the residential community utility billing program. A third of them pay an average of \$32. A third of residents owe nothing. Another third receive a rebate averaging \$36.

Two-thirds of today's Soldiers live off-post and they pay utility bills every day – and none of them get a rebate, Bolden noted. The program to bill utilities in Army residential communities has helped Army families pay renewed attention to their own energy use. "We are already seeing decreases in consumption – greater than 15 percent at most projects. Savings goes to build more new homes or provide additional amenities to residents," said Bolden.

The program is equitable, said Bolden. "We won't execute utility billing here 'til we get it right," he affirmed.

Later, Bolden addressed concerns about a nationwide expectation that utility rates will jump. When rates rise, the monthly average rises – and since utility bills are based on the rolling monthly average, residents will not. He explained that Army privatized housing will make monthly or immediate changes to residents' baseline utility costs. When rates rise, the average rises; since utility bills are based on the rolling monthly average, Army housing residents will be. In short, "the project takes the risk on prices increases, not the Soldier."

Safety first in snow removal

Tom Kelly, the Public Works director, responded to queries about snow-removal plans. Our priorities are safety and security, he began, and gave a street-by-street review of the plan to make sure fire trucks and ambulances can get through. The plowing starts at the helicopter pad, through the vehicle checkpoint, from the Claremont gate to the Route 11 gate. They then clear from the fire station to the Dunham Clinic – followed by residential streets. AHEC is a lower priority. Sidewalks do get attention, but they too are a lower priority. Most sidewalks are the responsibility of the resident or the building workers.

Audience members weighed in on the communication plan for post delays and closures. Facebook is proving a popular way to learn about changes in operations and activities: it's fast and anyone can look. As a faculty member noted, you don't need a facebook account to check the Army War College site.

Check www.facebook.com/usawc .

The new way of communicating didn't bump out the tried-and-true ways. Once PAO is notified, the office contacts the four local TV stations and most radio stations. Schools, churches and businesses created lengthy lists of closures during the big February storm – making the official post news sources a better source. Call 717-245-3700 for the official announcement. Check the Banner and check Facebook. The February snowstorm motivated the first widespread use of the Mass Notification System to automatically call employees and students. Some missed calls triggered a review of the system and that, in turn, identified a coding problem – now fixed. The system leaves a voice mail message alerting you to check 245-3700 or facebook. Employees can call 717-245-3676 and ensure that your phone number is accurately on file.

Circle this date: Tuesday, May 27 Town Hall at 4 pm -- and plan to participate in Bliss Hall or by email.

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