

RESOLUTION 2020-M

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EATONVILLE, WASHINGTON, APPROVING AN EMERGENCY POLICY & PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTION AND ENFORCEMENT OF UTILITY BILLS

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization has determined that a pandemic exists due to the global spread of a highly contagious virus commonly known as COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2020, the Governor of the State of Washington proclaimed a State of Emergency due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 24, 2020 the Governor of the State of Washington, in Proclamation 20-23.1, strongly encouraged all utilities to take reasonable actions to mitigate the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their utility customers, including but not limited to: acting to prevent disconnection of services due to non-payment during the state-wide emergency; waiving late payments and fees; and using payment plans to fulfill outstanding customer balances; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Schaub proclaimed an emergency within the Town of Eatonville on March 24, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on April 20, 2020 the Governor of the State of Washington announced Washington's Recovery Plan, which includes ensuring access to essential services during the state's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on July 2, 2020 the Governor of the state of Washington issued Proclamation 20-23.6, extending Proclamation 20.23, pertaining to Utility Ratepayer Assistance and Preservation of Essential Services through August 1, 2020; and

WHEREAS, Proclamation 20-23.6 extended prohibitions on utilities disconnecting service, refusing to reconnect service and charging late fees; and

WHEREAS, Proclamation 20-23.6 requires all utilities providing energy, telecommunications and water services in Washington State to develop COVID-19 Customer Support Programs, consistent with the guidance document attached as Exhibit B; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Eatonville has amended the Emergency Policy & Procedure for Collection and Enforcement of Utility Bills to be in compliance with the guidance document; now, therefore

**THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF EATONVILLE, WASHINGTON,
HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:**

THAT: The Town of Eatonville Emergency Policy & Procedure for Collection and Enforcement of Utility Bills is approved in the form attached hereto as Exhibit A.

PASSED by the Town Council of Town of Eatonville and attested by the Town Clerk in authentication of such passage this 27th day of July 2020.

Mike Schaub, Mayor

ATTEST:

Miranda Doll, Town Clerk



**EMERGENCY POLICY & PROCEDURE
FOR COLLECTION AND ENFORCEMENT OF UTILITY BILLS**

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to allow for waiving water, sewer, storm drainage, garbage and electric utility past due penalties and a postponement of utility shutoffs during a Declaration of Emergency related to a pandemic illness or other public health emergency. The purpose of this policy is also to facilitate payment plans for utility customers in arrears due to the public health emergency.

2. SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Town of Eatonville utility customers who are currently in arrears or who fall into arrears during a public health emergency and to those that qualify as low-income.

3. DEFINITIONS:

“Public health emergency” means an occurrence or imminent threat of an illness or health condition, caused by bio terrorism, epidemic or pandemic disease, or a novel and highly fatal infectious agent or biological toxin, that poses a substantial risk of a significant number of human fatalities or incidents or permanent or long-term disability.

“Pandemic” means a disease that is prevalent over a region, country or the world.

4. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Town of Eatonville to take all appropriate measures needed to address a public health emergency. Protecting the community and Town staff is a top priority. This policy establishes actions that the Town will take related to the collection and enforcement of Town of Eatonville utility bills for electricity, water, sewer, garbage and storm drainage both during a public health emergency and immediately after.

During a declared public health emergency, it is the policy of the Town of Eatonville to postpone all utility service shutoffs and to suspend past due penalties (also known as “Late Fees,” “Disconnection Notice Fees” and “Reconnection Fees”) for the duration of the declared emergency. It is also the policy of the Town to postpone utility service shutoffs immediately following a declared public health emergency, provided an affected utility customer establishes and complies with a payment plan with the Town.

This policy does not suspend regular monthly utility charges for electric, water, sewer, garbage and storm drainage utilities.

5. PROCEDURE:

The following procedures are established to allow for customers who are in arrears to continue receiving electric, water, sewer, garbage and storm drainage utility service, without penalty, during a declared public health emergency.

Notification

- A. Utility Billing will be notified when a Declaration of Emergency related to public health is proclaimed.
- B. Utility Billing will notify customers who are in arrears (past due and/or scheduled for shutoff) of the policy, including an explanation that all past due amounts are still owed, but that during the duration of the declared emergency, additional past due penalties and shutoffs will be suspended.
- C. Utility Billing and/or the Town will notify customers of opportunities to establish payment plans for all past due amounts and of other customer support programs, if applicable. The Town will prominently post on its website the opportunities to establish payment plans and other customer support programs, if applicable.
- D. It shall be the responsibility of those customers whose accounts are in arrears to contact Utility Billing to request the establishment of a payment plan. Payment plans may consist of a specified date by which all past due amounts must be paid, or payments made on an established, mutually agreed upon, schedule.
- E. During the Declaration of Emergency, the Town will not shut off the utility service that is in arrears.

Reporting

- A. Utility Billing will track, by way of reports, utility accounts that go into arrears during the duration of the proclaimed emergency and submit the reports to the Town Administrator on a regular basis throughout the proclaimed emergency.

Post-Emergency Procedure

- A. After the Declaration of Emergency has been lifted, Utility Billing will review those accounts that have gone into arrears. For those accounts for which no payment plan has been established, Utility Billing and/or the Town will again notify customers of opportunities to establish payment plans for all past due amounts and of other customer support programs, if applicable.
- B. For ninety (90) days following the lifting of the Declaration of Emergency, the Town will work with customers financially impacted by the public health emergency to establish payment plans that will bring their accounts current within six (6) months from the date the payment plans are entered into, or within a longer period if so determined by the Mayor or his designee on a case-by-case basis.
- C. Regular penalty and shutoff timelines, as outlined in Eatonville Municipal Code Title 13, will be re-established on the first day of the month following thirty (30) days after the Declaration of Emergency being lifted. For known low-income or otherwise vulnerable customers, regular penalty and shutoff timelines will be re-established on the first day of the month following sixty (60) days after the Declaration of Emergency being lifted.

