



UTILITY BILLING POLICY

I. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this internal policy, the following words and phrases shall have the meaning as defined by this section.

- a. *Bill* – means the statement of account for utility services rendered by the Town to a customer and due and payable to the Town by the customer.
- b. *Town* – means the municipal corporation known as the Town of Rockford, Washington, and any designated agent authorized to act on behalf of the Town.
- c. *Customer* – means any person, firm, corporation or entity to which the utility services are rendered.
- d. *Delinquent Customer* – means any person, firm, corporation or entity who fails to pay any current charges or portion thereof for any utility by the due date of the bill.
- e. *Utilities* – means the water, sewer and garbage services, departments or systems of the Town of Rockford, Washington, or any combination thereof.
- f. *Past Due Amount* – means any current charges or portion thereof for any utility which remains unpaid past the due date of the bill on which such current charges first appear.
- g. *Disconnect* – means the water, sewer and garbage service shall not be made available to any person, firm, corporation or entity due to non-payment.
- h. *Payment Plan* – means a contract between the Customer and the Town allowing the Customer to make payments to the Town to pay any current charges or portion thereof for any utility by a determined date.

II. UTILITY BILLING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following policies and procedures shall govern the provision of utilities of the Town of Rockford, Washington.

III. UTILITY BILLING

There is hereby created a utility billing section within such department(s) as may be designated by the Town Council. The billing section shall be responsible for the calculation and rendering of all utility bills. The utility billing section shall maintain account records for each customer that includes the customer's name, billing address, service address, current charges and account history including past due charges, penalties and fees.

IV. RATE ORDINANCE

All utility charges shall be calculated in accordance with the specific rate ordinance applicable to each utility or service rendered to a customer.

V. MONTHLY UTILITY BILL

The utility billing section shall provide each utility customer a combined monthly utility bill which shall include the charges incurred by the customer for regular monthly water and sewer, plus any fees, penalties or previous balances. Each utility shall be designated as a separate entry on the billing statement. Bills for utility services provided shall be rendered and paid monthly.

VI. BILLING CYCLE

- a. *Meter Reading Date* – Meters shall be read between the 24th and the 28th days of the month.

b. *Billing Period* – Monthly billings shall be rendered within one week following the period in which utility service is provided. The total bill shall be due and payable by the close of business no later than the 20th day of the following month after which services are billed for. If the due date falls on a holiday, Saturday or Sunday, the due date shall be at 8:00 a.m. on the first business day following the holiday or weekend; payments can be deposited 24 hours a day in our payment drop box at Town Hall. Payments can also be made online at www.rockfordwa.com 24 hours a day. A 2.5% surcharge will apply for all credit/debit payments.

c. *Delinquent Date* – If a bill is not paid on or before the close of business of the due date, a late charge of \$20.00 shall be added to the charges. The first (1st) business day following the due date shall be known as the delinquent date.

d. *Disconnect Notification Date* – If a bill is not paid on or before the close of business on the due date, the Town will send a 10- day disconnection notice to the customer. The disconnection notice will state the past due amount on the customer’s account, and note that there are reconnection fees associated if not paid by the disconnect date.

e. *Disconnection Date* – If a bill is not paid before the end of the 10th business day following the due date of the utility bill, the Clerk/Treasurer or Deputy Clerk will order a disconnection of the customer’s water service. If a customer’s water service is disconnected, a shut off fee of \$25.00 will be added to the following month’s utility bill. When the water service is reconnected, a reconnection fee of \$25.00 shall also be added to the following month’s bill.

VII. DELINQUENT CUSTOMERS

Any customer whose bill remains unpaid at 4:00pm on the 10th business day after the due date shall be considered delinquent. Any customer who is delinquent on any one utility (water or sewer) may be disconnected from the water system and once disconnected shall not be reconnected or reinstated until payment of all charges, fees and penalties necessary to bring the account(s) to current status. Delinquent utilities more than 30 days may also have a lien placed with the Spokane County Treasurer’s Office.

VIII. UTILITY SERVICE APPLICATION

Any person, firm or corporation desiring to establish any utility or combination thereof shall make application for said service(s). The application shall be on such form(s) as may now or hereinafter be prescribed by the appropriate utility. The application may include the applicant’s name, property address, mailing address, home and cell phone numbers, and signature of the party responsible for payment. If applicant is renting the property, a supplemental Utility Account Change Form must be completed by the owner of establishment. Each service location shall be considered a separate account.

IX. UTILITY BILL ADJUSTMENT

a. *Policy and Purpose* – It is the policy of the Town of Rockford to make adjustments to customer utility bills where said adjustment is necessary to correct billing errors, to correct errors due to equipment failure, or in certain circumstances to make adjustments due to customer-owned plumbing or equipment malfunction. It is of the discretion of the Mayor of the Town of Rockford to allow a one-time late fee removal.

b. *Responsibility* – The Town shall determine the amount, if any, of the adjustment to be made. Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to obligate the Town to grant an adjustment. The Town Clerk/Treasurer or designee shall receive requests and notify the customer of the determination.

c. *Staff Adjustments Allowed* – Staff is authorized to make adjustments to utility bills, without Town Council action, in the following cases:

1. **Billing Errors.** Where an error has occurred, whether by the customer or by staff, that results in an inaccurate utility bill being sent to a customer, staff shall correct the error as soon as discovered. These adjustments include data recording and entry errors as well as meter failures if tested and found to be inaccurate.

3. **Limitation on Adjustments.** Adjustments shall only be considered in those situations where the customer's monthly bill exceeds that customer's average usage by at least 5,000 gallons. In evaluating this usage, the Town reserves the right to adjust the customer's average usage for the time of year.

4. **Proof of Repair.** The customer shall provide proof to the Town that the increased water usage was due to a plumbing or equipment malfunction and that the malfunction has been repaired. Proof may consist of a plumber or contractor's bill, or documentation of repair parts purchased by the customer.

5. **Timely Notification and Repair.** The customer shall notify the Town of a leak as soon as practical following discovery of the leak, and shall accomplish a repair of the leak in a timely fashion. Failure of the customer to timely notify the Town and repair of the leak may result in denial of the customer's request to adjust the water bill.

d. *Procedure* – When an adjustment is made, a credit for the amount of the adjustment shall be made to the customer's account. When a customer makes a written request for an adjustment, the amount under consideration for adjustment shall not be payable until a determination on the adjustment is made. All other amounts not in dispute shall be due according to utility rules. When a customer pays an amount that is later adjusted, the credit shall remain on the account. No cash refunds shall be made for adjustments unless the account has been or is subsequently closed and a credit balance remains.

e. *Requests for Adjustments* – The Town Clerk/Treasurer or designee may require the request to be in writing. Written requests shall state the name of the account holder, service address, contact information and the reason for the requested adjustment. The customer shall provide all information requested by the Town and deemed necessary to make a determination on the request.

f. *Response* – The Town Clerk/Treasurer shall respond to the written request for adjustment within fourteen (14) business days after receipt from the customer. All information necessary to make a determination must be on the request, except in those situations where the request must be reviewed by the Town Council.

g. *Reporting* – The Town Clerk/Treasurer shall provide a report to the Town Council on all adjustments made under this policy.

h. *Appeals* – Customers who disagree with the determination of staff regarding their requested adjustments may appeal to the Town Council. Said appeal must be in writing and shall be scheduled to be heard at the regular meeting immediately after receipt of the written appeal.

X. PROMISSORY AGREEMENT

The Town Clerk/Treasurer or designee is hereby authorized to enter into a written promissory agreement for only the current month's utility bill on a case-by-case basis for utility customers. Verbal agreements will not be accepted. If a customer fails to make good on any term and/or condition contained within the promissory agreement, the customer's utility services may be disconnected immediately.

XI. SERVICE CHARGES

In accordance with Resolution 17-05, the following additional fees shall be charged for services provided by the utility:

a. Disconnection of water service due to non-payment of bill: \$25.00

b. Reconnection of service due to non-payment of bill: \$25.00

c. Returned check/disallowed electronic funds fee: \$40.00

Returned checks, the customer shall pay, by cash or money order, the amount of the returned check(s) plus the corresponding returned check fee; after a returned check, the customer shall pay all current and future payments by cash or money order for ONE year.

XII. SEWER CHARGE; A CONTINUING CHARGE

In accordance with Ordinance 17-03,

- a. Except as provided in subsection B of this section, the charge for sewer service provided in this ordinance, shall be due and payable each and every month an improvement is connected to the Town sewer system, whether or not the improvement receives water service.
- b. The owner of a property not receiving water service may submit an application to the Town Clerk/Treasurer or Deputy Clerk, requesting the suspension of sewer service to the property. The application shall be on a form provided by the Town Clerk/Treasurer or Deputy Clerk and shall be signed by the property owner. The application shall include a statement that sewer service shall not be reinstated except upon payment of the sewer connection fee as set by the current fee resolution for residential service. Upon receipt of the application by the Town Clerk/Treasurer or Deputy Clerk, sewer service to the property shall be suspended. During the period of suspension, no sewer charges shall accrue for the connection.
- c. Sewer service that has been suspended as provided in this section shall not be reinstated until the appropriate sewer connection fee has been fully paid. Any use of the sewer system through a connection for which service has been suspended and not reinstated shall be considered a theft of services equal in value to the sewer connection fee, and the amount of regular, monthly sewer charges that would have accrued for each month if such use had sewer service been properly reinstated as provided in this section.

XIII. METER OBSTRUCTION

It shall be prohibited for any person to obstruct access to a utility water meter whether in a public right-of-way or on private property. Should any person, in violation of this section, refuse to remove an obstruction within 24 hours after notification to do so, the Town shall cause such obstruction to be removed at the customer's expense and may charge an "Unreadable meter or denied access to meter" fee of \$150.00/instance, in accordance with Resolution 17-05.

XIV. METERS REQUIRED; UNAUTHORIZED HANDLING PROHIBITED

No person not authorized by the Public Works Director or Town Council shall connect, disconnect, take apart, or in any manner change or interfere with any such meter or its use.

XV. WATER ORDERED OFF OR ON

In accordance with Ordinance 17-02

- a. All requests for disconnection must be made by the owner of the property or some authorized agent of the owner in writing to the Town's water department.
- b. A fee, to be set by Council resolution, will be charged for turning on the water after service is installed and the applicant wishes the water turned off for a month or any part of a year.

XVI. APPROVAL OF POLICY

This policy shall be formally approved and adopted by the Town Council.

This policy was adopted by motion on *February 7, 2018*