



## **Customer Service Policy**

Approved by Town Board on January 11, 2016  
*(Changes in RED will be effective February 1, 2016)*

### **The Policy**

#### **Authority**

The enactment of these policies requires the approval of the Town Board of Commissioners. As fee schedules, rates and other specific policies are updated, it will be the responsibility of the Town Administrator to make sure the policy manual is revised.

The Town Administrator or his/her designee (Town Clerk) is authorized as the hearing or grievance officer for customers. He/She is authorized to hear concerns and complaints regarding billing accuracy, and settle disagreements. He/She is authorized to reconnect any customer disconnected for non-payment while the concern is being investigated, if the monthly bill in question is equivalent to twice as much, or more, consumption than the twelve (12) month average consumption for the same customer.

#### **Scope**

1. This policy is not meant to be all-inclusive but offers direction and guidance for the Town Administrator and employees of the Town.
2. This policy has been adopted by the Town Board of Commissioners for all customers of the Town.
3. The intent of this policy is to provide the customer, and the employees of the Town a helpful guide with uniform procedures for providing utility service. The Town desires to treat its citizens in a fair and indiscriminate manner while recognizing that each customer has distinct needs and requirements.

4. Employees of the Town have been empowered and well-trained to use this policy to deliver high quality service to customers. Employees are expected to deal with each decision with empathy and understanding, listening carefully to the needs and requirements of individual customers. Ultimately, the Town Administrator accepts the responsibility as the final authority on this policy. However, every customer has the right to appeal that decision before the Town Council.

### **Establishing Service**

#### **Office and Service Hours**

1. The Town's Customer Service Department is located in the Mount Pleasant Town Hall. The Town Hall is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Routine and regular service work will be performed during these hours, Monday through Friday, except for holidays. Service work for unusual conditions may be arranged at other times upon request.
2. Emergency restoration work is performed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Please page us at **704-788-0301** for emergency service. If after hours reconnection work is performed to reconnect service to a customer who was disconnected due to nonpayment, then after-hours reconnection fee will be charged to the customer's account. This fee is set by the Town Board of Commissioners in the Town Fee Schedule.

#### **Request for Service with Existing System Connection**

1. Original application for service: Any customer requesting services will complete an application and agreement for services. The customer will be asked to show:
  - a. Photo Identification, supply a social security number (or Federal Tax ID)  
**Social security numbers are used for collection purposes only**
  - b. Proof of residency if requested
  - c. Sign the application
2. A separate application will be requested if more than one connection is requested. In the instance where multiple living units are metered by a single meter, the account may only be established by the property owner.
3. Any changes of account information, mailing address, account name, etc. should be made in writing by the account-holder to prevent mistakes.
4. Non-residential Accounts: Accounts established for non-residential service will require a Federal Tax ID number, and a signature by an officer of the corporation listed in the Articles. For a non-incorporated business, the account will be listed in the name of a responsible person (owner, manager, etc.). That person accepts the personal responsibility for payment of the account.

5. Time of Application: The Town will strive to meet customers' needs for connection of service. Normal connection will be made the same day as the request if request is made by 3:00 p.m.
6. Explanation of Policies: Customers can request a verbal explanation of the Town's policies and may obtain a written copy of the guidelines as well.

### **Service Requests for New Connections to the System**

1. Customers wishing to establish a new water or sewer tap to the system should discuss their plans with the Utility Supervisor by calling 704-436-9803 or 704-436-2353.
2. All applicable tap fees, connection fees, or capacity fees must be paid before a connection will be established.
3. For new construction, charges assessed by the Water and Sewer Authority of Cabarrus County (WSACC) will be collected by the Cabarrus County Building Permitting.
4. Some connections may not be feasibly made to the existing system. All extensions of the water and wastewater system shall be governed by the Water and Wastewater System Extension Ordinance (Section 5-3001 to 5-3007)

### **Deposits**

1. A service security deposit will be collected before any service is established. The amount of the deposit will be determined from time to time by the Board of Commissioners and listed in the Town's adopted Fee Schedule.
2. Owners occupying or utilizing water at separate properties must establish a separate account, and pay a separate deposit for each property (see exception in 4 below for landlords).
3. Deposits will be reimbursed to customers when the account is closed and all bills have been paid in full. Deposits may be applied to the final bill if all other balances have been paid.
4. **Floating Deposits:** A landlord who maintains multiple establishments may be allowed to pay only one deposit for several service locations, for the purpose of maintenance of units between tenants. Floating deposits may not be used to establish accounts for renters.

### **Prior Debts**

1. The Town may deny service to an applicant who is indebted to the Town for service previously furnished.

## Maintaining Service

### Regular Billing Cycle, Late Fees, and Reconnection Charges

1. Bills are mailed out on or about the 2<sup>nd</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> of each month.
2. A bill is payable upon the date that it is received and is considered past due if payment is not received in the Town Hall by 4:30pm on the due date posted on each bill (20<sup>th</sup>).  
~~A \$5 late fee will be assessed on the account. When the due date falls on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, the next working day will be considered as the due date.~~ A late fee will be assessed on the account based on the current fee structure. If the 20<sup>th</sup> falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, payment may be made with a credit/debit card online or dropped into the Drop Box located beside Town Hall **prior to noon** the next business day to avoid the late fee.
3. Service is scheduled to be discontinued if payment is not received by 4:30pm on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month following the month after the bill is due. The reconnection fee and past due balance must be paid before service is reconnected. When the 5<sup>th</sup> falls on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, service will be disconnected on the next working day.  
Accounts cutoff more than once within a calendar year for nonpayment must pay the FULL account balance and the reconnection fee prior to reconnection.
4. A Non-Payment Administrative Service Disconnection Fee will be charged to all customers scheduled for disconnection. This fee will be set by the Board of Commissioners and listed in the Town's adopted Fee Schedule.
5. A reconnection fee will be charged for customers wishing to reconnect to the water system following disconnection for nonpayment. This fee will be set by the Board of Commissioners and listed in the Town's adopted Fee Schedule. This fee may vary for reconnections made during working hours and reconnections made after hours or on weekends.
  - a. When a customer requests reconnection between the hours of 8:00am and 4:30pm, on a regular working weekday, there will be no cost for regular reconnection, unless otherwise specified by the Board of Commissioners in the Town's adopted fee schedule. The customer must pay, at the Town Hall, the past due balance of the bill, and the Non-payment administrative service disconnection fee before service will be reestablished.
  - b. When a customer requests reconnection outside of the regular reconnection period an off-hours reconnection fee will be applied to the account. The reconnection fee, non-payment administrative service disconnection fee, and the past due balance must be paid by noon the following working day to retain service.

6. When water has been disconnected for nonpayment, only cash, money order, certified check, or credit/debit cards will be accepted as payment. **No personal checks will be accepted.**

### **Drop Box for Paying After Hours**

1. For customer convenience, a drop box is located at the front left corner of Town Hall (near the Wheel Chair Ramp), at 8590 Park Drive. For added security, please do not deposit cash in the after-hours depository.
2. Payments made in the drop box are accepted for the day the drop is made, regardless of date on the check or bill.
3. When the due date, **20<sup>th</sup>**, falls on a ~~Friday~~, Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, ~~the next working day will be considered as the due date~~, and all drop box payments made over the holiday or weekend are credited as paid prior to the due date **if in the box prior to noon of the next work day.**
4. **Other Payment Options for after hours are online credit/debit payments or setting up Automatic Draft payments.**

### **The Town's Response to Returned Checks**

1. The Town will accept only cash, certified check, money order, or credit/debit card from any customer having two (2) returned checks. The following policy will apply to customers paying with returned checks:
  - a. Upon receipt of the first returned check, the customer will be informed of and given a copy of the written policy.
  - b. Upon receipt of the second returned check, the Town will only accept cash, certified check, or money order from said customer for term of 365 days from the time of receiving the second returned check.
  - c. When a customer, having previously paid with two (2) checks that are returned, and having the privilege of paying with checks reestablished after the 365 day term, presents another check for payment that is returned, the Town will accept only cash, certified check, or money order from said customer in perpetuity.
2. Returned checks shall be picked up within 72 hours of notice from the Town. If the returned check is not picked up with payment in full including the returned check fee, service shall be disconnected without further notice.
3. Customers will be charged a return check fee for each returned check. This fee will be set by the Board of Commissioners and listed in the Town's adopted Fee Schedule.

## Adjustments for Leaks

1. High bills due to leaks may be eligible for an adjustment, if the following criteria are met.
  - a. The Water Superintendent must verify that the high bill is due to a leak in the customer's plumbing.
  - b. The leak must result in a meter reading with water usage ~~400~~ 50 percent above the customer's average consumption for the prior 6 months.
  - c. The customer must show proof (parts purchased or plumbers receipt) that the leak has been repaired and completes the Leak Adjustment Form.
  - d. Only one modification may be granted to a customer within 365 days.
  - e. The customer will be charged the same wholesale rate paid by the Town for water usage over the 6 month average due to the leak.
  - f. If the water leak has occurred before the water has gone into the sewer system, the Town can forgive the excess sewer charges over the customer's 6 month sewer average.
  - g. If the water leak went into the sewage system, the customer will be charged the same wholesale rate paid by the Town for sewer charges over the customer's 6 month sewer average.
2. If the bill meets these criteria, then the bill may be reduced to the current purchase rate for the same amount of water paid by the Town to its whole sale water provider for treated water. (Section 5-1016).

## Adjustments for Filling Pools

1. The Town of Mount Pleasant may make adjustment to water/sewer customer charges in the event of seasonal filling of swimming pools. Adjustments shall be made in accordance with the following policy:
  - a. Adjustments shall be authorized a maximum of one time per year.
  - b. The customer shall be responsible for notifying the Customer Service Department to report a pool has been or shall be filled during a particular billing cycle.
  - c. No adjustment shall be made for water consumption.
  - d. An adjustment may be made for sewer consumption. The sewer charge for a billing cycle during which a pool was filled shall be calculated based on the previous six month actual usage for the account.

## **DIFFICULTY IN PAYING BILL**

1. The following organizations may be able to offer assistance to customers who are having difficulty in paying their bill.

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>
Cabarrus County Dept. of Social Services	704-920-1400
Concord Christian Ministries	704-786-4709

2. We encourage each customer to seek assistance with paying their utility bills prior to disconnection.

## **Billing Accuracy**

1. Customers who dispute the accuracy of their bill may contact Town Hall to request investigation of the bill.
2. An investigation may be conducted at the discretion of the Town, only if there is evidence that bill does not accurately reflect usage.
3. Requesting an investigation of a bill does not relieve a customer of the responsibility to pay the bill by the due date.
4. In the event a billing error is identified by the Town, a new bill may be calculated using average consumption in prior years.
5. Higher than average water consumption does not automatically, or independently, indicate that a billing error has occurred.

## **Direct Bill-Pay by Bank**

1. Many banks offer automatic bill pay to their customers. These arrangements are negotiated between customers and the bank. The Town of Mount Pleasant is in no way associated as a third party.
2. It is the responsibility of the customer to ensure that their payment is made on time.
3. Customers are advised to be aware of processing and delivery times required by their bank to make payments to the Town of Mount Pleasant.
4. Customers are responsible for all fees and charges when a direct bill-pay from a bank is not received by the Town prior to due dates.

## Transfer or Termination of Service

### **Transfer of Service**

1. Customers may transfer service from one location to another as long as any current bills are not past due. The remaining amount owed and any fees will be transferred to the new account.
2. Customers may be required to complete a new application when transferring service **to update personal information. Also, if there is not a deposit on the current account, the customer will need to pay the deposit fee for the new account.**
3. If the customer has an account that is past due, he or she must pay the past due amount before the account will be transferred.

### **Closing An Utility Account**

1. After an account has been closed by either customer request or policy of the Town, all funds, including deposits, refunds, and overcharge credits will be used against amounts owed the Town on the closed account first. Remaining funds will then be used against any amounts owed for water or sewer service on any other accounts the customer may have with Town. When those accounts have been cleared, a check for the remaining money will be issued to the customer for any net credit.

### **Forced Closing of a Utility Account**

1. One month after termination of utility service due to nonpayment, the account will be closed. All fees and credits are then added to the balance and a "Final" bill will be issued to the customer. Any balance owed to the Town will remain in active suspense until the balance is paid.
2. All legal means of collection for an account in arrears will be taken whether the account is in "closed" status or not.

### **Voluntary Closing of a Utility Account**

1. **Requesting Discontinuance of Service:** Any customer requesting discontinuance of service will inform the Town's employee of the location, date service is to be disconnected, and the forwarding mail address for the final bill.

2. Disconnection Scheduling: Disconnection from the Town's utility system will be performed the same day if the request is received prior to noon. A request received after noon may be fulfilled the next working day.
3. Final Bill: A customer's final bill will be processed and mailed along with the regular cycle billing.

### Water Meters

#### **Meters are the Property of the Town**

1. Town personnel must have unobstructed access to water meters, in order to provide water service.
2. Customers who damage water meters may be charged for the repair.

#### **Meter Reading**

1. The Town's meters will be read by Town employees according to the Town's schedule. Reading dates will vary slightly from month to month due to weekends, holidays, weather conditions, and other factors. Monthly billing periods will be assumed to be 30 days, but may range from 27 to 33 days.
2. The Town's well-trained meter readers use modern meter reading equipment and techniques. If meter reading corrections are necessary, the Town will make the adjustments and a new bill may be rendered upon request. A credit due to a customer from a meter reading error will be posted to the customer's account or a check may be written to the customer if requested.

#### **Meter Testing Requested by Customer**

1. A customer may request to have their meter tested by a third party meter testing lab. Such testing shall be completed under the following policy:
  - a. If the meter is found to be operating inaccurately, then no fee will be charged to the customer requesting the testing.
  - b. If the meter is found to be operating accurately, then the customer will be charged for the meter testing fee set by the Board of Commissioners and listed in the Town's adopted Fee Schedule.
  - c. Fees may vary based on meter size.

#### **Tampering With Water Meters**

1. Tampering with a meter or bypassing a meter is the same as stealing. The large majority of good paying customers who would be financially burdened with paying for the stolen services require the aggressive enforcement of this policy.

2. Anyone who tampers alters, bypasses, removes, or replaces a water meter will be charged a tampering fee set by the Board of Commissioners and listed in the Town's adopted Fee Schedule, along with all costs of repairs.
3. Removing a lock or a tie that has been placed on a meter is considered meter tampering.