

**SULTAN CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

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ITEM NO: Consent C 8  
DATE: February 12, 2009  
SUBJECT: Utility Account Relief

CONTACT PERSON: Laura Koenig, Clerk/Deputy Finance Director



**ISSUE:**

The issue before the Council is to approve the Utility Committee recommendations for relief from excess charges on utility accounts due to water leaks and vacant properties. (Attachment A).

**SUMMARY:**

The Utility committee met on January 29, 2009 to review requests for relief from excess charges for water usage due to leaks and for vacant properties. In accordance with the current policy, utility customers may receive relief from excess charges once in a five year period. (Attachment B).

The Committee has been receiving requests for waiver of charges from landlords whose tenants have left unpaid bills. The landlords sign an Authorization to Bill Renter with the understanding that they are responsible for "any all utility charges incurred at the property". (Attachment C). The Committee has requested the Utility Clerk add past due statement notification to all landlord/tenant accounts, unless the landlord specifically directs the City in writing to remove the notification.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** \$484.64 total relief granted.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

- 1) Approve the Utility Committee recommendations for relief of utility charges for excess water usage.
- 2) Approve the Utility Committee recommendations to waive late fees not covered under the current policy.
- 3) Direct Staff to prepare a revised policy that addresses other relief requests.

Attachment: A. Utility Committee Report  
B. Relief Policy  
C. Authorization to Bill Renter

UTILITY COMMITTEE MEETING

January 29, 2009

Members Present: City Administrator - Deborah Knight,  
CM Steve Slawson, CM Sarah Davenport-Smith, Utility Clerk – Janice Leonardi

1) 307 2<sup>nd</sup> Street

**RE: Requesting relief of water, sewer, garbage, recycling charges for March 2008 = \$105.71**

Customer is requesting relief of services for the month of March, 2008 because the house was vacant at this time and services were not used. Customer originally wanted credit for January through March 2008, but account history shows water usage into February, 2008. Thus, request was changed to relief of March services only.

APPROVED – Committee agreed there was just cause to credit the base utility charges for the month of March as the facts provided gave evidence that the house was vacant and services not used in March.

2) 106 8<sup>th</sup> Street

**RE: Requesting relief of excess water charges due to a faulty toilet = \$202.53**

Customer is requesting relief of excess water charges for a three month period from approximately September 20, 2008 through November 20, 2008. Residence had a faulty toilet valve which was repaired as soon as she realized what the problem was.

APPROVED – Committee agreed request for relief was valid and owner had taken care of the issue as soon as she found the exact problem.

3) 404 8<sup>th</sup> Street

**RE: Requesting relief of excess water charges due to a broken pipe = \$74.01**

Customer is requesting relief of excess water charges due to a broken pipe. She had repaired as soon as she could get a plumber out to the house. Customer is asking that \$10.00 late fees credited as she made payments when she was supposed to. Late fee charged because of excess water charges.

APPROVED – Committee agreed the home owner repaired leak in a timely manner, relief is justified.

4) 930 Stevens Avenue

**RE: Requesting partial relief of utility charges between April 2007 and August 2007 = Up to \$498.10**

Customer is requesting that she be granted some relief on utility bills as she was not aware that tenant was behind. Tenant vacated building and left unpaid utilities. At the time, owner was not receiving past due notices. Owner was not responsive to bills we sent her and did not ask for help or relief at the time of this situation in 2007.

DENIED – Committee agreed all services had been used for the entire time period and that the owner of the building is ultimately responsible. Committee is waiving late fees as they are not connected to services used. Building owner must set up payment plan for balance owing.

5) 13826 310<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E.

**RE: Requesting relief of excess water charges due to water line break = \$102.39**

Customer is requesting relief of excess water charges due to water line break. Break was repaired in a timely manner.

APPROVED – Committee agreed owner found and repaired leak in a timely manner. Relief granted.

**Note:** Committee discussed and agreed to have Utility Clerk add past due statement notification to all landlord/tenant accounts. Committee determined that any account which has a Utility Committee Request in process must keep their account current, as late fees will not be waived.

**CITY OF SULTAN  
POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**TITLE: GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**SUBJECT: UTILITY COMMITTEE WATER LEAK RELIEF REQUEST POLICIES**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/01/2001**

**PURPOSE:**

To offer relief of excess water charges to individuals within the City due to the hardship of a water leak.

**DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED:**

Finance/Utility Departments

**UTILITY COMMITTEE WATER LEAK REQUEST POLICIES:**

Each citizen shall be given the opportunity to apply for relief of excess water charges incurred as a result of a water leak through the Utility Committee.

In the event of excessive water meter reading caused by broken or leaking water services pipes upon the premises of any customer, without the knowledge or fault of the customer, an adjustment may be requested upon written application within a thirty day period of receipt of the billing in question to the Utility Committee. After the complete and satisfactory repairs and with documentation of satisfactory repair, reduction in fees shall be based on an average of the past twelve month's usage as determined by the Finance Department to be associated with the billing period on question.

**All request for relief of excess utility charges will be considered subject to the determination that no further approved relief to the property within five (5) years of the current request has occurred, exclusive of ownership changes.**

The Utility Committee, after review of all information provided to them, shall recommend to the City Council whether to approve or deny all received requests with an explanation for each action within 30 days of receiving the request.

Once an applicant has been approved for the relief, the individual's utility account will be adjusted to reflect the discount within the same month of approval. A notice shall be mailed to the applicant to inform them of such action.

In the event an applicant's request is denied, a letter explaining the reasons for such action shall be mailed to them.

**CITY OF SULTAN  
Authorization to Bill Renter**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby authorize the City of Sultan to bill the current renters occupying property owned by me.

Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Property location: \_\_\_\_\_

I fully understand that in accordance with the Sultan Municipal Code 13.12.050, I have total responsibility for any and all utility charges incurred at the above listed property.

I further understand that billing of the renter will be discontinued should the account become delinquent and any charges incurred in collecting the overdue amounts could become a lien against the property.

I also understand that this change will not go into effect until all outstanding charges are paid in full through the current month.

Owners Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Owners Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Owners Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Effective Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Must be the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month**

Renters Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

DATE: Application Received: \_\_\_\_\_  
Account Paid in full: \_\_\_\_\_  
Account Changed: \_\_\_\_\_