



## AGENDA ACTION FORM

**Consideration of a Resolution to temporarily give management and staff more flexibility to work with utility customers who accumulated delinquent balances during COVID-19 and during our billing delays related to meter replacement.**

To: Board of Mayor and Aldermen

From: Chris McCartt, City Manager *CM*

Action Form No.: AF-25-2023

Work Session: February 6, 2023

First Reading: February 7, 2023

Final Adoption: February 7, 2023

Staff Work By: Lisa Winkle

Presentation By: Lisa Winkle

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**Recommendation:**

Approve the Resolution.

**Executive Summary:**

Many utility customers have been allowed to accumulate delinquent utility balances. First this was due to COVID-19 and the desire not to make a difficult time even worse. Then we continued to allow the delinquent balances to accumulate due to the time involved with manually reading meters and getting the bills prepared timely.

We are now beginning to work delinquent accounts and cut off customers who do not call or come in to make payment arrangements. City policy only allows payment arrangements to extend 6 months. During this extraordinary time we would like to extend payment arrangements for 12 months. City policy demands that the customer's water be cut off if they miss a single payment after the arrangement has been signed and not turn it back on until full payment has been made. Staff requests flexibility to delay cut offs or extend payment arrangements to work with our customers. We request this additional flexibility through December 31, 2023.

Right now there is federal covid money available to help delinquent customers by directly paying all or at least part of their utility balance. The biggest program is the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) administered by Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UETHDA). The BMA approved a resolution to participate in the program on June 6, 2022. However our policies have made it difficult for customers. Policy requires city staff to give documentation directly to the customer and the customer to take it to UETHDA. In many instances customers are having to drive back and forth between city hall and UETHDA to ask for additional information taking extra time and causing delays. We would like to have the ability to get the customers' permission to email the requested documentation directly to our UETHDA contacts. This would lessen the burden on our customers especially ones without ready transportation. It would prevent customers from being cut off and enable us to cut customers back on quicker.

**Attachments:**

Resolution

	Y	N	O
Cooper	—	—	—
Duncan	—	—	—
George	—	—	—
Montgomery	—	—	—
Olterman	—	—	—
Phillips	—	—	—
Shull	—	—	—