

Oelwein Utility Assistance Program

August 11 6:30 Public Information Session



Why are we here?

- In the summer of 2024, the city did a utility increase of 30 percent
- At those meetings, several public comments revolved around how the city expected low to moderate income customers to afford their bill
- The city wants to invest in properties to ensure they have properly operating utilities

Tonight's Agenda

- Discuss in detail:
 - Oelwein Leak Assistance Program
 - Oelwein Water Line Assistance Program
 - Oelwein Sanitary Assistance Program
- Funding of the programs
- Questions from customers
- Comments and concerns from customers

Oelwein Leak Assistance Program

- The city would pay a plumber up to \$350 to repair a leak in an owner-occupied home
 - Must meet income requirements
 - SSI, SSDI, SNAP, Elderly Tax Credit
 - The city would bid out the services annually with a local plumber
 - This assistance can only be once per year by the property owner
 - Eligible Leaks
 - Toilet, faucet, shower, outdoor spigot, broken pipe, water softener

Oelwein Water Line Assistance Program

- Owner occupied homes who have a damaged or broken service line
- The city will provide \$2,500 toward the repair
- Staff sees on average less than three water service line repairs a year
- Lastly, with the new federal rules, the city must replace all discovered lead service lines. If the city discovers a lead service line while repairing the city's main, it must be replaced.

Oelwein Sanitary Assistance Program

- This program would help with failed or collapsed sewer line. This will also help property owners install back flow preventers.
- The city will provide \$2,500 toward the repair
- Staff sees on average less than one sewer line replacement in a year

Budget

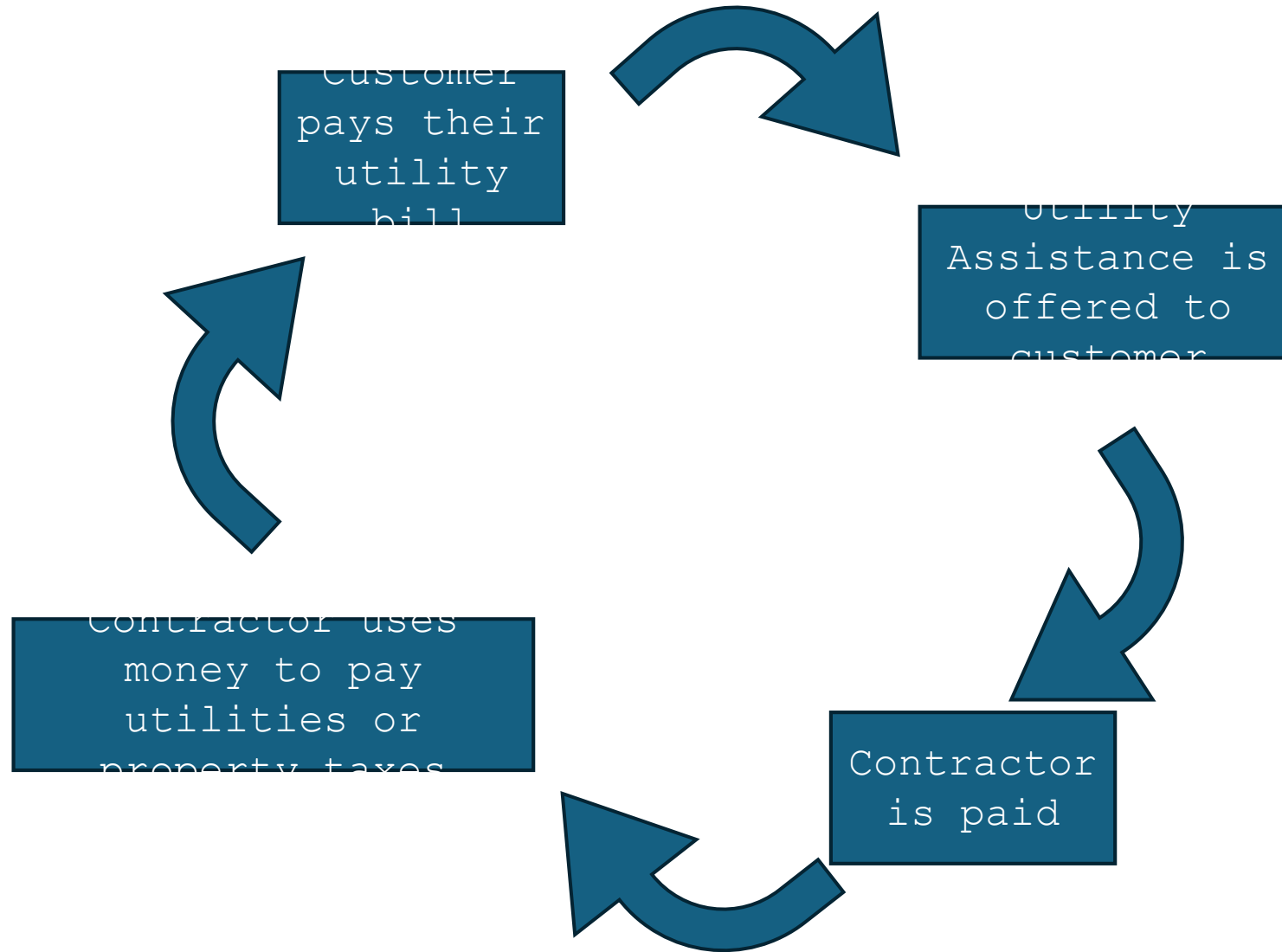
- City will implement a program allowing customers to donate \$1 each month toward the program.
 - The goal is 500 customers
- The city will allocate \$5000 between the water and sewer utility
 - With over 2,500 customers, the city would use \$2.00 from customers annually
 - \$1.00 from water and \$1.00 from sewer
 - \$5,000 is .001 percent of the operating costs for the city utility
- The city will only spend what is generated each year

Questions

- “Why is the city giving away money after just raising rates”?
 - The city wants to provide assistance to those in need while making investments in the city’s utility system and properties. A property with a failed water or sewer line is much more likely to fall into disrepair and no longer be an asset to the community.
- “Why is the city giving money to lazy people”?
 - People are not lazy, their predicaments vary from house to house
 - With the program focused on owner occupied, the city wants these repairs to ensure two things:
 - Utility bills stay manageable and do not increase because of a leak
 - Investing in the city’s housing stock through these repairs

Questions

- “So, the city is just going to give away money to everyone for anything”
 - This is a narrow-focused program which will be evaluated each year. If the program does not work, the city council can vote and discontinue the program. If the program is successful, the city will continue to invest in the water sewer utility.



Next Step

- City Council will vote on a resolution to establish the program
- City Council will pass an ordinance allowing for utility donations
- City staff will promote signing up for the donations
- City staff will work implement the program and provide updates to the city council