

Sample Adjustments to Utility Bill Ordinance

CITY OF _____ POLICY REGARDING ADJUSTMENTS TO UTILITY BILLS

1. **Policy and Purpose.** It is the policy of the City of _____ to make adjustments to customer utility bills where said adjustment is necessary to correct billing errors, to correct errors due to equipment failure, or to fairly apply the rates and rules of the utility. The purpose of this policy is to improve customer service by enabling staff to quickly and accurately respond to customer requests for adjustments to utility bills rather than waiting for the matter to come before the City Council and also setting forth the situations where adjustments will and will not be considered.

2. **Responsibility.** A panel made up of the public works coordinator, the city clerk-treasurer and the billing clerk shall determine the amount, if any, of the adjustment to be made. The city clerk-treasurer or designee shall receive requests and notify the customer of the determination.

3. **Adjustments Allowed.** Staff is authorized to make adjustments to utility bills, without City Council action, in the following cases: **Billing Errors:** Where an error has occurred that results in an inaccurate utility bill being sent to a customer, staff shall correct the error as soon as discovered, whether by the customer or by staff. These adjustments include data recording and entry errors as well as meter failures if tested and found to be inaccurate. **Late Fees:** Where a customer incurs late fees and requests an adjustment, staff may reduce or remove the late fee based on the customer's circumstances and payment history. **Sanitary Sewer:** Where a customer experiences extraordinary water consumption during a billing period due to break in customer owned plumbing, equipment malfunction, etc. and said water did not enter the sanitary sewer system, staff may adjust the sanitary sewer charge to an amount that is more typical of that customer's normal usage. When an adjustment is made, a credit for the amount of the adjustment, including any sales tax 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.

4. **Adjustments Not Allowed.** The City will not consider adjustments for the following situations:

Water. Adjustments to water charges where customer experiences extraordinary water consumption during a billing period due to a break in customer owned plumbing, equipment malfunction, etc. **Sanitary Sewer.** Adjustments to sanitary sewer charges for customers who claim normal outdoor water usage (i.e. lawn or garden sprinkling, car washing, filling swimming pools, etc.) where the water used did not enter the sanitary sewer system.

5. **Requests for Adjustments.** The city 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 City and deemed necessary to make a determination on the request.

6. **Response.** The utility shall respond to the written request for adjustment within ten (10) business days after receiving from the customer all the information necessary to make a determination on the request.

7. **Reporting.** The city clerk-treasurer shall provide a quarterly report to the City Council on adjustments made under this policy exceeding one hundred dollars (\$100).

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

Effective Date. This policy shall become effective immediately upon approval of the City Council.

This policy was adopted by the _____ City Council this day, _____.

_____, Mayor

ATTEST: _____, City Clerk-Treasurer