

Town of Whitsett

Effective Date:	July 1, 2023
Approval Date:	June 13, 2023
Category:	Water & Sewer

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Subject: Utility Service Policies
(Water and Sewer Services)

1. Utility Service Initiation:

- A. A completed application and deposit, if applicable, must be submitted to the Town of Whitsett to establish service. Please allow up to two business days for processing.
- B. For any new applicant, any of their prior balances must be paid before establishing a new account.
- C. A Service Fee will be assessed to each new account in a manner set forth by the town's Utility Fee Schedule to cover administrative costs associated with account initiation.

2. Customer Deposits:

- A. All accounts are required to pay a deposit.
- B. Deposit amounts can be changed annually and published in the town's Whitsett Utility Fee Schedule on file at Town Hall.
- C. Interest will not be paid on deposits held by the Town.
- D. Deposits will be refunded under the following conditions:
 - I. Customer's account is successfully closed, and all balances are paid.
 - II. If an account is terminated and a balance remains, the deposit will be credited to the customer's account and the difference refunded to the customer.

3. Billing:

- E. All customers will be charged monthly based on the service they receive (water and sewer) depending on the availability of that active service. The Service Charge Rates can be changed annually and published in the Town of Whitsett's Utility Fee Schedule on file at Town Hall.
 - A. Active account customers will be charged monthly based on the published rates established in the Town's Utility Fee Schedule.

B. The town will send final account billing statement to a provided forwarding address at the time a customer requests to end their service.

C. Billing Cycles are monthly and due dates adhere to the following schedule:

- I. A bill payment is due within 30 calendar days from the bill date shown on the bill.
- II. Failure to receive bill in the mail does not excuse responsibility for timely payment or prevent service disconnection. The Town of Whitsett is not responsible for a failure or delay of the U.S. Postal Service to deliver bills.
- III. A late notice will be sent via phone call to customers with past due bills after 35 days have passed and no payment has been received by the Town.
- IV. A late fee will be added to the customer's account after 9:00am on the 31st day from the bill date if the account has not been paid. An Overdue Late fee charge will be assessed in a manner set forth by the Town of Whitsett's Utility fee schedule. Customers are granted a "one-time" annual exemption every 365 days from the late penalty fee. It is the responsibility of the customer to request the "one-time" exemption by contacting the Town Administrator.
- V. After the 40th day of delinquency, the customer's account is subject to disconnection/lock-out status, the utility may be cutoff at any time past the 40 days of being delinquent. If the 40th day falls on the town closure days, weekend or holiday; payment must be received by 12:01 pm on the next business day.
- VI. When the account is delinquent, and the account reaches shut-off lock-out status a re-connect fee will be added to the account and all balance past due amounts and fees must be paid in full before service can be re-established. The Re-connect fee will increase with each occurrence that the account is open and active with the Town. Re-connect Charge rates are published in the Town of Whitsett's Utility Fee Schedule. If the service is discontinued and

not re-established within 60 business days after the lock-out the account will be terminated, and the customer must re-apply for service. If the customer is a tenant, then Property Owner will also be notified of the past due account typically by a courtesy phone call. All Terminated accounts 90 days beyond their initial due date are subject to be turned over to a third-party agency for collection.

VII. If the customer is also the Property Owner and the delinquent account is past 90 days the account is automatically terminated, the water meter is then considered a subject for removal by the Town's Enforcement Officer.

VIII. When account collection fails the Town Council must approve any amount, that are considered for a loss before any write-off amount can occur.

4. Payment:

- A.** The Town of Whitsett will accept payment in the form of cash, check, money order, or credit/debit card
- B.** Payments may be made in person at the Town Hall during normal business hours, or by mail. A payment drop box is located at the Town Hall Payments placed in the drop box after 3:00pm will be considered next-day payments.
- C.** Payment Vouchers from approved civic, fraternal, philanthropic, or social service organizations will be accepted in lieu of customer payment. In the event a payment voucher is accepted, no penalties will accrue from the date the voucher is received.
- D.** Partial payments made towards a customer's account will be credited in the following order:
 - 1. Penalties/Fees
 - 2. Water
 - 3. Sewer

E. Payments made in excess of the balance due will not be refunded, but rather applied as a credit balance to the account. Credit balances of \$5 or more will be refunded in the event of account closure.

F. Returned Checks/Drafts:

I. All checks/drafts will be presented to the customer's bank twice.

II. The customer's account will be charged a returned check fee published in the Town of Whitsett Utility Fee Schedule on file at Town Hall and service is subject to disconnection/lock-out for nonpayment, refer to Section 3.

III. A returned check must be replaced with cash, money order, credit card or certified check.

5. Payment Extensions:

A. One (1) due date extension per 12-month period in the form of a delay in disconnection may be granted to any customer regardless of need. Due date extensions must not exceed 5 calendar days from original disconnection date. A due date extension will not suspend the accrual of penalties.

B. Default on the payments required by the agreement will result in disconnection of service for nonpayment and termination of account could result.

C. Requests for extensions greater than those allowed in Paragraph A. above will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Town Administrator based on specific need or extenuating circumstance.

6. Meter Testing:

A. If a customer disputes the accuracy of a bill, a request may be made to capture a data log of the meter in question. One free data-log per fiscal year may be performed for each customer as requested. Contact the Town Administrator and provide any paperwork demonstrating the need for testing. A fee as published in the Town of Whitsett Utility Fee Schedule on

file at Town Hall must be paid before any subsequent data-logs will be performed.

- B. If a data-log does not resolve any billing disputes, customers may request the performance of a physical test on his/her water meter to confirm billing accuracy. A meter test fee as published in the Town of Whitsett Utility Fee Schedule on file at Town Hall must be paid before the test is performed.

- C. The Town will perform the performance test in accordance with the American Water Works Association standards. If the meter fails to register within the American Water Works Association standards, the meter test fee will be refunded to the customer. If the meter functions properly when tested, the meter performance test fee is kept by the Town.

7. Adjustments:

- A. Usage charges may be eligible for adjustments to water and/or sewer charges in the following situations:
 - I. Meter malfunction proven by testing in accordance with the American Water Works Association standards.
 - II. Documented leaks. Documentation may consist of a plumber's bill, recent receipts for plumbing repair parts, or Town staff verification of leak accompanied by a customer's written request. Only adjustments to sewer charges will be granted and no more than two adjustments for leaks will be credited within a twelve (12) month period.
 - III. Inadvertent use beyond the customer's knowledge and control.
 - IV. Crossed service connections.

V. Billing errors or omissions.

VI. Adjustments for sewer charges are allowed one time per calendar year for filling pools.

B. Adjustment Methodology:

- I. Adjustments for meter malfunctions will be credited to the customer for up to one (1) years' worth of consumption. The adjustment will be calculated by multiplying the customer's consumption by the amount (quantified as a percentage) of noncompliance over and above (fast meter) the American Water Works Association Standards. Customers whose meters are found to be performing below (slow meter) the American Water Works Association Standards will not be charged for lost consumption.
- II. Documented leaks for customers with consistent consumption history, the most recent six (6) month average for normal consumption will be calculated. Those users with inconsistent consumption history will be calculated using the most appropriate method such as a seasonal average or a computer-generated moving average. For residential customers with insufficient consumption history, an estimated consumption of 5,000 gallons per month will be used as the basis. The basis for nonresidential customers with insufficient consumption history will be evaluated case by case by the Water/Sewer Billing Department using the best available data for the particular use.
- III. Customers who experience an inadvertent use beyond their knowledge and control will have their sewer charges adjusted according to the method outlined in paragraph ii. above. Additionally, customer whose consumption has increased by ten times (10x) their normal consumption may be eligible for an additional credit of 25% towards their excess water charges.
- IV. Adjustments for crossed service connections will be made as follows:
 - A. The affected customers' utility billing histories will be netted for the past three (3) years or all the customer history, whichever is less.

- V. Credit will be applied to accounts, as appropriate, when overcharges are discovered. No adjustment will be made when undercharges are found and will be recovered in subsequent routine billings. Billings for undercharges that result in charges above the accustomed amount can be paid in installments not to exceed three years or length of the customer history, whichever is less. Adjustments for utility billing errors will be made when overcharges are discovered. There will be no adjustments for undercharges that will be recovered in subsequent routine billings. Billing undercharges and omissions will be billed retroactively up to one (1) year when service use and/or availability can be determined and quantified. Payment plans will be offered to customers with retroactive billings not to exceed the length of the term of undercharges/omissions or three (3) years, whichever is less.
- VI. Pool adjustments will be credited for the estimated consumption as calculated and included on the completed form provided by the Town Administrator. In no case shall an adjustment exceed the customer's normal consumption as calculated per Paragraph ii. above.

8. Service Disconnections/Reconnections

- A. Service disconnections will be performed on the 40th day of delinquency. The Town is authorized to conduct disconnections in a manner deemed most appropriate by Town Staff including delay of disconnections and/or disconnections over multiple days. All unpaid delinquent accounts will be monitored on a routine basis for unauthorized customer reconnection/tampering.

- B.** Customers will be provided a notice of disconnection via phone-call no later than one day prior to being disconnected. Though not required, this call is performed as a courtesy offered by the Town to maintain helpful communication with customers and mitigate potential disputes.
- C.** Services will be reconnected once all past due charges are paid on the account, as stated in Section 3 of this document.
- D.** Services will be reconnected in a sequential order determined by Town Staff including, but not limited to geographic location, reading sequence, and/or order in which customers pay.
- E.** All accounts that are paid before close of business will be reconnected the same day.
- F.** Upon reconnection, a member of Town Staff will observe the customer's meter. The service will only remain connected if/when all water has stopped flowing through the meter. If service is left disconnected, a member of Town Staff will notify the customer typically by a phone call.