

ALLEGANY COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

UTILITIES DIVISION

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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Director of Public Works

MARK W. YODER, P.E.

Utilities Division Chief

STAFF REPORT

TO: Brandon S. Butler, Esq., County Administrator
FROM: Mark W. Yoder, P.E., Utilities Division Chief
DATE: June 1, 2018
RE: Disconnection of Water and Sewer Service

For the Agenda of: June 7, 2018

BACKGROUND

On May 22, 2018, the Sanitary Commission met to consider changes to our current temporary disconnection policy.

ISSUES

The following are some issues that need to be considered if any changes are made to the policy:

- Our debt payments continue regardless if a home is connected or not.
- Our current policy does not encourage a person to buy a dilapidated house and remodel it, because paying utility bills increases the total cost of the project. The Commission would like to encourage these types of projects, not discourage them.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

We do not have a lot of requests for temporary disconnections; however the requests are increasing. Much of our operational cost is unchanged regardless of the number of customers. If customers disconnect and do not pay for service, those costs are borne by the remaining district customers.

ALTERNATIVES

Keep the existing policy for temporary disconnections.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Changes to the policy approved in January 2018 by the Sanitary Commission and the County Commissioners consist of the following:

- The requirement to physically disconnect the sewer lateral was removed.
- For newly acquired property that is not fit to be occupied water will be disconnected but disconnection of sewer is not required. The payment is reduced from 50% to 25% of normal charge for a maximum of two years instead of one year.

CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICY

Conforms to County Policy. The Allegany County Commissioners often take action based on recommendations from the Sanitary Commission.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve and adopt the attached change in policy from the Sanitary Commission regarding temporary disconnection of water and sewer service.

CHANGE IN POLICY

TEMPORARY DISCONNECTION OF WATER AND SEWER SERVICE

Whereas, the Allegany County Sanitary Commission determined that it is necessary to adopt the following Temporary One Year Disconnection of Water and Sewer Service policy.

NOW THEREFORE IT IS RESOLVED that the Allegany County Sanitary Commission, the governing body of the Allegany County Sanitary District, Inc., pursuant to the provisions of Section 658 of Article 43 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, does hereby certify to the County Commissioners of Allegany County that it is necessary to adopt the following Temporary One Year Disconnection of Water and Sewer Service Policy.

1. An existing water or sewer customer may request, in writing, disconnection of an abandoned structure for sewer and water service if no fixtures are in the structure. The Utilities Division will visit the site to evaluate the structure prior to the disconnection.
2. When the structure is deemed unoccupied, the water service will be disconnected by the Utilities Division by removing the water meter.
3. The customer must acknowledge in writing that if water and/or sewer service is not restored after one year or full charge being paid; new current connection fees will be charged. The connection fees are subject to change. In FY 18, they are \$750 for water and \$750 for sewer plus the cost of labor and material. Allegany County will provide the disconnection request form for signature.
4. In some County water and sewer districts, the funding agencies that participated in the original construction require 100% customer participation in the form of a minimum service charge payment.
5. A newly acquired property, by purchase, or estate settlement, provided that all past due utility bills are paid, will be required to pay 25% of the minimum charges, provided the home is not fit to be occupied and a major renovation is underway up to a maximum of two years. The water meter will be removed by the County. All fixtures do not need removed. The Utilities Division will confirm the renovation is underway. After two years, the property must begin paying full charges or permanently remove fixtures.
6. A major disaster, such as a fire that renders the home unfit to be occupied, would be treated the same as Item 5, as previously stated, for up to two years.

7. Existing houses that are being abandoned by the homeowner to be used for storage or for possible future remodel will follow the existing policy that requires fixture removal and repayment of tap fee when reconnected.

8. In all cases, the neighboring homes will also be informed of the situation of the disconnected property. Also informing them that connecting or allowing the house to be connected to the adjacent property is illegal and considered theft, subject to legal action, and as a minimum, be assessed the County service tampering fee of \$250 per service. This tampering fee would also be assessed to the disconnected property.

9. Any occupancy violation of the policies by the property owner will be subject to payment of past due utility bills based on the County's sole determination of costs and the utility tampering fee, with collection enforced by liens and/or more aggressive disconnection measures.

Date

Warren Foote – Chairman

Date

Jason M. Bennett, Secretary-Treasurer

MOTION

By motion duly carried of the County Commissioners of Allegany County, Maryland the following action was authorized as part of the Agenda for the June 7, 2018 public meeting.

Approve and adopt the attached change in policy from the Sanitary Commission approved and adopted regarding temporary disconnection of water and sewer service.

VOTE:

JCS

CVB

WRV

County Commissioners of Allegany County, Maryland

CERTIFICATION

I, Brandon S. Butler, Esq., County Administrator to the County Commissioners of Allegany County, Maryland, hereby certify that the above action of the Commissioners is a part of the formal, written record of the public meeting held on the 7th day of June 2018.

BY: _____
Brandon S. Butler, Esq.

SEAL

Dept: Public Works – Utilities Division
Account No: 5111
Contact: Mark W. Yoder, P.E.

Date:

Name
Address
Address

Account No.:

Dear Customer,

You have requested that you do not want to continue to pay the minimum charges on your water and/or sewer tap(s) for the above account. This letter is verification that if you elect to reconnect after two years, you will be charged the minimum reconnection fee at the current rate. In FY 2018, they are \$750 for water and/or \$750 for sewer.

Your quarterly charges will remain on your bill and it is your responsibility to write on the bill "Temporary Disconnection" for each quarter and then the charges will be reduced by 75%. Your charge will start with the quarter -----. Your signature will verify your acceptance of this policy for the disconnect(s) involved. Please sign and return one copy. The second copy is for your use.

If you have any questions, please contact this office at 301-777-5965, Ext. 265.

Thank you,

Sharon L. Bishop
Sr. Accounting Technician

I agree to pay the current reconnection fee to have the water and/or sewer service reconnected at the above address if I do not reconnect within a year.

Sign Name

Date

Print Name

Att.

DISCONNECTION OF WATER AND SEWER SERVICE

1. An existing water or sewer customer may request, in writing, disconnection of an abandoned structure for sewer and water service if no active fixtures are in the structure. The Utilities Division will visit the site to evaluate the structure prior to disconnect.
2. When the structure is deemed unoccupied, the water will be disconnected by the Utilities Division by removing the water meter.
3. For the sewer connection, the homeowner must excavate the tap as close as possible to the sewer main, disconnect and cap the service lateral and secure the cap with concrete. The homeowner must leave the cap uncovered for inspection by the Utilities Division. After inspection and approval by the Utilities Division, the homeowner may backfill the connection and sewage billing will be discontinued. If the disconnected lateral is backfilled prior to inspection, sewage billing will continue.
4. The customer must acknowledge in writing that if water and/or sewer service is ever restored, a new current connection fee will be charged. The connection fees are subject to change. In FY 2018 they are \$750 for water and \$750 for sewer. Allegany County will provide the form for signature.
5. In some locations, the funding agencies that participated in the original construction require 100% customer participation in the form of a minimum service charge payment. Therefore, at some locations, a minimum quarterly payment will be due regardless of whether a customer is connected or not.

This policy has been followed by the Utilities Division for several years and was formally adopted by the Allegany County Sanitary Commission on November 6, 2008.