



CITY OF SOUTH BEND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

August 17, 2022

Sharon McBride
South Bend Common Council
County City Building
227 W. Jefferson Blvd, 400
South Bend, IN 46601

Re: Amendments to various sections of Chapter 17 of South Bend Municipal Code

Dear Council President:

A few years ago, the Common Council authorized a Low Income Customer Assistance Program. This Program was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic while the City of South Bend also instituted a moratorium on utility bill collections. In late 2021, this program was revised to provide greater assistance, and was generally renamed Utility Assistance Program.

As the public health emergency has ceased, the City will continue with standard processes for collecting late payments on utility bills, up to and including disconnection of service after bill has become delinquent. These amendments are intended to recognize that customers who meet low income guidelines may have more difficulty paying their bill, and that those customers would benefit from certain modification to existing policies.

The following amendments are proposed:

- Update references to Low Income Customer Assistance Program (LICAP) to Utility Assistance Program (UAP)
- A process for enrolling renters into the UAP when the account is in the name of the property owner.
- Exemption from late penalties (fees) for water, sewer, and stormwater charges when customers are enrolled in UAP.
- Customers enrolled in UAP will not lose the benefits of the Water Service Line Repair Program, or Sewer Service Line Repair Program when their account is delinquent.

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Additionally, the amendment to the Water Service Line Repair program will revise the program to include coverage of separate irrigation lines owned by customers. These lines are currently excluded from this program. When an irrigation service line leaks under the street, damage to the street and other public and private property can occur. Customers are often not prepared for the expense of fixing these leaks. Customers who own separate irrigation service lines will be assessed the same monthly fee for Service Line Repair (\$2.10 per month), and the program will cover all repairs that occur between the public water main and the customers property. This will result in more timely repairs, minimize damage to public streets, and not require the customer to make a costly repair.

I will present this ordinance to the Council and will be accompanied by an attorney in the City's Department of Law.

Thank you for your assistance. We hope that the Council will consider this ordinance favorably.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Horvath', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric Horvath, Director of Public Works