


POLICY

	Policy:	Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy		
	Department:	Corporate Services		
	Division:	Finance	By-Law No.:	N/A
	Administered By:	Treasurer	Approval Date:	June 8, 2020
	Replaces:	N/A		
	Attachment(s):	N/A		

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Corporation of the Town of Amherstburg is committed to the establishment of a set of billing and collection practices that are fair and equitable and to ensure consistent processes are followed.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1. This policy outlines the billing and collection process of water and wastewater accounting for the Town of Amherstburg.
- 2.2. This policy ensures fair and equitable treatment of ratepayers related to water and wastewater accounts.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This policy applies to Amherstburg water and wastewater accounts.
- 3.2. This policy shall be reviewed every five (5) years from the date it becomes effective, and/or sooner at the discretion of the CAO or designate.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1. **Dishonoured payments** occur when a payee attempts payment but has insufficient funds to cover the transaction.
- 4.2. **Residential Properties** are classified as residential but not including properties with multiple units serviced by a house meter.
- 4.3. **Average Monthly Consumption** is equal to the average of one-year's consumption for the subject property.
- 4.4. **High Consumption** occurs when water consumption exceeds two times the customer's average consumption and is greater than 18 cubic meters.

Common definitions, acronyms, and terms are available in the Glossary located on the Town's Policies webpage.

5. INTERPRETATIONS

Any reference in this policy to any statute or any section of a statute shall, unless expressly stated, be deemed to be reference to the statute as amended, restated or re-enacted from time to time. Any references to a by-law or Town policy shall be deemed to be a reference to the most recent passed policy or by-law and any replacements thereto.

6. GENERAL CONDITIONS

6.1. Meter Reading – Water Consumption

6.1.1. Water consumption for billing purposes shall be collected as registered on water meters. Where a meter is not in place prior to occupancy, charges will be applied on a flat rate per the Town's Fees By-law.

6.2. Billing

6.2.1. Billing accounts will be issued to registered property owners and bills will be issued in the name(s) of the registered property owners. The Town may accept payments from tenants/other non-owners; however the property owner is, in all circumstances, financially responsible for all water and wastewater fees and charges incurred against the property.

6.2.2. Bills will be issued electronically, where possible, to the email address on the account. Customers shall be responsible to provide updated account holder information to the Town and its service provider.

6.2.3. The Town of Amherstburg, directly or through its agent, reserves the right to change the method of bill delivery with advance notice.

6.3. Deposits

6.3.1. New customers will be required to make a deposit on their water account.

6.3.2. The deposit shall be 2.5 times the estimated average monthly billing for the property, based on average monthly consumption. Where the property did not have a previous water account or had a change in use, the deposit shall be 2.5 times the estimated average monthly billing for a similar property.

6.3.3. Deposits shall be held at a minimum for a period of 3 years at which time, subject to the account being current, the customer can contact the billing agent directly to request a refund of the deposit or application to their water account.

6.4. Payment of Accounts

6.4.1. Payments received will be allocated to the customer's account in the following order: miscellaneous fees, NSF fees, interest charges, principle balances. For each of these categories, the payment will be allocated to the oldest outstanding balances first.

6.5. Late Payment Charges and Arrears

- 6.5.1. Late payments will incur a fee of 1.25% per month.
- 6.5.2. Adjustments to late payment charges may only be considered where the charge resulted from an administrative error by the Town.
- 6.5.3. Account arrears that are otherwise deemed uncollectible shall be transferred to the tax roll for the property along with applicable fees and charges, and shall be collected in a like manner as taxes.

6.6. Dishonoured Payments

- 6.6.1. In the case of a dishonoured payment, an NSF fee will be processed on the account in accordance with the Town's current User Fee By-law.

6.7. Ownership Changes

- 6.7.1. Where the Town or its agent has been notified in writing of a request for a final meter reading in relation to a property sale, a final meter reading shall be done.
- 6.7.2. Such requests shall be made to the Town or its agent a minimum of two (2) business days prior to the requested meter read date and the Town will make a reasonable effort to ensure the final meter reading is done on the day requested.

6.8. Temporary Water Turn Off and On

- 6.8.1. A minimum of five (5) business days' notice is required for the temporary water turn off and turn on service, unless it is an emergency. The customer or their authorized designate must be in attendance for the service call.
- 6.8.2. During the period that the water is turned off, the customer remains responsible for the fixed monthly charges.
- 6.8.3. Fees to turn the water service on or off will be charged in accordance with the Town's User Fee By-law.

6.9. Schedule of Fees

- 6.9.1. Fees in relation to water and wastewater billing and collection are established by the User Fee By-law.

6.10. Water and Wastewater Usage and Billing Disputes

- 6.10.1. When a customer has contacted the Town or its agent concerning a high water/wastewater bill, the account will be reviewed to determine if the high bill was the result of a billing error, faulty meter, or a leak.
- 6.10.2. Where a billing error is confirmed, an adjustment will be made to the account and a new bill will be issued.

- 6.10.3. Where a discrepancy in the meter read to the actual meter read occurs resulting in a billing error, an adjustment will be made to the account, and a new bill will be issued.

6.11. Faulty Meter

- 6.11.1. Any customer may, upon written application to the Town, have the Water Meter checked for accuracy of registration. Every such application shall be accompanied by a deposit equal to the fee for checking the Meter for accuracy as shown in the User Fee By-law.
- 6.11.2. The meter will be removed for testing and a new meter will be installed.
- 6.11.3. Where the Meter is found to register correctly, slow or not to exceed three per cent (3%) in favour of the Town when tested in accordance with Section 4.2.8 of ANSI/AWWA C700 and AWWA Manual M6, Water Meters – Selection, Installation, Testing, and Maintenance, the customer's deposit shall be forfeited towards the cost of the test and the cost of the new meter installed. Any balance and additional expense of removing and testing of the Meter will be paid for in full by the customer.
- 6.11.4. Where the Meter is found to register in excess of three per cent (3%), a refund will be made to the customer equal to such excess percentage of the amount of the account for the period of four (4) months prior to such testing of the Meter, plus the customer's deposit for the test.
- 6.11.5. The Town reserves the right to replace any meter, with no cost to the property owner, whether for upgrade purposes or not, without testing of the original meter.

6.12. Leak

- 6.12.1. The customer is responsible for water consumption, including consumption resulting from any leak after the meter.
- 6.12.2. Where a high consumption bill occurs as a result of a leak, residential water account customers may apply in writing to be considered for a water bill adjustment. The request must be submitted within 90 days following the issue of the high consumption bill. High consumption due to filling a pool or spa, irrigation system or other similar uses of water is not eligible for adjustment.
- 6.12.3. To be eligible for an account adjustment, the customer must show proof, satisfactory to the Town, of the leak repair.
- 6.12.4. The billing adjustment is limited to a maximum of \$1,000 and is calculated at 50% of the excess water use over the customer's average consumption over a maximum two-month period.
- 6.12.5. Any adjustment will be calculated using the rates that were in effect at the time of the high consumption.

- 6.12.6. No rebates will be made within 60 months of a previous rebate for an individual property unless ownership changed within the 60 month period; and no more than two leak adjustments will be considered within a 10 year timeframe.
- 6.12.7. The property cannot be vacant or unattended during the timeframe when the leak occurred.
- 6.12.8. Water loss due to theft, vandalism, or construction damage is not eligible for an adjustment.

7. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 7.1. **Council** has the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.1.1. Approve the User Fee By-law.
 - 7.1.2. Approve the *Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy*.
- 7.2. The **CAO** has the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.2.1. Ensure compliance with the *Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy*.
- 7.3. The **Treasurer** has the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.3.1. Administer all accounts receivable, billing and collections of the Town, and ensure applicable policy and fees are applied.
 - 7.3.2. Provide relief as outlined in the *Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy*.
- 7.4. The **Director of Engineering and Public Works** has the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.4.1. Authorize the investigation of water and wastewater billing errors or leaks.
- 7.5. The **Manager of Environmental Services** has the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.5.1. Investigate water and wastewater billing errors or leaks.
- 7.6. **Staff** have the authority and responsibility to:
 - 7.6.1. Abide by the *Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy*.

8. **REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- 8.1. User Fee By-Law
- 8.2. Water By-Law