

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, from August 23, 2015 to January 1, 2016, Austin Water received calls from 23,944 customers related to high water bills; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin wants to provide relief to single family residential customers who experience unexpected, unusually high water bills that cannot be attributed to a particular cause; and

WHEREAS, a recent independent audit of Austin Water's meter reading system found that 3.4% of meter reads could not be read, had a blurred photo or showed a discrepant reading; and

WHEREAS, of the more than 220,000 meters system-wide, a 3.4% potential error rate equates to 7,650 meters; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Water Utility already has a policy in place to provide relief to single-family residential customers who experience high water and wastewater bills due to certain water leaks by processing an adjustment or credit on the customer's water bill; and

WHEREAS, the current leak policy, Resolution #20110512-003 was approved for that purpose and Austin Water Utility wants to ensure this resolution is consistent with Chapter 6-4 of the City Code that prescribes water conservation regulations that require repair of controllable leaks and prohibits the waste of water during irrigation; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Water Utility's conservation goals encourage customers to regularly monitor, take responsibility, and pay for their water use, and the Water Utility also has a responsibility to ensure that meters are accurate, that

customers are billed appropriately, and to provide a high level of customer service;
NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to draft proposed amendments to the City Code and implement a revised administrative adjustment policy applicable to customers billed at the single family residential rate, who received a utility bill that includes unusually high water and wastewater bill charges that may not be attributed to a particular cause. With regard to this administrative adjustment policy the following applies:

- 1) A single family residential customer is eligible for an administrative adjustment if a customer's water usage is greater than or equal to three times the customer's normal usage at the service address for which an adjustment is being requested.
- 2) The single family residential customer must have at least 12 months of water billing history at the service address for which an administrative adjustment is being requested.
- 3) A single family residential customer is eligible for one administrative adjustment in a 24 month period. A customer will not qualify for a subsequent administrative adjustment until 24 months after the credit for the prior adjustment was applied to the customer's account.

- 4) To request an administrative adjustment for water consumption related to unusually high water usage, the customer must file an application on a form provided by the Director of Austin Water Utility within 90 days of the date of the bill reflecting the unusually high water usage.
- 5) Should the Director of the Austin Water Utility determine that a customer's unusually high use is likely related to customer actions or omissions not in compliance with City Code Chapter 6-4, the customer may not be eligible for an administrative adjustment. As such, customers with pools and spas may not be eligible for an administrative adjustment.
- 6) The Austin Water Utility will credit the single family residential customer's account for 50% of the excess usage. Excess usage is defined as usage that is over and above the customer's normal usage. A customer's normal usage shall be determined based upon average water usage during the same month over the previous 2 years. If the previous 2 years usage history for the same month does not exist, a customer's normal usage is calculated as water usage during the same month in the previous year, similar months during the same season in the current or previous year, or water usage during similar subsequent months.
- 7) For the remaining 50% of the excess usage, the charges for metered water consumption related to the unusually high water usage for up to the two billing cycles affected will be calculated as follows. The customer will be responsible for 50% of the excess usage, however the charges will be

calculated at the lower of (a) the standard application of the regular billing rate, or (b) an established discounted rate for the excess usage.

- 8) If the customer's wastewater charges were affected by the unusually high water usage, the wastewater charges will be adjusted to the customer's normal usage and a credit will be applied to the customer's account.
- 9) If a customer accepts a credit for unusually high water usage, the customer may not request an administrative hearing, for the same water billing period as the credit is applied, to dispute the administrative adjustment or the remaining amount of the excess usage charged to the customer.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager draft proposed amendments to the City Code and implement revised policies to the City's current leak adjustment policy related to calculating a customer's normal usage, how much the customer will pay for the excess usage, waiving certain rights to an administrative hearing related to the same water bill, and any other changes necessary.

ADOPTED: _____, 2016 **ATTEST:** _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk