



City of Oskaloosa
City Council Study Session
Council Chambers
City Hall, 220 S. Market Street
Oskaloosa, IA 52577
Agenda
April 17, 2017
5:00 PM

1. Discussion Regarding A Possible Amendment To The City's Current Sanitary Sewer Reduction Policy.

Documents:

[20170417_STUDY SESSION SEWER REDUCTION POLICY.DOCX](#)
[SEWER REDUCTION POLICIES.PDF](#)

2. Adjourn

If you require special accommodations, please contact the City Manager's Office at least 24 hours prior to the meeting at (641) 673-9431.



City Council Communication Study Session

Meeting Date: April 17, 2017

Requested By: City Manager's Office

Item Title:

Discussion regarding a possible amendment to the city's current sanitary sewer reduction policy.

Explanation:

This item has been requested by city council for the purpose of reviewing the presently adopted policy for sanitary sewer reductions and to provide staff with direction on an amendment to said policy.

Budget Consideration:

To be determined.

Attachments:

1. Policy example document

Sanitary Sewer Bill Adjustment Policy Examples

Questions for the Mayor and City Council members:

1. What is the policy objective that is trying to be achieved?
2. Entertain a more traditional reduction request policy or an insurance type policy (Pella/Grinnell versus Boone)?
3. Adopt policy by Resolution or Ordinance?
4. Who will administer the policy, city staff, a board/committee or commission, or the city council?
 - a. If staff administers, is there a limit on the amount to be approved for reduction?
 - i. Will there be an appeal beyond staff?
 - b. If a board, committee or commission administers, is there a limit on the amount to be approved for reduction?
 - i. Will there be an appeal beyond a board, committee, or commission?
 - c. If council administers will that be done at a city council meeting, study session, council committee meeting, etc.?
5. What information does the customer need to provide with the request?
6. Does a qualifying “no-fault” event have to occur to consider a reduction (i.e. theft, pipe break, water heater fails, etc.)?
7. Does an excessive amount of water have to be used in order to apply for a reduction (i.e. a threshold of excessive usage, like Pella or Grinnell)?
8. Does it matter to city council if the water directly enters the sanitary sewer system?
 - a. If no, does the property need to provide any proof of repair(s) or documentation with the request?
 - b. If yes, will staff be required to complete an onsite inspection or will the customer simply be asked to “attest” that water did not enter the sewer system?
9. Will a limit to the number of reduction requests per property or customer be established?
 - a. If yes, what are the parameters?

1. Boone

Leak Protection Program. All residential pays 50-cents per month and anyone can “opt-out.” If you opt-out you are responsible for all water usage regardless of cause (you are required to sign a document saying you are responsible for water regardless of cause). If you opt-in you are covered. Coverage is a general policy that some type of leak had to happen and you have to show proof that you fixed it (receipts, etc.). Then you fill out a form. If the form is approved you pay your typical bill along with the first \$100 of the leak and the remaining amount is waived.

2. Carlisle

Any utility bill adjustment can only be requested and approved from the City Council at a regular or special City Council meeting.

A utility bill adjustment requested due to a water leak may be made by the City Council if substantial proof that the water from the leak did not go into the sanitary sewer system. If substantial evidence does exist, a credit may be given to the sewer customer to reduce the sewer charges for the month of the leak to the average sewer charge for the past twelve months. Determination of such evidence that the water did not enter the sanitary sewer system shall be made by the City Council.

3. Grinnell

We have a sanitary sewer reduction policy. Ours is whether the water has gone down the sanitary sewer or not.

The water used must be more than three times their average consumption. We look at 12 months’ worth of consumption, if available. If it isn’t available, we use what we can or wait a few months until we can determine what their true consumption is. We take their high consumption billing and subtract it from the average multiplied by three. That consumption amount is multiplied by the first bracket of the sewer rates and divided by two. This is the amount provided as the sewer credit.

Here’s an example which may help clarify the calculation:

High Consumption amount – 10,000 gallons

Average Consumption – 3,000 gallons x 3 = 9,000 gallons

10,000 gallons

-9,000 gallons

1,000 gallons

1,000 gallons x \$7.60 (sewer rate per 1,000 gallons) = \$7.60 / 2 = \$3.80 credit

It may not seem like much, but usually the customers are happy to get something. Most receive more than this as their consumption is usually a lot more when we do a sewer credit.

4. Indianola

The purpose of this policy is to provide the City Manager, or his designee, with the authority to issue credits to utility accounts with bona-fide excessive sewer usage in amounts up to \$500 based on the following criteria:

- Water was metered
- Municipal employees verify evidence that water did not directly enter into the sewer system
- The metered water that did not enter into the sewer system was due to extraordinary circumstances beyond the utility account holder's control

Amounts in excess of \$500, and denials of credit by the City Manager, may be considered by the City Council.

Any and all credits will be issued to the customer's utility account and not as a cash credit unless approved by the City Council

5. Knoxville

Knoxville does not have a formal policy, but the council has never granted a request of adjustment or waiver. When this type of request is brought to staff, we tell them that staff cannot act on such a request without council authorization and that council has never granted a request. For most, that is enough that they drop the issue.

6. Leon

Resolution adopted stating no adjustments will be made to any utility bill for any reason. City works out a payment agreement with the customer.

7. Osceola

If there is an incident where a burst pipe (or other issue) results in an abnormally high utility bill and the customer can show the water did not somehow drain down the sewer, Osceola will forgive the difference between the high bill and the customer's last highest sewer bill from the previous 12 months (sewer only). The credit can only be applied for once every five years. They will deny any request if the high usage is the

result of excessive irrigation during a landscaping project or to fill a swimming pool. The water utility will not forgive any metered use, regardless of the reason.

8. Oskaloosa

Council adopted policy by resolution. "The City shall not provide sanitary sewer customers a reduction or waiver in service fees or charges due to a water leak, excessive usage, accidental usage, or catastrophic events. This includes interior or exterior leaks on a property for residential or commercial customer accounts. Policy states the City Manager responsible for enforcement, however the council entertains appeals of the policy.

Council has overruled staff's enforcement of the adopted policy and made differing adjustments based on the customer's situation or attendance at meetings since the policy's adoption.

9. Pella

Where a "garden meter" is not installed, an adjustment or waiver to residential sanitary sewer charges may be allowed under the following conditions:

- (1) If the customer can reasonably prove that in any month that more than fifteen thousand (15,000) gallons of water was used by the customer in a way that the water did not reach the sanitary sewer, that amount of water would be exempt from the sewer rate.
- (2) The waiver would apply only for non-intentional uses.
- (3) Residential customers would only be eligible for a waiver from sanitary sewer charges once annually.
- (4) The period of time for the waiver cannot exceed two consecutive billing cycles.
- (5) To be considered for a waiver, a written request has to be made to the City Administrator.
- (6) The final decision of the waiver will rest solely with the City Administrator.