

CITY OF ELIZABETH CITY

**Customer Service Office
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CITY OF ELIZABETH CITY

CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY & PROCEDURES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	i
SECTION ONE -- RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	1
AUTHORITY	1
SCOPE.....	1
DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY	2
APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY	2
CONFLICT	2
PART OF ALL CONTRACTS.....	3
NO PREJUDICE OF RIGHTS	3
UNIQUE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	3
CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITY	3
CUSTOMER'S RIGHTS	4
CITY RESPONSIBILITY	4
CITY'S RIGHTS	5
SECTION TWO -- ESTABLISHING SERVICE	6
OFFICE AND SERVICE HOURS	6
REQUEST FOR SERVICE	6
CONNECTION SCHEDULING	7
PRIOR DEBTS.....	8
CUSTOMER DEPOSITS	8
REFUNDING OF DEPOSITS	10
ELECTRICAL RATES	10
TAXES	11
BILLING CYCLE INFORMATION	11
BILLING ADJUSTMENTS	14
LEAKS AND WATER LINE BREAKS - SEWER ADJUSTMENT	14
DROP BOX FOR PAYING AFTER HOURS	15
EXTENSIONS OF TIME FOR PAYMENT OF BILLS.....	15
THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO RETURNED CHECKS	15
SECTION THREE -- SERVICE OPTIONS	17
DIFFICULTY IN PAYING BILL.....	17
OPTIONS IN BILLING PAYMENTS	17
EQUAL PAYMENT PLAN	17
BANK DRAFTS PLAN.....	18
ACCEPTANCE OF CREDIT CARDS	18
MEDICAL ALERT PROGRAM.....	18
GATEKEEPER PROGRAM	19

SECTION FOUR -- DISCONTINUING SERVICE	20
TRANSFER OF SERVICE.....	20
CLOSING A UTILITY ACCOUNT	20
FORCED CLOSING OF A UTILITY ACCOUNT	20
TERMINATION OF SERVICE	20
CUSTOMER'S RIGHTS PRIOR TO DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE.....	21
CUSTOMER'S RIGHTS REGARDING DISCONNECTION	22
INVOLUNTARY DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE	22
DISCONNECTION DURING EXTREME WEATHER.....	23
RECONNECTION.....	23
SECTION FIVE -- METERING GUIDELINES	24
METER READING.....	24
THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO METER AND LOAD MANAGEMENT SWITCH	
TAMPERING.....	24

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SECTION ONE -- RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

AUTHORITY

The enactment of these policies requires the approval of the City governing body. As fee schedules, rates and other specific policies are updated, it will be the responsibility of the City Manager to make sure the policy manual is revised. Most changes other than fees and rate schedules are delegated to the City Manager, without requiring prior approval of the municipal governing body. The Board expects to be kept informed on material changes.

The Customer Service Manager is authorized as the hearing or grievance officer for customers. He/she is authorized to hear concerns and complaints, settle disagreements and reconnect any customer disconnected for non-payment while the concern is investigated, if he/she deems necessary. Hearings are addressed on page 21.

All grievances must be heard and addressed by the hearing officer prior to an item appearing before the City governing board.

SCOPE

1. This policy is not meant to be all-inclusive but offers direction and guidance for the City Manager and employees of the City.
2. This policy has been adopted by the City Council for all customers of the City.
3. The intent of this policy is to provide the customer, the electrical and building trades, and the employees of the City a helpful guide with uniform procedures for providing utility service. The City desires to treat its citizens in a fair and indiscriminate manner while recognizing that each customer has distinct needs and requirements.
4. Employees of the City have been empowered and well-trained to use this policy to deliver high quality service to customers. Employees are expected to deal with each decision with empathy and understanding, listening carefully to the needs and requirements of individual customers. Ultimately, the City Manager accepts the responsibility as the final authority on this policy. However, every customer has the right to appeal that decision before the City's governing body.
5. This policy is not meant as a substitute for personal initiative on the part of employees.

It will serve as a guide for reasonable response to customer needs while meeting the requirements of good business practices on the part of the City.

DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY

1. EMPLOYEES - The employees of a city, charged with the responsibility of delivering services to the citizens and customers while ensuring good business practices and considering the needs and wants of customers.
2. CITY - The municipal governing body and its employees.
3. CITY COUNCIL - Those officials elected to represent the citizens of the City.
4. GOOD CREDIT - Good credit is defined as no more than 2 delinquencies, 1 returned check and no disconnections in the most recent 12-month period for residential customers and a 24-month period for commercial customers.
5. UTILITY - The City of Elizabeth City Utility Department.
6. UTILITY SERVICE - Includes Electric, Water and Sewer.

APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

1. This policy applies to every customer or applicant for utility service. Copies of this policy are available at the City's offices.
2. This policy may be revised, amended, supplemented or otherwise changed from time to time by action of the City Council. Customers are encouraged to seek answers to any questions by calling the City offices.
3. As detailed in ordinances, the City intends to adhere to all rules and regulations of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) entitled the "National Electrical Safety Code (NESC)" as amended. Further, all operations are prefaced upon safety for the public and employees alike. Safety guidelines are detailed in the North Carolina Association of Municipal Electric Systems (NCAMES) safety manual as amended.
4. The City is not responsible for any damage caused by turning on City utility services.

CONFLICT

Provisions of a special contract or tariff between the City and a customer will take precedence over these policies.

PART OF ALL CONTRACTS

These policies are part of all oral and written contracts for providing and receiving utility service from the City.

NO PREJUDICE OF RIGHTS

Although the City and its customers may not always exercise the rights specified in these policies or available to them by law, that does not prevent the municipality or the customer from exercising those rights at another time.

UNIQUE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The customer and the City have unique rights and responsibilities toward utility service. These responsibilities, detailed fully throughout this publication, are summarized here.

CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITY

1. To establish credit in one of these ways:
 - + Proof of land ownership of the premises to be served.
 - + Acceptable credit references.
 - + Proof of 12 months of good credit history with another utility.
 - + Name a qualified person to guarantee payment of bills up to a certain amount.
 - + Pay a cash deposit.
2. Allow utility department personnel access to property to set up and maintain service.
3. Pay bills by the due date shown on each monthly bill.
4. Notify the utility department of another person a customer would like to receive any notice of service interruption for non-payment of bills.
5. Notify the utility department if there is someone in the household who is either chronically or seriously ill, handicapped or on a life support system.
6. Notify the utility department of questions or complaints about service.
7. Be aware of city-owned property at the customer's home/business and safeguard it.
8. Install, maintain and repair wiring in the home/business.
9. The City provides utility service for the sole use and convenience of the premises under contract. The customer will ensure that utility service is not given or resold to a neighbor or tenant. Violation of this policy will be cause for immediate disconnection of service.

CUSTOMER'S RIGHTS

1. A customer has a right to request the deposit to be refunded if he/she establishes credit

- by other means, pays bills promptly for one year, or discontinues service from the City.
2. If the customer is notified of an impending disconnection for non-payment, he/she has a right to request installment payments designed to pay the account in full according to an agreement with the City's customer service representative.
 3. The customer has a right to request, free of charge, historic billing and usage information. If a utility department employee cannot find any reason for usage changes, the customer may request a meter test. The customer has a right to request a meter test. The City will test a meter without charge provided that such tests will not be made more frequently than once in twelve (12) months. A fee will be charged if the meter is tested more than once in a twelve (12) month period. The customer has a right to results of this test.
 4. The customer has a right to request a review of any complaint according to the grievance procedure.

CITY RESPONSIBILITY

1. To refund the customer's deposit if conditions are met.
2. To give written notice at least 10 calendar days before service is interrupted for failure to pay. The notice will explain the reason for disconnection, the date when service will be disconnected and explain how the customer can avoid service interruption. Notices will respect a customer's right to privacy, regarding publication of debt.
3. To avoid disconnection for non-payment during extreme weather conditions.
4. To avoid disconnection for non-payment after 4:00 p.m., the day prior to a holiday or a weekend.
5. To provide and explain rate schedules, how meters are read, and other additional, reasonable information.
6. To respond to questions or complaints from customers. We may not agree with the complaint, but we pledge prompt, courteous and honest answers.
7. To provide historic billing and usage information when requested by the customer.
8. To provide energy usage and conservation information.

CITY'S RIGHTS

1. To access the City's utility facilities.
2. To receive notice of changes in address, status of utility service, or problems with utility service.
3. To receive timely payment for services delivered to a home/business.
4. The appropriate department of the City is allowed to take action in court regarding equipment tampering or financial delinquencies.

SECTION TWO -- ESTABLISHING SERVICE

OFFICE AND SERVICE HOURS

1. The City's Customer Service Department is located downtown in the Gardner Municipal Building and the Remote Site at Southgate Mall. The Customer Service Department is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Routine and regular service work will be performed during these hours, Monday through Friday, except for holidays. Service work for unusual conditions may be arranged at other times upon request. The drive-in window is also open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day.
2. Emergency restoration work is performed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Please call us at (252) 335-2196 for emergency service.

REQUEST FOR SERVICE

1. Original application for service: Any customer requesting services will complete an application and agreement for services. The customer will show:
 - A. photo identification, supply a social security number (or Federal Tax ID number in the case of a business account);
 - B. deed, deposit receipt, lease agreement or contract for sale; and
 - C. sign the application.The City recognizes a joint application for utility service which allows credit to be established for both husband and wife. A separate application will be requested if more than one connection is requested.
2. Accounting Information Changes: Any changes of account information, mailing address, account name, etc. should be made in writing by the account-holder to prevent mistakes.
3. Non-residential Accounts: Accounts established for non-residential service will require a Federal Tax ID number, and a signature by an officer of the corporation listed in the Articles. For a non-incorporated business, the account will be listed in the name of a responsible person (owner, manager, etc.). That person accepts the personal responsibility for payment of the account.
4. Service Requests for All Utilities: Any request for utility service, or a request to add another service connection by a customer will be handled as a request for all services applicable to the location. Applications and fees are shown in the accompanying fee

schedule.

5. Account service charge: A customer will pay an initial account service charge to begin utility service.
6. Place of application: Customers may request utility service at the Gardner Municipal Building or at other locations that may be designated by the Elizabeth City City Council for customer convenience.
Application for utility service must be made in person by the individual owner or occupant of the property. Occupant will be determined to be the person named in the lease agreement.
7. Time of application: The municipality will strive to meet customers' needs for connection of service. Normal connection will be made the same day if the request is received prior to noon and an inspection is not required. A request received after noon will be connected the next working day.
8. Out-of-city connection requests: If a customer wants to obtain service prior to arrival in Elizabeth City, the City will provide service. The customer may contact the Customer Service Office by telephone to request the service connection, and provide the scheduled date of their arrival. The customer will be required to personally come into the Customer Service Office to complete an application and agreement for services, and establish credit with the City within ten (10) days of the scheduled date of arrival or the service will be discontinued and the account closed.
9. Temporary cut-ons at permanent dwellings: The City may request an additional fee (see fee schedule) be paid for the expense of cutting on and off utilities maintained for less than 30 days at a permanent premises. The purpose of this fee is to recover costs for cut-on and cut-offs of difficult services (such as primary metered, bucket truck type facilities or man-hole type facilities).
10. Explanation of Policies: Customers can request a verbal explanation of the City's policies and may obtain a written copy of the guidelines as well.
11. Service requests for new construction: The customer will need to meet the requirements explained in the City of Elizabeth City Electric Service Manual.
12. Welcome packet: The City has welcome packets available for new customers which includes information about the utility, conservation tips and load management information.

CONNECTION SCHEDULING

Connection to the City's utility system is available during normal business hours. There is

service available after normal business hours, and, depending on the situation, there may be an additional cost-based fee.

PRIOR DEBTS

The City does not furnish service to an applicant who is indebted to the City for service previously furnished, or to the applicant or any other member of the applicant's household, until all indebtedness has been satisfied.

CUSTOMER DEPOSITS

1. Need for a deposit: City employees are charged with the responsibility of prudent management of the City's finances. A deposit for utility services is collected as security that all bills will be paid in full by their due date. Employees realize that most customers pay their bills in full and on time, however, we seek to protect the good-paying customers from the detriment of uncollectible accounts by other customers. Ideally, only those customers who "earn" the right to pay a deposit would be required to secure their accounts. Since the City's employees cannot know in advance which customers will pay promptly and which ones will not, reasonable and uniformly applied deposits may be necessary. A service security deposit will be collected before any service is connected when it is determined that a deposit may be needed to assure payment of the customer bill. Options to the customer deposit also have been created.

2. Determining the Deposit: In determining the need for a security deposit, and in fixing the amount of the deposit, City employees will give careful consideration to these factors:
 - Customer's ownership of the premises to be served
 - Type of service requested
 - Risk involved in a new business enterprise
 - Reputation of the involved premises
 - Overall credit rating of the customer
 - Utility credit rating of the customer with the municipality or another electric utility
 - History of connects, disconnects and reconnects at the involved premises or for the involved customer (For residential customers, a 12-month history of service with the municipal utility. For commercial customers, a 24-month history.)
 - Any other factor which bears on the customer's financial responsibility
 - Guarantor agreement

3. Two month standard: A deposit may require an amount up to two months electric service as determined by the City. (See fee schedule.)
4. Residential Customer Deposit Alternatives: Any person who must pay a deposit for residential utility service may:
 - A. Pay an initial cash deposit. (See fee schedule). Customer may pay one-half of the deposit at time of service and remaining balance with first month bill.
 - B. Supply a letter of credit demonstrating good credit with another electric utility.
 - C. Have a guarantee agreement signed by a current City customer who has good credit with the City. The guarantor will be responsible for an amount up to the amount of the deposit, if the customer does not pay his/her bill. The guarantor will be notified by the City of an impending disconnection.
 - D. Supply the City a certificate of deposit or stock as security for the deposit.
 - E. Customer ownership of the premises to be served with good credit. (If a customer has previously had credit with the city demonstrating more than two late payments for a previous 12 month period and or owes a delinquent bill, the deposit will not be waived.)
5. Deposits for short-term service: Any person requesting services to either clean or show a residence for rent or sale may be required to satisfy a deposit as stated in the above paragraph.
6. Non-Residential Customer Deposit Alternatives: Any person who must pay a deposit for non-residential utility service may:
 - A. Pay initial cash deposit. (The standard is up to 2 months average bill.) Customer may pay one-half of the deposit at time of service and remaining balance with first month bill.
 - B. Supply a surety bond equal to the amount specified as the deposit, valid for a two-year period and written by an insurance company authorized to do business in North Carolina. The City, upon review of the account, may request the surety bond be extended until termination of service.
 - C. Provide a letter of credit with the account in the name of the owner of a sole proprietorship. The letter of credit must be from another electric utility showing good credit.
 - D. Purchase a jointly-owned certificate of deposit for the amount of the deposit, held by the City, with interest paid by a local financial institution directly to the customer.

- E. Have a guarantee agreement signed by a current City customer who has good credit with the City. The guarantor will be responsible for an amount up to the amount of the deposit, if the customer does not pay his/her bill. The guarantor will be notified by the City of an impending disconnection.
 - F. Customer ownership of the premises to be served with good credit. (If a customer has previously had credit with the city demonstrating more than two late payments for a previous 12 month period and/or owes a delinquent bill, the deposit will not be waived.
7. Future deposits: Any customer whose service is involuntarily terminated for either non-payment, meter tampering, or other reasons will be required to pay a deposit, or add an additional deposit, as specified in the above paragraphs, prior to reconnection of service. This includes all customer accounts. The future deposit may be at a higher level based upon experience with the account, but it may not exceed two-twelfths of the estimated yearly charge for that account.
 8. Floating deposits: A builder who is constructing concurrent establishments may be allowed to pay only one deposit for several service locations.
 9. Interest accrued on deposits: Any interest accrued on deposits will be used for an emergency assistance fund for the needy in the community as approved by City Council.
 10. NOTE TO ALL CUSTOMERS: Contact with a city utility employee prior to disconnection is always more favorable than making arrangements after service is involuntarily interrupted. Payment options may be available prior to disconnection which will save the customer from additional higher deposit amounts and additional fees.

REFUNDING OF DEPOSITS

1. Prompt refund: A deposit will be refunded promptly and automatically when service is voluntarily discontinued. All outstanding amounts on the final bill will be deducted from the deposit amount.
2. Residential and business accounts: The City will promptly return the customer's deposit when the customer pays bills promptly for one year. The customer may request this refund when he/she pays bills promptly for one year.
3. Account in arrears: The deposit will not be refunded if the customer has another account with a past due balance. The remaining credit on the account will be

transferred to another account with a balance.

ELECTRICAL RATES

1. The City currently offers two rate schedules for residential service and three rate schedules for non-residential service. Please see the rate schedule to find the best rate for a class of service. (Refer to rate schedule.)
2. The City's rates are set by its local governing body and are designed to be fair, reasonable, just, uniform and nondiscriminatory. Setting rates locally offers rate regulation that is responsive to the customers of the system.
3. Where the customer qualifies for two or more rates, the choice of rates lies with the customer.
4. New and potential business customers are encouraged to provide the City utility department with the load characteristics of their facility. The City may require special conditions and contracts for electric service based upon necessary investment in electric plant.
5. Competitive rates: The City's goal is to provide the best possible electric service to all customers at a rate which is competitive with other energy providers.
6. Complete rate schedules are available to customers upon request.

TAXES

Billings of the City will include all applicable taxes, listed as a separate line item on the bill.

BILLING INFORMATION FOR CYCLE "1" CUSTOMER

1. Meters are read for billing no more than 15 days prior to the customer being billed. Bills are mailed out on the 10th day of the month.
2. A bill is past due if not paid by 2:00 p.m. on the 27th of the month. A penalty will be assessed on all past due accounts.
3. A second notice will be mailed to customers with unpaid bills as soon as possible after the 27th.
4. For any customer who has a Guarantee Agreement instead of a deposit, a copy of the customer's second notice is also mailed to their guarantor.
5. Service is scheduled to be discontinued if payment is not received by 8:00 a.m. on the 6th day of the month. The fee/past due balance must be paid before service is

- reconnected.
6. A fee will be charged to all customers who request service to be reconnected after 4:30 p.m. or on weekends or holidays. No service will be reconnected between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. The fee must be paid by noon the following day to retain service.
 7. A charge, as outlined in the Meter Tampering Section of the policy, will be charged to any customer who reconnects his/her own meter.
 8. Customers who think a bill is in error or otherwise have reason to protest termination of utility service may contact the Customer Service Manager for an informal hearing at the Gardner Municipal Building between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday or telephone (252) 338-3981.

BILLING INFORMATION FOR CYCLE "2" CUSTOMER

1. Meters are read for billing no more than 15 days prior to the customer being billed. Bills are mailed out on the 17th day of the month.
2. A bill is past due if not paid by 2:00 p.m. on the 4th of the following month. A penalty will be assessed on all past due accounts.
3. A second notice will be mailed to customers with unpaid bills as soon as possible after the 4th.
4. For any customer who has a Guarantee Agreement instead of a deposit, a copy of the customer's second notice is also mailed to their guarantor.
5. Service is scheduled to be discontinued if payment is not received by 8:00 a.m. on the 15th day of the month. The fee/past due balance must be paid before service is reconnected.
6. A fee will be charged to all customers who request service to be reconnected after 4:30 p.m. or on weekends or holidays. No service will be reconnected between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. The fee must be paid by noon the following day to retain service.
7. A charge, as outlined in the Meter Tampering Section of the policy, will be charged to any customer who reconnects his/her own meter.

8. Customers who think a bill is in error or otherwise have reason to protest termination of utility service may contact the Customer Service Manager for an informal hearing at the Gardner Municipal Building between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday or telephone (252) 338-3981.

BILLING INFORMATION FOR CYCLE "3" CUSTOMER

1. Meters are read for billing no more than 15 days prior to the customer being billed. Bills are mailed out on the 25th day of the month.
2. A bill is past due if not paid by 2:00 p.m. on the 12th of the following month. A penalty will be assessed on all past due accounts.
3. A second notice will be mailed to customers with unpaid bills as soon as possible after the 12th.
4. For any customer who has a Guarantee Agreement instead of a deposit, a copy of the customer's second notice is also mailed to their guarantor.
5. Service is scheduled to be discontinued if payment is not received by 8:00 a.m. on the 23rd day of the month. The fee/past due balance must be paid before service is reconnected.
6. A fee will be charged to all customers who request service to be reconnected after 4:30 p.m. or on weekends or holidays. No service will be reconnected between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. The fee must be paid by noon the following day to retain service.
7. A charge, as outlined in the Meter Tampering Section of the policy, will be charged to any customer who reconnects his/her own meter.
8. Customers who think a bill is in error or otherwise have reason to protest termination of utility service may contact the Customer Service Manager for an informal hearing at the Gardner Municipal Building between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday or telephone (252) 338-3981.

BILLING INFORMATION FOR CYCLE "4" CUSTOMER

1. Meters are read for billing no more than 15 days prior to the customer being billed. Bills are mailed out on the 31st day of the month.
2. A bill is past due if not paid by 2:00 p.m. on the 17th of the following month. A penalty will be assessed on all past due accounts.
3. A second notice will be mailed to customers with unpaid bills as soon as possible after

- the 17th.
4. For any customer who has a Guarantee Agreement instead of a deposit, a copy of the customer's second notice is also mailed to their guarantor.
 5. Service is scheduled to be discontinued if payment is not received by 8:00 a.m. on the 28th day of the month. The fee/past due balance must be paid before service is reconnected.
 6. A fee will be charged to all customers who request service to be reconnected after 4:30 p.m. or on weekends or holidays. No service will be reconnected between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. The fee must be paid by noon the following day to retain service.
 7. A charge, as outlined in the Meter Tampering Section of the policy, will be charged to any customer who reconnects his/her own meter.
 8. Customers who think a bill is in error or otherwise have reason to protest termination of utility service may contact the Customer Service Manager for an informal hearing at the Gardner Municipal Building between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday or telephone (252) 338-3981.

BILLING ADJUSTMENTS

If the City has inadvertently overcharged or underbilled a customer for utility service, the City will promptly notify the customer and set up a payment process.

1. Should the mistake be in the customer's favor, the City will refund the excess amount to the customer or credit the customer's account with that amount. If the time frame of the mistake can be determined, the utility should credit the account for that entire interval, as long as it is not more than three years. If the time frame of the problem cannot be determined, the utility should refund the excess amount charged during the previous 12 months. If the exact amount of excess charge cannot be determined, the utility should estimate the amount due. If an overcharged customer owes a past due balance to the City, the utility may deduct that past due amount from any refund or credit due.
2. If the utility has inadvertently undercharged a customer for utility service, the City should collect the amount due in installments over the same amount of time as the mistake. If the amount of time or usage cannot be determined, the City will estimate the amount due. In most instances, the City will limit its collection period to the 12 months before the mistake was discovered.

3. If an undercharge has occurred because of meter tampering, the City can ask for the overdue amount in a lump sum.
4. If an overcharged customer owes the City on another account, the City will apply the credit to that past due account.

LEAKS AND WATER LINE BREAKS - WATER/SEWER ADJUSTMENT

When the City finds the cause of an excessive water/sewer bill is the result of a leak in the customer's plumbing system that (1) was of such a nature and at such a location to not have been discovered with the customer's reasonable diligence, (2) and certification is furnished that such leaks were repaired, (3) and no such adjustment has been made in the preceding twelve months; in such case the City shall reduce the billed water service by 50 percent of the amount which it exceeds the average bill for water service during the preceding twelve months; and the billed sewer service by the amount which it exceeds the average bill for sewer service during the preceding twelve month period, provided that complaints must be made prior to the date specified as the cutoff date for nonpayment of water/sewer bills. No excessive water/sewer bill shall be adjusted for more than three months. Excessive is defined as water/sewer consumption which is over 50% of the customers average sewer bill.

DROP BOX FOR PAYING AFTER HOURS

For customer convenience, a drop box is located on the left corner of the Gardner Municipal Building. A check and billing stub may be deposited in the drop box. For added security, please do not deposit cash in the after hours depository. Payments put in the box after 2:00 p.m. are considered next-day payments.

EXTENSIONS OF TIME FOR PAYMENT OF BILLS

1. Customer Request: All requests must be made by the person (or their authorized, legal representative) in whose name the account is opened.
2. The customer requesting the extension must call or come into the Customer Service Office and request the extension prior to the scheduled cutoff date.
3. Maximum: Customer Service may grant 5 extensions per calendar year and may grant additional extension provided a payment of 50% of the outstanding bill is paid prior to the cut off day. Maximum extension will be 5 working days from the cut-off date.
4. Valid Reason: The customer will be required to give a valid reason as to why the extension is needed.

5. Agreement: If payment is not made by the specified time, service will be disconnected without further notice.
6. Extension Number: The customer will be given an extension number upon approval of the extension. It will be the customer's responsibility to include the extension number on their overdue bill.
7. Approval of Extension: An extension is a privilege and will be granted based on customer need and circumstances. An extension will not be guaranteed and may be denied for excessive abuse.

THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO RETURNED CHECKS

1. The City will accept only cash, certified check or money order from any customer having two returned checks within any one year period.
 - A. Upon receipt of the first returned check, the customer will be informed of and given a copy of the written policy.
 - B. Upon receipt of the second returned check, the customer will be advised that all bills must be paid in cash and will be given another copy of the written policy.
 - C. Cash payments, certified checks or money orders only will be accepted for the next year.
2. No returned check will be held more than 48 hours from the time it is received by the City.
3. Notice to the customer of a returned check will be made by telephone if possible. If not possible, a closed door hanger or written memo will be released on the day after the check is received.
4. As allowed by the State of North Carolina, a charge is added to the customer's bill because of each returned check. (See fee schedule.)
5. The customer's account will be charged for returned checks and will be subject to regular collection policies for delinquent accounts.
6. All returned checks and receipt of cash, certified check or money order for payment will be recorded on the City's books.

SECTION THREE -- SERVICE OPTIONS

DIFFICULTY IN PAYING BILL

1. The following organizations may be able to offer assistance to customers who are having difficulty in paying their bill:

AGENCY	PHONE NUMBER
Pasquotank County Dept. of Social Services	338-2126
Salvation Army	338-4129

2. We encourage each customer to seek assistance with paying their electric bills prior to disconnection.

OPTIONS IN BILLING PAYMENTS

To better serve the needs of customers, the City offers many options to bill payments. They are described below. To begin any of these options, please call a Customer Service representative.

- Equal Payment Plan
- Bank Draft
- Online Credit/Debit Cards/Echeck
- Telephone Credit/Debit Card/Echeck
- Mail
- Office
- Drive-Thru
- Drop Box

EQUAL PAYMENT PLAN

1. The purpose of this plan is to spread the cost of electric service as evenly as possible on a monthly basis over an annual period and to assist customers with home budgeting. Billing under this plan will not result in any greater or lesser payments to the City than would be the case with customary monthly billings.
2. To Qualify for the Equal Payment Plan: Accounts should be paid in full prior to beginning the Equal Payment Plan.
Late Payments: If a customer is late in paying his/her monthly bill, he/she may be

removed from the equal payment plan.

Rate Adjustment: When an electric rate adjustment is approved, the equal payment amount will be adjusted by the same percentage.

Termination of Equal Payment Plan: The agreement remains in effect until the customer or the City decides to end the payment option.

3. The City reserves the right to request a payment adjustment conference with the customer between anniversary dates if it appears that the amount billed and the amount paid will vary by a substantial amount.

BANK DRAFTS PLAN

1. Bank drafts offer customers the option of having their bank accounts drafted on a set date of the month. This relieves the customer from having the possibility of lost or late payments and saves a trip to the Gardner Municipal Building or the cost of an envelope and stamp.
2. The draft date will be on the bill's due date. This will allow the customer time to verify or question his/her bill.
3. The customer should supply the City with a VOIDED check. This gives us the necessary account number, routing number, etc. for the purpose of drafting.
4. Draft returned by the bank because of insufficient funds or a closed account will be treated as a returned check, and the procedures for a returned check will be followed.

ON-LINE/TELEPHONE CREDIT CARD OR DEBIT CARD

1. NCO Financial Services processes all phone and on-line payments, (check by phone, credit and debit card). You may call 1-866-569-5292 or click the "Make a Payment" on the home page of the City website at www.cityofec.com. This service is available to residential and commercial customers. Credit and debit card payments are not accepted in the office.
2. Payments can be made 24 hours a day, using the automated phone or on-line service. Call center representatives are available from 8:00 am Monday through Saturday to 3:00 PM to assist with a payment.
3. NCO charges a convenience fee of \$3.95 per payment up to \$9,999. The City of Elizabeth City does not receive any of the convenience fees charged by NCO. These are merchant fees charged by banks to help defray the transaction processing costs along with the cost of extending credit.

MEDICAL ALERT PROGRAM

1. The customer has the responsibility of notifying the City if there is someone in their household who is either:
 - A. Chronically or seriously ill, or
 - B. On a life support system (heart/lung, respirator, etc.).
2. The customer must provide a letter or certification from a doctor or hospital advising of the above condition. These letters will be reviewed and brought up-to-date each year. A customer who complies with these notification procedures will have a white seal placed on his/her meter to designate his/her household as containing a chronically ill or life support customer.
3. The customer has the responsibility to carefully handle his/her account so that service will not be interrupted for failure to pay. With the medical alert designation, the City will make every effort to make personal contact with the customer before service is terminated.
4. The City will exercise all diligence in keeping the power flowing to a life support patient. However, due to conditions beyond the control of the City and its employees (storm damage, loss of generation, etc.), electric power cannot be guaranteed 100 percent of the time. Each customer listed with the Medical Alert program should have a back-up plan for movement of the life support patient if the City is unable to restore power in a length of time which is acceptable.

GATEKEEPER PROGRAM

1. The Gatekeeper Program was created to assist elderly citizens who need help but who are sometimes unable to help themselves. There are many who are healthy, active people involved in the community, but there are others who are not as fortunate. They live alone and may have little communication with others. If they become sick or unable to care for themselves, they can easily go unnoticed and unattended.
2. This program raises awareness among employees, who in the normal process of doing their jobs, come in contact with the elderly. The meter readers have been trained to watch for danger signs in the homes of elderly customers, and they know what local agency to contact should the need arise. If the customer knows of someone who might benefit from this program, please contact the City. The City cares about its citizens.

SECTION FOUR -- DISCONTINUING SERVICE

TRANSFER OF SERVICE

Customers may transfer service from one location to another as long as any current bills are not past due. The remaining amount owed and any fees will be transferred to the new account.

If the customer has an account that is past due, he or she will have to pay that amount before the account can be transferred. Existing deposits are transferred to the new account. Existing deposits lower than the current deposit amount, will increase to the amount of the current deposit prior to setting up the new account per the fee schedule.

CLOSING A UTILITY ACCOUNT

After an account has been closed by either customer request or demand of the City, all funds (including deposits, refunds, and overcharge credits) will be used against amounts owed the City on the closed account first. Remaining funds will then be used against any amounts owed on any other accounts the customer may have with the City. When those accounts have been cleared, a check for the remaining money will be issued to the customer for any net credit.

FORCED CLOSING OF A UTILITY ACCOUNT

1. One month after termination of utility service, the account will be closed. All fees and credits are then added to the balance and a "final" bill will be issued to the customer. Any balance owed to the City will remain in active suspense until the balance is paid.
2. All legal means of collection for an account in arrears will be taken whether the account is in "closed" status or not.

TERMINATION OF SERVICE

1. Requesting Discontinuance of Service: Any customer requesting discontinuance of service will inform the City's employee of the location, date service is to be disconnected and the forwarding mailing address for the final bill.
2. Disconnection Scheduling: Disconnection from the City's utility system will be performed the same day if the request is received prior to noon. A request received after noon will be fulfilled the next working day.

3. Final Bill: A customer's final bill will be mailed in a timely manner to encourage collection and customer understanding.

CUSTOMER'S RIGHTS PRIOR TO DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE

1. Reasonable opportunity: The City will discontinue utility service to customers for non-payment only after giving the customer a reasonable opportunity to question the accuracy of the bill. Reasonable opportunity is defined as the period of time from the issuance of the bill until the date of potential disconnection.
2. Disputed bill: If a customer disputes the accuracy of his/her bill, he/she has the right to a hearing at which he/she may be represented in person or by another person of his/her choosing who may present, orally or in writing, his/her complaint and contentions.
3. Exceptions: Under special circumstances, the municipality may choose not to interrupt service during extreme weather or when the meter serves an elderly or handicapped person about whom the City has prior written knowledge.
4. No disconnection: Disconnections for non-payment will not be made after 4:00 p.m., the day prior to a holiday or a weekend.
5. Hearing: The City will discontinue utility service for non-payment of bill only after notice has been given and the customer has had the opportunity to be heard on disputed bills. Any customer desiring a hearing may contact the Customer Service Manager or his/her designee at the Gardner Municipal Building, 306 East Colonial Avenue, telephone (252) 338-3981. Hearings may be scheduled between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. This person has the authority to settle the issue and reconnect any disconnected account while the matter is investigated. The customer may be represented in person and/or by counsel or other person of his/her choosing at this hearing. The complaint may be presented orally or in writing. The customer will be notified in a timely manner of the results of any investigation regarding a hearing and of any resulting determination regarding adjustment or cut-off. All grievances must be heard and addressed by the Customer Service Manager prior to an item appearing before the City Council.

CUSTOMER'S RIGHTS REGARDING DISCONNECTION

1. If a customer disputes the accuracy of a bill, that customer has a right to a hearing as detailed on the previous page.
2. Customers are entitled to receive second notice on an overdue utility bill. This notice may come in the form of a phone call, a written notice, or a discreet door hanger and will be given 10 calendar days prior to cut off.

INVOLUNTARY DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE

1. Normal involuntary disconnection procedures will be waived the first time a good credit customer appears on the disconnect list. The customer will be notified of the one-time waiver.
2. The City may discontinue utility service for any one of the following reasons:
 - A. Failure of the customer to pay bills for utility service as required in the Billing Information Section of this policy.
 - B. Failure of the customer to pay deposits as required or to increase deposits as required in the Customer Deposits Section of this policy.
 - C. Upon discovery of meter tampering including by-passing the meter or altering its function.
 - D. Failure of the customer to permit City employees access to their meters and/or load management switches at all reasonable hours. Locked gates, loose dogs, parking cars over meters, etc. are violations of City policy.
 - E. Use of power for unlawful reasons.
 - F. Discovery of a condition which is determined to be hazardous or unsafe.
3. A notice for termination must include a clear explanation of the reasons for the termination, a statement that cutoff is imminent and the date it will occur, a statement advising the customer of the availability of an administrative hearing and a right to contest the bill and the termination, and the address, phone number, and office hours of the person or persons to contact regarding the payment, the hearing and the dispute.
4. Federal laws regarding bankruptcy require that the City not alter, refuse or disconnect service based solely on the basis of the beginning of bankruptcy proceedings or on the customer's failure to pay for pre-bankruptcy service, when a petition for bankruptcy has been filed. However, a utility may terminate a bankrupt debtor's service if it is not provided assurance of payment (a deposit or other security) for future services within 20 days after the date of the order for relief. If the debtor gives adequate assurance of future payment for services, the utility may not terminate the debtor's electric service

- for pre-petition debts.
5. The City will take extra measures to insure that handicapped, elderly or seriously ill customers receive their bills, have them explained to them, and are notified of any problems with payment.
 6. Partial Payments: Partial payments are accepted on an account. A partial payment does not waive an involuntary discontinuance of service. A partial payment is first applied to sewer service, then to water and then to electric.

DISCONNECTION DURING EXTREME WEATHER

The City will not exercise its right to disconnect service for non-payment of any bill when the safety and well-being of a customer may be at stake. For that reason, disconnections for non-payment may not be conducted on any extremely cold winter day or extremely hot summer day.

The definition of an extremely cold day would be a day in which the temperature is expected to remain below 32 degrees Fahrenheit all day long. The definition of an extremely hot day would be a day in which the temperature is expected to remain above 95 degrees Fahrenheit all day long.

If a customer's bill remains unpaid on the next business day, the disconnection for non-payment may then occur. This delay in disconnection for non-payment will not preclude the City from disconnection at a future date and does not change the customer's liability for payment of all bills and fees.

The customer is encouraged to contact the City in advance of disconnection to make payment arrangements.

RECONNECTION

When it becomes necessary for the City to discontinue services for any of the reasons listed above, service will be restored after payment of (1) all past due bills due the City including additional fees and charges required by this policy (2) any deposit as required and (3) any material and labor cost incurred by the City, according to the current Fee Schedule.

After-hours reconnection will be available if the customer signs a promissory statement that he or she will pay the past due amount and any additional fees by noon the next business day.

SECTION FIVE -- METERING GUIDELINES

METER READING

1. The City's meters will be read by City employees, according to the City's schedule. Reading dates will vary slightly from month to month due to weekends, holidays, weather conditions, and other factors. Monthly billing periods will be assumed to be 30 days, but may range from 25 to 36 days.
2. The City's well-trained meter readers use modern meter reading equipment and techniques. If meter reading corrections are necessary, the City will promptly make them, and a new bill will be rendered. A credit due to a customer from a meter reading error will be posted to the customer's account or a check may be written to the customer if requested.

THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO METER AND LOAD MANAGEMENT SWITCH TAMPERING

1. Tampering with a meter or bypassing a meter is the same as stealing. The aggressive enforcement of this policy is required by the large majority of good paying customers who would be financially burdened with paying for the stolen services. The City will call for the prosecution of cases of meter tampering, electric or water theft and fraud to the fullest extent of the law.
2. Load management devices are considered by this policy to be the same as meters. Any damage to these devices will be paid by the customer.
3. A service charge representing the City's cost for the investigation and processing of a meter tampering case will be billed to the customer who benefitted from the tampering.
5. Any customer may contest these additional service charges by calling upon the Customer Service Manager for a hearing. A hearing will be scheduled before the Customer Service Manager at any time between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday except on holidays.

Tampering with electric meters is prohibited by North Carolina General Statutes 14-159-1 and North Carolina General Statutes 14-151.1 :

"It shall be unlawful for any unauthorized person to alter, tamper with or bypass a meter which has been installed for the purpose of measuring the use of electricity, gas or water or knowingly to use electricity, gas or water passing through any such tampering meter or use electricity, gas or water bypassing a meter provided by an electric, gas or water supplier for the purpose of measuring and registering the quantity

of electricity, gas or water consumed.

Any meter or service entrance facility found to have been altered, tampered with, or bypassed in a manner that would cause such meter to inaccurately measure and register the electricity, gas or water consumed or which would cause the electricity, gas or water to be diverted from the recording apparatus of the meter shall be the prima facie evidence of intent to violate and of the violation of this section by the person in whose name such meter is installed, or the person or persons so using or receiving the benefits of such unmetered, unregistered or diverted electricity, gas or water. It is unlawful for any unauthorized person to alter, bypass, interfere with, or cut off any load management device, equipment, or system which has been installed by the electricity supplier for the purpose of limiting the use of electricity at peak-load periods, provided, however, if there has been a written request to remove the load management device, equipment or system to the electric supplier and the electric supplier has not removed the device within two working days, there shall be no violation of this section."

INDEX

Adjustments	14,15
Agreements	14,15
Application	2
Applying for Service	6,7
Authority	1
Bank Drafts	18
Bankruptcy	22
Billing	11,12,13
Checks (returned)	16
Closing Account.....	20
Conflict	2
Contracts.....	3
Credit Cards	17,18
Cycle	11,12,13
Debts (Prior).....	8
Definitions	2
Deposits.....	8,9,10
Residential	9
Non-Residential.....	9
Interest on Deposits	10
Refunding	10
Disconnection.....	11,12,13,19,20,21,22,23
Voluntary	20,21
Involuntary.....	22,23
Disputed Bill	21
Due Dates	11,12,13
Energy Assistance Programs	17
Equal Payment	17,18
Extensions	15,16
Extreme Weather.....	23
Final Bill	20,21
Gatekeeper Program	19
Hearings	11,12,13,21
Hours.....	6,7,11,12,13
Interest	10

Life Support	18,19
Medical Alert Program.....	18,19
Meter Reading.....	24
Meter Tampering.....	7,24,25
New Construction	7
Payments	15,16,23
Partial.....	13,23
After Hours.....	15
Rates	10,11
Reconnection	23
Responsibilities	3
City	4,5
Customer	3,4
Returned Checks	15,16
Rights	3,4,5
City	4,5
Customer	4
Scope.....	1,2
Service Charge	7
Service Request.....	6,7
Sewer Adjustments.....	14,15
Taxes	11
Temporary Cut Offs	7
Transfer Service	20
Water Leaks	14,15
Weather	21,23
Welcome Packet	7

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CITY OF ELIZABETH CITY
OTHER FEE SCHEDULE

Residential Electric Deposit	\$200.00
Non-Residential Electric Deposit	Two times the monthly average bill with a \$200.00 minimum
Water Deposit	\$10.00
Returned Check Charge	\$25.00
Reconnection after disconnection for nonpayment	
Residential	
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	\$25.00
4:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.	
(Includes \$20.00 after-hours fee)	\$45.00
Non-Residential	\$100.00
Initial Service Fee	\$25.00
Temporary Service Fee	\$ 5.00
Special Festival Utility Service	\$20.00
Meter Tampering Investigation Charge	\$50.00
Broken Meter Charge	\$90.00
Delinquent Fee, for payments after due date but before disconnection	5%
Meter Test Charge (First test free each year)	\$10.00
Temporary Construction Service Charge	\$30.00