

Policy: Utilities Billing & Collection Policy

Main Contact: Treasurer/Deputy CAO

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Policy Statement

This policy will establish fair and equitable processes for the billing and collection of utility accounts.

Purpose

Provide a formal procedure for billing and collection, past due utility charges, accrued interest and other allowable fees on behalf of the Municipality. The policy will help to manage utility aging and keep administrative costs low.

Definitions

In this policy, the following terms have the meanings set out below:

“Utility Invoice” means the quarterly invoice that is issued for water and wastewater charges as per the Township of Whitewater Region’s User Fees and Charges By-law.

“Penalties and Interest” means amounts applied by the Municipality to unpaid utility accounts.

“Utility Arrears” means any portion of Utility accounts that remain unpaid after the due date on which they are due.

Policy Requirements

1.0 Utility Billing

- 1.1 Utility charges will be billed every other month based on the rates established through by-law. Due dates are as follows:
 - A. Last business day of March, May, July, September, November and January.
 - B. All billings will be sent out to the registered owner by regular mail at least twenty-one (21) days in advance of the due date.
 - C. Invoices will be sent to registered owner only. The Municipality does not take responsibility to ensure a tenant has a copy of the invoice.
- 1.2 Utility charges for new construction shall commence in the month after the Chief Building Official, Township Official or the Agency in charge of water and sewer connection notifies the Finance Clerk that the connection has been made. The utility charge shall commence on the 1st day of the following month that the connection has been made.
- 1.3 If an owner requests that the water be shut off or turned on the turn off/turn on fee will be billed on the next utility invoice.

2.0 Penalty & Interest Charges

- 2.1 Interest will be charged at a rate of 1.25% on current year's arrears. Penalty will be charged at a rate of 1.25% on previous years arrears.

3.0 Payments

- 3.1 Payments of utility accounts must be received in the Municipality's administrative office, or be post marked, on or before the due date. Payments not received on time are subject to penalties and interest. The following are modes of payments available for the property owner's use:
 - A. Telephone or internet banking – using the roll number as the account number (the number of digits used depends on the bank). Please note that property owners must allow at least 3 business days in order for payment to reach the Township of Whitewater Region's financial institution)
 - B. One of the municipality's preauthorized payment plans (installment based or monthly)
 - C. Post-dated cheque(s)
 - D. In person – at the counter by cash, cheque, debit or money order.
 - E. In the secure drop box located at the Main Street entrance door.
 - F. Other alternatives approved by the Treasurer or their designate.
- 3.2 Receipts will be provided for all cash, cheque or debit payments at the counter at the time of the payment and may be requested by the registered owner for all other payment methods. Requests must be made in writing either by mail, email, or through a web submission.

- 3.3** The owner must provide the roll number and/or the property address if requesting a receipt in writing. Payments will be applied as follows.
- 1) To the oldest and all penalty and interest charges.
 - 2) To the oldest invoice up to the current invoice.
 - 3) Then to other charges that have been added to the utility account.
- 3.4** Payments that have been returned by the bank will be subject to an NSF fee as set out in the Township of Whitewater Region's User Fees and Charges By-Law.
- 3.5** Preauthorized payment plans may only apply to accounts that are in good standing (i.e. no arrears)

4.0 Utility Arrears Collection

- 4.1** All fees charged under the current Fees and Charges By-law are deemed to represent the cost of providing water and wastewater services.
- 4.2** The Municipality will primarily use the following methods to collect Utility Arrears:
- A.** Verbal communications
 - B.** Utility arrears statements (generally sent out monthly)
 - C.** Annual auditor verification letters
 - D.** Personalized reminder to those approaching one year in arrears;
 - E.** Arrangement of a satisfactory term of payment that significantly reduces the previous and current utility charges;
 - F.** Final notice at the beginning of a fiscal year outlining the arrears from the previous fiscal year. The owner will have 30 days past the due date of the final notice to pay the arrears in full. Any arrears not paid will be transferred to the tax roll in accordance with the Municipal Act, 2001, Section 398 and collected in the same manner as taxes. These additions will have priority lien status pursuant to Ontario Regulation 581/06.

5.0 Miscellaneous

- 5.1** From time to time property utility accounts may experience credit balances for various reasons such as duplicate payment or payment in error. Credit balances may be refunded if the registered owner makes the request in writing and as long as all invoices billed have been cleared.
- 5.2** If an owner of a property fails to notify the Municipality of a change in mailing address, resulting in the return of their mail, no further action will be taken by the Municipality to locate the whereabouts of the owner.

Monitoring

The Treasurer shall be responsible for the monitoring and execution of this policy.

Authority

The *Municipal Act, 2001* and Ontario Regulation 581/06 provide parameters in which a municipality may invoice and collect utility services.

Contact

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Change History

Policy Name	Effective Date	Significant Changes	By-law No.
Utilities Billing & Collection Policy	May 1, 2019	New Policy	2019-04-1168
	December 11, 2019	Amendments	2019-12-1242