

## RESOLUTION NO. 3346

### A RESOLUTION OF THE BEND CITY COUNCIL DISCONTINUING THE SENIOR CITIZEN AND DISABLED PERSONS DISCOUNT AND THE \$150 ONE-TIME CREDIT UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND ESTABLISHING THE LOW-INCOME ASSISTANCE AND CRISIS VOUCHER UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

#### Findings

- A. In 1982, the Bend City Council approved a Senior Citizen and Disabled Persons Discount Program and a \$150 One-time Credit Program for sewer service charges that provided a 50% discount for residential low-income customers over the age 62, people with permanent disabilities, and customers facing certain hardship situations. Stormwater discounts were added to the discount program in 2007.
- B. The 2021-2023 Council Goals workplan for Shared Prosperity included a strategy to increase economic opportunity, advancement, and resiliency by instructing staff to modernize the utility assistance programs through community partnerships.
- C. In 2021, the City partnered with a local non-profit, NeighborImpact, for third-party administrative services to qualify customers for utility bill assistance for low-income residential customers in the City of Bend facing hardship because of the COVID-19 pandemic ("COVID-19 Utility Assistance Programs"). A total of \$250,000 was allocated to the COVID-19 Utility Assistance Programs. Those funds were exhausted by May 31, 2023.
- D. On April 1, 2022, NeighborImpact received funding from the State of Oregon to distribute Low-Income Household Water Assistance (LIHWA) Program funds. The LIHWA Program is designed to provide low-income households with assistance for their drinking water and wastewater services costs. Households who are at or below 60% state median income (SMI) are eligible for the program. The LIHWA program expires March 31, 2024.
- E. Cities throughout Oregon provide water, sewer, and stormwater discounts in their utility assistance programs for households facing economic hardship. Access to economic security programs, such as utility assistance programs, have been shown to improve long-term outcomes for children, and water service shutoff often has a disproportionate health impact on low-income households.
- F. The City will discontinue both the Senior Citizen and Disabled Persons Discount Program and the \$150 One-Time Credit on November 30, 2023, and replace them with the Low-Income Assistance (LIAP) and the Crisis Voucher Utility Assistance Programs. The existing programs have been underutilized. The new programs align with similar programs offered by municipal utilities throughout Oregon.

- G. The LIAP is a recurring bill discount program that provides a 50% reduction to the base fee charge for residential water, sewer, and stormwater services published in the City of Bend Fee Schedule, as may be amended. Customers must requalify and enroll for assistance annually. The LIAP will become available upon adoption of this Resolution.
- H. The Crisis Voucher Program will serve customers going through extenuating personal or financial circumstances shown to be interfering with their ability to pay their utility bill. Examples include, but are not limited to, death, job loss, divorce, birth/adoption of a child, funeral expenses, or domestic violence. The Crisis Voucher Program will become available after LIHWA Federal funding expires on March 31, 2024.
- I. Both programs are available to qualifying residential customers with combined income at or below 60% area median income (AMI). Households receiving Oregon Department of Human Services Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) are considered automatically eligible for LIAP but must still enroll and requalify for LIAP annually.

Now, therefore, based on the above findings,

THE CITY OF BEND RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

- Section 1. The purpose of the Low-Income Assistance Program is to provide on-going financial assistance to low-income residential utility customers. The purpose of the Crisis Voucher Program is to provide customers experiencing extreme hardship utility relief to avoid water service shutoff. Council therefore resolves to create and implement, in substantially the form attached as Exhibit A, the Low-Income Assistance Program and the Crisis Voucher Program (together, the Programs). The City Council delegates to the Utility Director authority to modify the Programs without returning to Council, provided such modifications are consistent with the intent of the Programs.
- Section 2. Reductions in revenue to support the Low-Income Assistance Program have been financially modeled in the City's 30-year Utility Rate models and do not impact the City's current or long-term established rate strategy. The current amount budgeted for the Crisis Voucher Program is \$200,000.
- Section 3. The Low-Income Assistance Program will become effective on the date approved by City Council and will remain in effect until repealed by resolution. The Crisis Voucher Program will become effective April 1, 2024, and remain in effect repealed by resolution.

Adopted by motion of the Bend City Council on September 20, 2023.

YES: Mayor Pro Tem Megan Perkins  
Councilor Barb Campbell  
Councilor Anthony Broadman  
Councilor Ariel Méndez  
Councilor Mike Riley  
Councilor Megan Norris

NO: none

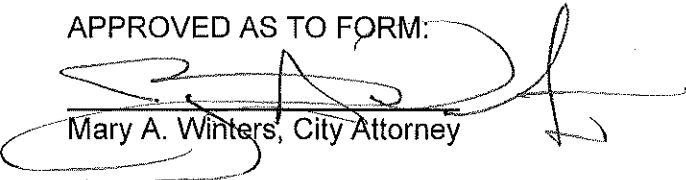


\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Pro Tem Perkins

ATTEST:

  
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Robyn Christie, City Recorder

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
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Mary A. Winters, City Attorney



## City of Bend Utility Assistance Programs Exhibit A – Program Overview

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Low-Income Assistance Program and Crisis Voucher Program (together, the “Programs”) is to provide financial assistance to qualifying low-income residential utility customers. The Programs will provide rate discounts and/or one-time emergency funding to help those customers afford their monthly utility charges, and to prevent water service shutoff for delinquent customers and/or to reinstate services for customers already in shutoff status, as further defined below.

#### *Low-Income Assistance Program*

The Low-Income Assistance Program (LIAP) will be a recurring bill discount program that provides a 50% reduction to the base fee charge for each qualifying residential water service (water, sewer and stormwater) published in the City of Bend Fee Schedule. The LIAP will be available to qualifying residential accountholders with income at or below 60% Area Median Income (AMI). Customers must re-qualify for the discount annually. Households receiving Oregon Department of Human Services Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) are considered automatically eligible but must still enroll in the program and requalify annually.

#### *Crisis Voucher Program*

The Crisis Voucher Program will serve customers going through extenuating personal or financial shown to be interfering with their ability to pay their utility bill. Examples include, but are not limited to, death, job loss, divorce, birth/adoption of a child, funeral expenses, or domestic violence. This program will become available after Federal and State funding for the Low-Income Household Water Assistance (LIHWA) program expires on March 31, 2024.

Qualifying customers will receive a bill credit equal to the amount owing at the time of application, up to a maximum of \$200. The maximum amount allowable is \$200 per 24-month period.