



DATE: July 14, 2020

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Director of Public Works

SUBJECT: Adopt a Resolution Confirming the Report and Special Assessment for Delinquent Sewer Bills and Water Bills Incurred by Property Owners

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopts a resolution (Attachment II) confirming the report and assessment for delinquent water bills and sewer bills and authorizing the delinquent charges to become a special assessment against the properties if not paid by August 1, 2020.

SUMMARY

In November 2012, Council approved collection of delinquent water and sewer service charges by way of special assessments on property tax rolls for property owners that receive only sewer service from the City and from owners of multi-family properties. As of the date of this writing, a total of forty-nine affected property owners owe a total of \$48,394.72 in unpaid sewer and water charges, plus an additional \$2,450 in administrative fees to the City and \$864.36 in administrative fees to the County, as listed on Attachment III. Despite the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, this year's delinquent amount is actually less than the same time last year. It is anticipated that the final list of properties and amount of delinquent water and sewer charges will be smaller by the final due date of August 1, 2020. Recovery of these outstanding charges improves the fiscal health of the Water and Wastewater Operating Funds, which benefits all rate payers.

BACKGROUND

The City provides water and sewer services to almost all residents and businesses within the City limits. The exceptions are a small number of properties that receive water service from the East Bay Municipal Utility District or sewer service from Oro Loma Sanitary District. In addition to in-City customers, Hayward provides sewer service to about 900 "sewer-only" customers, mainly located in unincorporated Alameda County, as well as other water or sewer service customers outside of the City limits. The Hayward Municipal Code states that responsibility for water and sewer bills lies with the person or entity that requested service, i.e., the account holder of record. For sewer-only accounts, however, ultimate responsibility rests with the property owner, regardless of the name on the account.

For accounts that become subject to collection, the most effective measure available to the City is to discontinue water service for unpaid charges. However, the City is unable to shut off water to sewer-only customers since water service is not provided by the City. With respect to multi-family customers, discontinuing water service would leave tenants without water, in most cases through no fault of their own. On November 27, 2012, Council approved ordinances allowing for the collection of delinquent water and sewer bills as special assessments on property tax bills. The ordinances apply to accounts that are at least sixty days in arrears as of March 1, and provides the City with a tool to collect delinquent charges from property owners that receive sewer service only from the City and from owners of multi-family properties. The ordinances are intended for use as a last resort, in addition to remedies that already exist.

DISCUSSION

Delinquent water and sewer service charges that would be placed on the property tax rolls are comprised of all charges in arrears by sixty days or more as of March 1, 2020, a fifty-dollar administrative fee charged by the City, and a 1.7% administrative fee charged by the Alameda County Assessor's Office. As of the date of this writing, a total of forty-nine affected property owners owe a total of \$48,394.72 in unpaid sewer and water charges, plus an additional \$2,450 in administrative fees to the City and \$864.36 in administrative fees to the County, as listed on Attachment III. Most of the delinquent charges are from one property owner, owing a total of \$28,295.08. If not paid by August 1, 2020, the unpaid charges and administrative fees will become a special assessment against the property and will appear on each property owner's tax bill later this year.

To give the Council a sense of the impact of the ordinance, the first formal letter was sent to 102 account holders, with total delinquent charges of \$94,786.67. The attached list includes 49 parcels, with charges totaling \$51,709.08, including City and County fees, which means that \$43,077.59, or approximately 45% of the original amount, has been collected that otherwise may not have been paid. The largest share of this amount is owed by one customer, owing \$28,295.08 in total delinquent charges, or approximately 56% of the remaining outstanding delinquent charges.

By comparison, at this time last year, sixty-three property owners owed a total of \$69,090.55, and the previous year, fifty property owners owed a total of \$34,699.72, including all fees. As in previous years, some property owners paid off their delinquent balance after Council action, so that the final list transmitted to the County Assessor included fifty-one properties owing a total of \$37,722.60.

Staff mailed three formal notices to each affected property owner in March, April, and May. Property owners were provided with an opportunity to schedule an administrative hearing if they disagreed with the charges or their responsibility for paying them. No requests for hearings were received.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The properties that are affected by this action are summarized in the following table:

	Number of Parcels	Amount Owed
	40	Less than \$500
	4	\$500 - \$1,000
	2	\$1,000 - \$2,000
	2	\$2,000 - \$10,000
	1	More than \$10,000
Total:	49	\$48,394.72

To the extent that the City recovers and discourages delinquencies, all rate payers will benefit from slightly less overall future rate increase requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no negative fiscal impact to the City as cost recovery occurs through administrative fees. Recovery of these outstanding charges improves the fiscal health of the Water and Wastewater Operating Funds, which benefits all rate payers.

STRATEGIC ROADMAP

This agenda item is a routine operational item and does not relate to one of the Council's Strategic Roadmap.

SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES

There are no direct sustainability features associated with this report.

PUBLIC CONTACT

In addition to the three notices sent directly to property owners, a notice of the City Council's scheduled confirmation of this report (Attachment IV) will be published in *The Daily Review* on July 3, 2020.

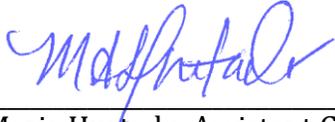
NEXT STEPS

The City will continue to accept payments until August 1, 2020. After that date, the list will be finalized and forwarded to the Alameda County Assessor's Office by August 8, in accordance with the County's schedule.

Prepared by: Michelle Tran, Developmental Review Specialist

Recommended by: Alex Ameri, Director of Public Works

Approved by:



Maria Hurtado, Assistant City Manager