

Introduced by \_\_\_\_\_

First Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Second Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_\_

Council Bill No. B12-23

**AN ORDINANCE**

amending Chapter 27 of the City Code to provide for a delay in the assessment of late charges to eligible residential utility customers; and fixing the time when this ordinance shall become effective.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, MISSOURI, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 27 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, Missouri, is hereby amended as follows:

Material to be deleted in ~~strikeout~~; material to be added underlined.

Sec. 27-19. Billing and payment.

(a) The city shall render a bill once during each billing period to every customer in accordance with the applicable rate schedule.

...

(f) Late charges assessed; providing for delay of assessment to eligible residential utility customers.

(1) Except as otherwise provided in this section, the city shall assess late charges against all delinquent accounts. If a customer's bill is not paid in full by the date payment is due, the bill for the next billing period shall include a late charge equal to three (3) percent of the amount remaining unpaid on the due date of the preceding billing period. Late charges shall not be assessed against the balance due on a delinquent account if the customer is current on the payments required by a settlement agreement for the account. Late charges shall not be assessed against the balance due on a delinquent account if the service has been disconnected.

(2) A program to delay assessment of the three (3) percent late charge to eligible residential utility customers for a period not to exceed twenty-one (21) days is hereby established pursuant to the following guidelines:

- a. To qualify for program participation, the customer must be eligible for utility assistance based on income pursuant to guidelines and requirements established by the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), and/or such other established program as determined by Department of Public Health and Human Services or Central Missouri Community Action.
  
- b. The customer must contact the city utility customer service office prior to the customer's current utility bill due date and request participation in the program to delay late charge assessment. The customer's account must not be past due for any previous billing period at the time of the request to participate in the program.
  
- c. Once the customer is determined to be eligible for the program, the imposition of the three (3) percent late charge will be delayed for a period not to exceed twenty-one (21) days for each billing cycle occurring during the next twelve (12) months.
  
- d. If a participating customer does not pay the utility bill by the end of the late charge assessment delay period, the three (3) percent late charge shall be assessed to the account at the end of the delay period.
  
- e. If at any time during participation in the program, a customer is disconnected at least two (2) times for non-payment, such customer shall be removed from the program.
  
- f. After twelve (12) months of participation, the customer will be reviewed for continued program participation. If the customer no longer qualifies for utility assistance, the customer shall be notified and removed from participation in the program during the next billing cycle. Upon removal from the program, the assessment of late charges shall resume pursuant to standard procedures for billing and payment.

...

SECTION 2. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after March 1, 2023.

PASSED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor and Presiding Officer

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Counselor