

WCSD Customer Discrepancies

Presented at the meeting on 2-19-2023 for Board Decision

1. Customer (A) has been being billed for a water and sewer connection since October of 2005 after paying the connection fees. According to the customer, the district never installed the connections. In Sept of 2022 her connections were finally installed. In Oct of 2005 Customer (A) was given an agreement with the following ordinance written on it.

Ordinance (#12), "After granting the person(s) the right to connect to the Weott Community Service District water lines, the applicant will have 120 days (4 months) to pay the District \$1250 connection fee. If the connection fee is not paid, the District shall revoke said application and place it for reissue. Following payment of connection fee, if no physical connection has been completed within 1 calendar year the property owner will then be liable for the minimum monthly fee of \$65.60.

Customer (A) has tried to request a credit with former Operator, Gary Neumann. He wrote a correspondence acknowledging that he did not understand why she was being billed but that there was nothing he could do because of this ordinance written on her agreement. He also said the ordinance wouldn't let her out of paying it even though they couldn't figure out how to connect it. In Sept of 2022 Greg rented equipment, dug a trench, and connected a lateral to the main line with no problems."

Customer (A) feels wronged and is requesting a credit of 10 years. They were billed an inactive rate since Oct of 2005 for this connection. From Jan 2017 till Oct of 2022 it was \$81.60 a month. It was less prior to 2017 due to varying the rate changes.

I recommend offering a credit for this situation and writing a better ordinance that does not leave future employees questioning variables and guessing scenarios. I think a compromise that makes both parties feel ok about the situation is appropriate. I do not like the ordinance stating that the customer has to pay the monthly bill if the district doesn't install the connection after 1 year. It is our job to install hook ups in a timely manner after payment is made and billing for a service they don't have access to is just wrong. It is not standard practice in the industry to bill a customer a monthly fee if they have paid for a connection but never physically received the hook up.

The Board does need to take into account our financial situation will limit our ability to offer large credits but Customer (A) deserves to be compensated.

CREDIT OPTIONS:

1 year \$979.20	5 years \$4,896
2 years \$1,958.40	10 years \$9,360
3 years \$2,937.60	17 years \$15,593.60
4 years \$3,916.80	

2. Customer (B) Purchased a property beginning of 2021. They were the renter of one of the 2 units on this property before they purchased it. They paid their part of the bill, but never received the bill because it went to the property owner. They would pay in person once a month. When they purchased the property they were told by previous employees that there was a \$12,000 water bill that needed to be paid to transfer water into their name. That's when they told her there was an enormous leak that had been going on for 6 months and now that she is the property owner she needed to pay for it. Customer (B) asked why they didn't shut the water off or let her know when she came in to pay the bills. They told customer (B) that they wrote on the bills that there was a leak and sent them to the property owner. Customer (B) asked if she should go to the Board for assistance and was discouraged from doing that. They told customer (B) the board isn't going to do anything and working with them instead of the Board is her best bet. They settled on \$6800 and told her that was a good deal. Customer (B) is concerned if the money was deposited to WCSD and feels like it was insane to allow a leak of that size to continue for 6 months without either shutting it off or telling her one of the times she paid her part of the bill. The previous landowner was not paying the bill at all, which she was unaware of. Customer (B) currently wants a new connection on their second, neighboring parcel, which is undeveloped.

I tried to find historical information on Customer (B) and the prior owner. I can find some payment info on desktop quickbooks but nothing from the past owner on intuit. The former owner's account is not in the billing system anymore which is interesting because there are several other former owners whose accounts are still in the system and were even still getting billed (just not sent). The transfer of ownership in the billing software happened in Aug 2021.

Customer (B) provided copies of invoices she received when she paid the bill. I'm waiting for bank statements from 2021 to verify the money was received into the account but it was paid with a credit card. We do not have very many 2021 bank statements in the office saved. Deposits were not documented in the bank accounts as to who they came from either.

Customer (B) is not requesting a credit. She was concerned about the situation and wanted the Board to be aware. However, I recommend the connection fee for the hook ups get waived but all construction costs be paid by the customer. It's our job to turn off a 231,000 gallon a month water leak and/or immediately notify the property owner. To allow it to go on for 6 months is negligent. For an employee to discourage a customer from going to the board to discuss an issue is so wrong. For transparency, the Board should approve all credits of high value, or write a very specific policy for employees to follow.

3. Customer (C) has been being billed incorrectly. There is a master meter with several individual customer meters after. The master meter was not being billed based on usage. It wasn't being billed at all. Some months, the individual customer meters were not billed

based on usage either. Some months, they were charged 7 base rates each month for the 7 individual customer meters with no meter readings. Without the master meter being read and billed no one noticed 2 very large leaks that were on the transmission lines between customer meters, likely for many months. The water never surfaced and was not easy to locate once we discovered their meter was showing a leak. The units of the master meter also were not recorded correctly. They were shown as cubic feet in the system but were actually 100 gallons. So for every 100 gallons they used, if they had been billed based on usage, they would have been billed for 7.48 gallons. This also made determining a leak difficult because the dial on a 100 gallon meter appears to move very slowly when there is actually a leak. Without a customer having a bill that shows usage, they will never know if they have an underground leak. It is our job to provide them with the information they need to be aware of their usage. The December to January meter readings showed 125,000 gallons going through customer (C) master meter. 35,000 gallons went to the 7 customer meters. There is an undetermined usage from a small laundry mat included in the overage. It is part of the master meter usage. So, a little under 90,000 gallons was unmetered usage that never surfaced. The cost of just the overage usage on the master meter was \$960.74.

The property owners have attached a letter. I recommend we credit a reasonable amount of the overage on their bill. Without usage on the bill, they never would have known there was a leak. Once we notified them and located the leaks, they fixed them right away. It is our responsibility to read meters and bill customers fairly based on usage.

4. Deposits- Some property owners are requesting their deposits be credited to their account. Typically a deposit is required for a customer who is a tenant to protect the property owner. Property owners are ultimately responsible for the bill so if a tenant leaves them with a bill the deposit can be credited towards it. Weott CSD does have an ordinance stating that every customer pays the deposit which is credited when they move or sell the property. This ordinance needs to be discussed when all ordinances are reviewed and credit requests addressed based on the updated ordinance.