


City of Winder


Title: Water Service Policy

Date Issued by Council: 10/4/16

Policy: 500



Mayor



City Administrator

500.10 Customer Responsibility

- A. The customer(s) whose name(s) appear(s) on the application for service is (are) the customer(s) responsible for payment of all charges. That customer is also responsible for any rules or policy violations that occur regarding the service to that property. Personal participation by the customer in any such violation shall not be necessary to impose personal responsibility on the customer.
- B. A Valid driver's license or official picture identification is required to apply for service or make any changes to an account.
- C. A copy of a rental, lease agreement, or closing documents may be required for new service connections.

500.11 Hours of Service

- A. Normal business hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. excluding City observed holidays.
- B. Service orders for new accounts will be turned on the next business day.
- C. Reconnections will be made the same day up to 5:00 p.m.

500.12 After Hours Connections

- A. If the request is made for the service connection to take place after 5:00 p.m. on days of business or on a weekend, an additional \$75.00 service fee will be added to the customer's account.
- B. All after hour connections are based on the availability of staff.

500.13 Water Service Charges

- A. All utility accounts are due and payable on the due date as shown on the utility bill. In order to maintain the water service, the monthly charge due must be paid in full; a minimum charge is assessed whether or not water service is used. If the customer's account is not paid by the due date, the account is deemed to be overdue.
- B. Charges will be billed up to the time of disconnection/shutoff with the next regular billing period.
- C. Failure to receive a utility bill that had been sent by the City does not relieve the consumer from liability for payment or any late fees assessed against the account.

500.14 Ownership of Water Meters and Service Lines

- A. The City of Winder retains all ownership of water meters connected to the City's water system.
- B. No applicant named on the utility bill or person associated with the property connected to the water distribution system, shall sell, transfer, or assign water rights to the City of Winder's system unless authorized in writing by the City of Winder.
- C. Only City Employees or those directly authorized by the City may work on water meters, water lines maintained by the City, and/or tap into City water lines.

500.15 Continuation of Charges

If the customer or property owner does not request a water service disconnection/shutoff, the City of Winder will continue billing for the service even if the property is determined to be vacant (all charges will continue to be billed). Customers are responsible for all water utilized until the City is able to disconnect services in accordance with the requested shutoff date.

500.16 Water Connections

- A. New customers must complete a water application, provide picture identification, and pay the applicable deposits and fees. A renter's agreement or closing statement may also be required to show proof of residency.
- B. If there is an outstanding balance on an existing account in the customer's name, this balance must be paid in full before new service will be initiated.
- C. Connections requiring a new service line/tap must complete an application and all associated fees shall be paid prior to connection.

500.17 Account Deposit

- A. Deposits are required on all residential accounts in the amount of one-hundred dollars (\$100.00) per dwelling unit(s) that are unable to meet established credit ratings or have a poor payment history with the City of Winder. A master metered multi-family building will be required to pay a deposit of one-hundred dollars (\$100.00) per dwelling unit.
- B. Deposits are refundable upon termination of service after all outstanding charges have been paid.
- C. Single-family residential customers that pay twelve (12) consecutive months on-time and in-full, will have their deposit credited to their account. Master metered residential accounts are not subject to a refund until the account is closed.
- D. Non-residential deposits:
 - 1) Restaurant and manufacturing – Five-hundred dollars (\$500.00)
 - 2) Retail/office commercial – Three-hundred dollars (\$300.00).
 - 3) Commercial/Industrial with more than fifty-thousand (50,000) s.q.f.t. shall be determined by estimated water consumption.

500.18 Changes to Meter Sizes

- A. The meter size can be reduced at no charge to the customer if the property owner submits a request in writing to the City.
- B. All requests for meter size increases will be considered a new tap; all associated fees will need to be paid before the new tap will be made to accommodate for the expanded service. A credit will be issued towards any capacity fees previously collected.

500.19 Relocation of a Meter

- A. If the relocation of a current meter is requested, then the customer will be billed the actual cost of the labor and materials for relocation, plus ten percent (10%).
- B. All costs will be required to be paid prior to the start of the relocation.
- C. All meter locations must meet applicable City guidelines.
- D. A meter can only be relocated within the same parcel as the original location.

500.20 Return Checks or Delinquent Accounts

- A. All checks returned by the bank as unpaid/insufficient funds will carry a \$30 returned check charge.
- B. After a check is returned for insufficient funds, the balance of the account, plus the \$30 returned check charge must be paid in cash, credit card, or money order. Failure to pay the total amount due in three (3) business days after being notified will result in services being disconnected. A check will be accepted for the following month's service unless there is a history of insufficient funds (2 returned checks within an 18 month period).
- C. If a check with insufficient funds is provided to cover services that have been reconnected, no grace period will be given before service is disconnected. A cash, credit card, or money order payment will be required after insufficient funds have been provided for reconnection of services.

500.21 Customer Requested Water Disconnections/Shutoff

- A. A water service disconnection will be done, at the request of the property owner or person whose name is indicated on the account (proper identification is required). All requests shall be submitted in writing.
- B. There will be no fee for the disconnection/shutoff request.
- C. All requests once the proper documentation is received will be completed by the City within two (2) business days.

500.22 Disconnection

- A. Disconnection shall take place in accordance with this policy between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, if disconnected due to lack of payment. If owner requested, disconnections may take place on a Friday or prior to a holiday.

- B. No disconnection shall take place the day before or on a holiday observed by the City of Winder.
- C. Notice for Disconnection shall be placed in a conspicuous place describing the steps of reconnection of service. Additional information may be obtained, on-line at cityofwinder.com
- D. If service is provided in more than one persons' name (i.e. husband and wife) either person, with positive identification, may request for the service to be disconnected.

500.23 Penalties and Disconnections Due to Late or Lack of Payment

- A. If the billing due date falls on a day that the City is closed, the due date is the next day of business.
- B. Payments that are not received by 5:00 p.m. on the billing due date are deemed to be overdue.
- C. A penalty of ten percent (10%) is applied to all late payments not received by the fifth (5th) day after the due date. (please see Water & Sewer Rates, Form 520 for other applicable fees)
- D. The scheduled disconnection shall be posted on the customer's bill. Customers will be notified via phone, email, text or other available methods two (2) business days prior to disconnection. It is the customer's responsibility to provide the City with current contact information.
- E. If the full payment is not received within ten (10) days of the due date, the water will be subject to disconnection and a fifty dollar (\$50.00) fee will be added. Garbage services for City residents will also be cancelled at this time. The City of Winder reserves the right to disconnect prior to ten (10) days if it is determined that the customer has a leak.
- F. After the water has been disconnected, the City may apply any deposits on file to the account. Once the deposit is applied, the account will be closed out and the unpaid balance will be sent to collections.
- G. The customer shall be responsible for all fees associated with the collections process in addition to the total balance due.
- H. Accounts disconnected and closed will be required to apply for new services.

500.24 Water Reconnect Due To Lack of Payment on Account

- A. The entire account must be paid in full before services will be reconnected.
- B. The City shall have the right to refuse to render service to an applicant or to any member of an applicant's household who is living at the same address whenever such person(s) is (are) delinquent on any payment to the City or had his or her service discontinued because of a violation of this policy.
- C. If a deposit was applied to the amount owed or never collected, the customer will be required to meet the deposit requirements.

500.25 **Agreement Plan for Higher than Normal Bills**

- A. The City will work with customers on high water bills (noted as at least twice the normal consumption). An agreement can be signed with a payment for 1/2 (half) the amount up front. The remaining half will be divided over a four (4)-month period. This amount must be paid in addition to the regular water bills until the amount is paid in full. Bills greater than \$500 will be reviewed on a case by case basis; however, payments will not exceed six (6) months.
- B. No penalties will be assessed against the account as long as the payments are made on time and in accordance with the agreement.
- C. In order to be eligible, the following requirements must be met:
 - 1) All arrangements will be in writing and approved by the City Administrator, Finance Director or designee.
 - 2) Payment arrangements must be made **prior** to disconnection for non-payment.
 - 3) Failure to comply with the terms of the arrangement will result in a 10% penalty being added to the past due amount and disconnection.

500.26 **Bill Adjustments for Loss of Metered Water**

- A. Under some circumstances involving leaks, and other water losses beyond reasonable control, the City may provide a credit on a bill once every twelve (12) months.
- B. The Water Department will first determine that the meter has been read properly. If an investigation of the meter and meter records establishes that the meter was misread or that there was a failure of utility equipment, a new bill will be issued using an estimated reading based on the last twelve (12) month billing period. There will be no penalty assessed in the event the adjustment procedure delays payment past the penalty date.
- C. To qualify for a leak adjustment, the water usage must be at least one-hundred (100%) percent above the average quarterly usage.
- D. The City shall not be obligated to make adjustments of any bills not contested within thirty (30) days from the billing due date. An adjustment can only be made for one billing period. In the event the leak extends into a second billing period, the higher bill of the two can be adjusted.
- E. The City reserves the right to request documentation or evidence of the leak, nature of the leak, and/or documentary evidence that repairs have been performed for any leak greater than 20,000 gallons. Failure to provide documentation may result in the adjustment being denied.
- F. If an adjustment of the customer's water bill is warranted, the entire number of gallons will be billed and then adjusted by 50%.

500.27 **RESERVED**

500.28 **Tampering and Theft of Services**

- A. Under no circumstances is any customer or individual authorized to turn water back on or alter services. Only authorized city staff or contracted employees may connect services or work on city lines.
- B. All persons are prohibited from interfering with or disturbing in any manner or form, any water meters, radio equipment, switches, locks, cutoffs, or other appliances of the City, including fire hydrants, or to appropriate or use any water after service has been cut off or discontinued for nonpayment or in order to avoid payment.
- C. The property owner, legal tenant, or person(s) noted on the utility account shall be held responsible for the violation of this section. A tampering fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) shall be assessed where a meter or water line has been disturbed. A tampering fine of seven hundred and fifty dollars (\$750.00) shall be assessed for tampering with a fire hydrant or any fire meter.
- D. The City of Winder reserves the right to prosecute in the accordance with established laws after any tampering of water services has been discovered.
- E. If, after removal of service, an alternative means of obtaining water service is attempted (such as a “jumper” or straight piping), then the water service to that property will be removed until such time as the case can appear and be settled before the City’s Municipal Court.
- F. If the City determines theft of service has occurred, it reserves the right to adjust the customer’s current bill and the bills for the past six (6) months usage. If the approximate amount of service that was stolen cannot be reasonably determined, the customer’s usage will be set at two (2) times the average volume.

500.29 **Service to Multiple Locations or Residences from One Meter**

- A. If one water meter serves more than one location or living unit (for example: two units/duplex apartments, a rooming house or more than one business in a shopping center), it is necessary that the account be in the owner's name. In the event that there are multiple owners, the City may require all parties to sign the application and put up a larger deposit. This policy is intended to avoid having a service request from one tenant that would affect another tenant's service, and to avoid having to allocate costs among tenants who share one meter.
- B. Each new or renovated residential dwelling will be required to have an individual water meter.

500.30 **Service Calls on Private Property**

- A. The City of Winder will not make any repairs to water lines not directly belonging to the City. All water lines between the City’s water meter and place of service (to include all lines within or directly under a structure) are considered private waterlines.
- B. If requested to turn on/shut off a water line for personal repairs on private property, no fee will be assessed against the property owner if the request is made during normal business hours or shutoffs in cases of weather related emergencies (e.g. storms, tornados, etc.).

500.31 Customer Request to Replace or Re-read a Meter

- A. Once a request is received, the meter will be inspected within five (5) business days to determine if the meter is damaged or faulty.
- B. There is no fee charged to a customer for a request to re-read a water meter. Only one re-read will be conducted per billing cycle.
- C. If the customer insists that the meter should be tested/replaced and the meter is found to be defective, there will be no charge for the test and a new meter will be installed. If the meter is not defective, the customer's account will be charged a twenty-five (\$25) service fee.

500.32 Damage to Meter and Radio Equipment

- A. Customers shall be responsible to ensure that city equipment is not damaged through the routine maintenance of adjacent property. The property owner may be deemed responsible for damages to City meters and equipment.
- B. The City reserves the right to assess the cost of the damaged equipment to the utility account.

500.33 Obstructing a Water Meter

- A. The City of Winder must have access to water meters to properly service water and sewer accounts and to ensure accurate billing. The utility customer is responsible to trim, cut back, and remove any bushes, trees, plants, sod, landscaping, etc. that may cover or obstruct access to a water meter.
- B. It is a violation to cover or obstruct access to a water meter. Failure to maintain accessibility to the water meter could result in civil fines of twenty-five (\$25.00) a day for noncompliance.
- C. The City reserves the right to disconnect services or remove the obstruction if not resolved seven (7) days after notice has been provided and pursue costs incurred to the City for clearing the obstruction through Municipal Court.
- D. If a leak is observed the City shall take immediate action to remove the obstruction and disconnect the service until necessary repairs are made.

500.34 Estimated Billing

Conditions may arise which prohibit city staff from reading a customer's meter either due to a damaged meter or obstruction of a meter. In these cases the City will estimate the reading based on historical data or other general comparisons. Once an accurate reading can be made in cases involving obstruction of a meter, the city will make the necessary adjustments for any discrepancies greater than 3,000 gallons for residential services and 5,000 gallons for commercial.

500.35 Water and Sewer Rate Schedule

See Form 520 [Water & Sewer Rates](#) for a complete schedule of City rates and fees.