

Past-due water fees could be waived

November 19, 2021



Crescent City's water and sewer customers who didn't pay for their water over a 15-month period during the pandemic will likely have those delinquent notices waived.

From March 4, 2020 to June of this year, there were 334 accounts past due, for a total of \$71,984.60. The accounts include both residential and business accounts in Crescent City, as well as customers in the Bertsch-Oceanview, Churchtree and Meadowbrook communities.

On November 15, the city council authorized City Manager Eric Wier to apply for funding to pay off those bills. The funding will come from \$985 million that the State of California received under the American Rescue Plan Act passed by Congress in March.

The city will also request an additional \$2,159.54 from the program, to pay for administrative costs associated with contacting customers about the waiver, and cleaning up the account balances.

According to city staff reports, the city manager will apply for the funding prior to the December 6 deadline, and there is no income limitation or other requirements for customers in order to be eligible for the waiver.

For customers who have delinquent balances for either water or sewer services either before March 4 or after June 15, payment plans will be offered.

After funding is dispersed to pay off the water bills, the State Water Resources Control Board is also expected to create a second program that would focus on wastewater systems. Crescent City's Sewer Fund is currently facing a \$115,487.26 shortfall from residential and commercial accounts in the same 15-month timeframe, which may also be waived. However, whether there will be enough funding to cover the entire amount of the shortfall is uncertain.

Shortly after the pandemic began, the city council directed staff to not shut off water services or charge late fees of customers behind on their water and sewer bills. In April 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom also issued an order that placed a moratorium on shutting off water for non-payment until September 30 of this year, which was later extended to December 31.