Ratepayer Notice: COVID-19 Relief Measures

IMPORTANT MESSAGE: COVID-19 RATEPAYER RELIEF MEASURES

This notice announces relief measures for residential ratepayers experiencing economic hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please review this message in its entirety. For more information please go to our website at www.VeronaNJ.org or contact JMuscara@VeronaNJ.org.

INSTALLMENT PLAN AVAILABILITY

BE ADVISED that State law requires residential customers to be offered an installment plan for any water and sewer arrearages accruing between March 9, 2020 and March 15, 2022. To maintain the installment plan, a residential customer must make timely payments on all current charges. More information is available at 973-857-4777 or email JMuscara@VeronanJ.org. Sewer liens that were sold before January 1, 2022 cannot be included in the installment plan.

LATE FEES, CHARGES AND PENALTIES

BE ADVISED that P.L. 2021, c. 317 prohibits local governments from charging residential customers interest, fees, or charges for late payment of water and sewer charges accruing between March 9, 2020 and March 15, 2022 until after March 15, 2022 at which time interest and penalties may begin to accrue. This prohibition does not apply to sewer liens that were sold before January 1, 2022. Late interest, fees or charges may be enforced against arrearages accruing before March 9, 2020 and after March 15, 2022.

BILL ASSISTANCE AND ARREARAGE FORGIVENESS PROGRAMS

The application period for the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs' Low Income Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) is now open. This federally funded program will provide financial assistance to low-income households to reduce the balances on their residential water and sewer bills. LIHWAP will provide benefits directly to water and sewer service providers on behalf of residential customers. The assistance can be used, in order of priority, to:

- restore services where services have been terminated and pay reconnection fees and other charges accrued due to a disconnection;
- avoid service disruption for those residential customers who are in danger of disconnection (i.e., received shut off notices or have past due balances) and to help them afford bill payment going forward; and
- support those household customers who are current in their bills but might be in danger of falling behind in the near future.

Priority will also be given to families with elderly or disabled household members and/or with children under the age of five, no matter which category they fall into.

BILL ASSISTANCE AND ARREARAGE FORGIVENESS PROGRAMS (cont.)

To be eligible for LIHWAP assistance, applicants must be water/sewer bill holders who are responsible for paying their water and sewer bills directly to the water/sewer provider. Also, applicants' total gross household income must be at or below 60% of the state median Income ($6,439 a month for a family of four). The LIHWAP frequently asked questions webpage, available at https://njdca-housing.dynamics365portals.us/lihwapfaq has additional information about maximum income limits and other items.

Participants in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) are automatically eligible for LIHWAP assistance so long as they are water/sewer bill holders.

People can apply online through the DCAid application portal at https://njdca-housing.dynamics365portals.us/en-US/dcaid-services/.

Those without computer or internet access can call 1-800-510-3102 to be directed to one of the community action agencies to assist them with starting, completing, and submitting an application online.