

Board of Aldermen
Charter & Ordinance Committee
Meeting minutes 18 October 2018

Committee members present: Aldermen Rebecca Mattis (chair), Lisa Ryan, Chris Etori, Melinda Humphrey

Others present: Alderman Matt Whitcomb, treasurer Mary Markowski, assistant treasurer Lynne Holmquist, and public works commissioner Jeff Wennberg

The meeting convened at 5:34. The purpose was to review proposed changes to city ordinance regarding billing for water and sewer. Commissioner Wennberg summarized the reasons for the proposed changes, which have been prompted mainly by the city's contract with Fathom Water Services to upgrade our water metering and billing systems. The changes are meant to accommodate both current and future needs.

There has been interest in City Hall in changing our current quarterly billing for water and sewer to monthly billing, which would help the ratepayers by keeping bills smaller and more manageable. As we transition to Fathom's billing services, we will continue quarterly billing, but we'll be able to change to monthly billing in the future with the proposed changes. Currently, ordinance specifies exact due dates for bills (the first of February, May, August, and November). The proposed ordinance defines the due date to be thirty days after issuance of the bill, providing much greater flexibility.

Because Fathom will be billing city water customers in both Rutland City and Rutland Town, the interest and penalties for late accounts need to be the same for both city and town. The proposed changes will match the system currently used by Rutland Town (and most other Vermont municipalities). By current ordinance, accounts that miss the due date are assessed a 5% penalty; accounts that are over 30 days past due are assessed an 8% collection fee, and accounts remaining delinquent are charged 1% interest every month they remain unpaid. Under the proposed new rules, late payments would be assessed a 1.5% penalty, with 1.5% interest charged monthly thereafter as long as the account remains not fully paid. This change meets the needs of Fathom for standard penalties and fees within its contract with Rutland City, and the lower fees make more sense for monthly billing, when and if we choose it.

Additional changes are as follows. The proposed ordinance defines a payment's timeliness by the date it is actually received in the treasurer's office, instead of by postmark. It allows payments to be collected not only by the city treasurer but also the city treasurer's designee. Additionally, it makes the rules for sewer billing the same as those for water billing.

The proposed changes have been reviewed by Fathom Water Services and are acceptable to them. Alderman Etori moved to accept the changes to ordinance as proposed, effective February 18, 2019. The motion passed unanimously, and I so move.

Meeting adjourned 6:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Mattis, chair