



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

DAWN M. JONES, CITY CLERK

PERSONNEL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 12, 2022, 3:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present:

Sheila Niezgodski, Eli Wax, Troy Warner, Rachel Thomas Morgan, Henry Davis Jr.

Agenda:

Bill No 43-22 – Amending Various Articles and Sections of Chapter 17 of the SB Municipal Code to Address Late Fees for City Utility Customers

Members marked with an asterisk (*) are present digitally

Please note the attached link for the meeting recording:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/browse.aspx?dbid=0&mediaid=357323>

Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski called to order the Personnel and Finance Committee at 3:30 p.m.

Bill No. 43-22 – Amending Various Articles and Sections of Chapter 17 of the SB Municipal Code to Address Late Fees for City Utility Customers

Eric Horvath, the Public Works Director, with offices on the thirteenth (13th) floor of the County-City building noted that this program has been in place for a few years. They have noticed potential for improvements. There have been significant efforts to get individuals signed up for this program. There has been a forty percent (40%) increase in participation this year. The first (1st) change is the name of the program to Utility Assistance Program. There is no longer the restriction that the utility bill needs to be in the individual's name. Individuals who are part of the program are now exempt from late fees. There is also the exemption that individuals who are not up to date on their account are still eligible for water and sewer insurance programs. Additionally, any water lines in the public right of way will be covered under the water insurance program.

Committee Member Wax asked if there are limits regarding amount and time.

Eric Horvath noted that it is indefinite. Individuals who are part of the program can still have their utilities shut off.

Council member Wax also noted concern that this program removes the incentives for individuals to pay their utilities. Additionally, this puts more of a burden on others who are paying for their utilities.

Eric Horvath noted that everyone still needs to pay their utility bills, but it removes the burden of late fees for individuals who cannot afford it. Unfortunately, late fees are not an incentive to pay their utility bills. Shut-offs are an effective incentive. There is support via payment plans to assist individuals to pay off their bills. There is also a federal program where low-income people can

have the water and sewage portion of their bills paid for. It was asked if there was a cost assessment done. Eric Horvath confirmed that this had not been done. Total arrears are approximately one million seven hundred thousand (\$1,700,000) dollars, which is higher than when shut offs are able to occur. He noted that he did not know how many people were in arrears or how many people were tenants compared to home owners. He will follow up on these items. There was discussion regarding areas that have high delinquency rates. It was noted that there is a monetary and time threshold for utilities to be turned off.


Committee Chair Niezgodski held the public hearing, and nobody spoke.

Committee member Tomas Morgan motioned send Bill No. 43-22 to Committee of the Whole with a favorable recommendation, seconded by Committee Chair Niezgodski, and carried by a vote of four (4) ayes, and one (1) nay.

Committee member Troy Warner - <i>Aye</i>	Committee member Rachel Tomas Morgan - <i>Aye</i>
Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski - <i>Aye</i>	Committee Vice-Chair Eli Wax - <i>Nay</i>
Committee Member Henry Davis Jr. - <i>Aye</i>	

With no further business, Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski adjourned the Personnel and Finance Committee meeting at 3:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


 Sheila Niezgodski, Committee Chair

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