

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
Monday, August 02, 2021  
6:30 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and time at the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex, 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina 28472, for the purpose of conducting the Regular Session, it being the first Monday.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Ricky Bullard, **Chairman**  
Jerome McMillian, **Vice Chairman**  
Chris Smith  
Giles E. Byrd  
Lavern Coleman  
Brent Watts  
Charles T. McDowell

**APPOINTEES PRESENT:**

Edwin H. Madden, Jr., **County Manager**  
Amanda B. Prince, **Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk to Board**  
Jay Leatherman, **Interim Finance Officer**

**6:30 P.M.**

**PUBLIC HEARING:**      **Water and Sewer District V - Close-Out of the Old Dock Elementary School Sewer Project:** the purpose of this Public Hearing is to inform the citizens of Columbus County of the final accomplishments and expenditures of the 2011 CDBG-Infrastructure Project to extend wastewater collection service to the Old Dock School with funds received from the NC Department of Environmental Quality under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended.

**This item was tabled under Agenda Item #4 until the August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Meeting.**

**Agenda Items #1, #2 and #3:**      **MEETING CALLED to ORDER, INVOCATION and PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE:**

At 6:30 P.M. Chairman Ricky Bullard called the Monday, August 02, 2021 Columbus County Board of Commissioners Regular Session Meeting to order. The invocation was delivered by Commissioner Brent Watts. Everyone in attendance stood and pledged Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America which was led by Commissioner Giles E. Byrd.

**Agenda Item #4:**      **BOARD MINUTES APPROVAL:**

- A. June 21, 2021 Regular Session
- B. July 06, 2021 Regular Session
- C. July 12, 2021 Special Called Meeting and Workshop
- D. July 20, 2021 Regular Session

Commissioner Coleman made a motion to approve the Board Minutes, seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #5:**      **APPROVAL OF AUGUST 02, 2021 AGENDA and TAX RELEASES:**

**Tax Refunds and Releases**

<i>Property Value</i>			Amount: \$93.54
Buffkin Trucking Inc.	<b>PROPERTY:</b> 00000		Total: \$95.86
Value: \$0.00      Year: 2020	Account: 01-01121		Bill#: 61799
Release value of Kenworth. Located in another county. Release Columbus Rescue(2.32			
<i>Property Value</i>			Amount: \$31.10
Munce, Paul M. c/o Regina Holmes	<b>PROPERTY:</b> 19722		Total: \$31.10
Value: \$0.00      Year: 2020	Account: 11-00106		Bill#: 99999
Release portion of value \$15,550. Should have been depreciated 20%. Release Lake Waccamaw(282.10)			

<i>Refunds</i>			Amount: \$375.5
4			
Munce, Paul M. c/o Regina Holmes	PROPERTY: 19722	Total:	\$375.54
Value: \$0.00	Year: 2020	Account: 11-00106	Bill#: 99999
Refund portion of value. Should have been depreciated 20%.			
<i>User Fee</i>			Amount: \$0.00
Bannerman, Tammie Bowen & Michael T	PROPERTY: 60214	Total:	\$1,883.00
Value: \$0.00	Year: 12-20	Account: 08-01214	Bill#: 99999
Release user fees. Home burned in 2007.			
<i>User Fee</i>			Amount: \$0.00
Farmer, Cyrus M.	PROPERTY: 12901	Total:	\$600.00
Value: \$0.00	Year: 18-20	Account: 07-03906	Bill#: 99999
Release user fee vacant land.			

The following item was moved to Consent agenda items to be tabled until the next Board meeting on August 16, 2021.

#21. WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT V – CLOSE-OUT OF OLD DOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SEWER PROJECT:

MOTION:

Commissioner McDowell made a motion to approve the August 02, 2021 Agenda and Tax Releases and to table the Public Hearing and Agenda Item #21 until the August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

Agenda Item #6: PUBLIC INPUT:

Chairman Bullard opened the floor for Public Input. The following spoke:

Johnny Edge, 470 Happy Home Rd, Nakina, NC 28455, stated the following:

- I am greatly concerned about the future of the County.
- I understand we are working on a planning and zoning ordinance and that will happen over the next several days, weeks, months.
- Your decision will dictate the future for Columbus County.
- It’s important you have as much information as you can.
- I have talked to the Director of Robeson and Brunswick County and they have agreed to come to any workshop, if asked.
- I have emailed Samantha Alsup with this information as well.
- They are having a meeting tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. at the Administration building in Brunswick County and the County Manager will be there along with Planning Board members to provide information on Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances.
- Dixon Ivey from Robeson County has been very supportive.
- I strongly suggest you hear from all walks of life in these work sessions – farmers, construction workers, commercial, retail, industrial and the average citizen.
- All of these things will decide the economic stability of Columbus County.
- Growth in this county can be done responsibly.

Agenda Item #7: MAINTENANCE – APPROVAL OF LOW BID FOR LAWN CARE OF LISTED COUNTY PROPERTIES:

Stuart Carroll, Director, requested approval of the low bid of \$52,800 from Bullard’s Landscaping. The second bid was received from County Plants and Trim for \$83,700.

County of Columbus  
Properties

- 1. Health Department Complex, includes Building Inspections, front and rear of the Emergency Services complex and the Parks and Rec office unit. All surrounding areas including surrounding parking lots. It does not include the fenced in Maintenance shop area or the fenced in Parks and Rec area. - Jefferson St. / Thompson St.
- 2. Columbus County Library on 701 Bypass, includes staff outside break area flower beds.
- 3. Columbus County Administration Building and parking lot, includes parking lot from Admin. Building by Gore Law firm to Madison St.-Washington Street
- 4. Tax Office Complex, includes Register of Deeds, MIS, GIS and Columbus County Storage facility (all 3 entrances) - Washington Street
- 5. D.A.s Office/Judges office, parking lots, brick walkway, strip toward Funeral Home, front lowered border and red-tips behind Law office – Smith Street
- 6. Lee/Smith St. Parking Lot, includes sloped area to side walk
- 7. Columbus County Courthouse parking lot and surrounding area.
- 8. Court Annex, parking lot and surrounding area – Smith Street
- 9. Veterans Services, parking lot and surrounding area including behind building – 850 Pinckney Street
- 10. Columbus County Department of Aging parking lot and surrounding area - Chadbourn Highway
- 11. The 50 Legion Office Facility (former BOE/HUD building) parking lot and surrounding area - 50 Legion Dr./ Chadbourn Highway
- 12. Animal Control Facilities (Old and New), parking lot, surrounding area, fenced in area and cut-down 10 foot outside of fence. – Legion Drive
- 13. Transportation Building, parking lot, surrounding area, fenced in area and cut-down 10 foot outside of fence. – Legion Drive
- 14. Cooperative Extension Agency / Farm Services parking lots and surrounding area – 45 Government Complex Road
- 15. Department of Social Services Building parking lots and surrounding area – 40 Government Complex Road
- 16. Columbus County Public Utilities Office, parking lot and surrounding area -612 N Madison St
- 17. Historical Courthouse surrounding area including parking lots south of Veterans building and parking lot south of BB&T.
- 18. Wyche/Smith St. parking lot and fence including drain ponds.
- 19. Board of Election parking lot and surrounding area - North 2322 James B. White Hwy North
- 20. Columbus County Finance/Utilities Office, (BB&T) 810 Pinckney St, Whiteville, NC 28472
- 21. Fair Bluff Senior Center, Academy St, Fair Bluff

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Coleman made a motion to Approve the Low Bid for Lawn Care of Listed County Properties, seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #8:     HEALTH – COVID UPDATE:**

Kim Smith, Director, provided an update on the County’s COVID numbers

**August 2, 2021 COVID-19 Update**

**State of NC**

14,477,619 completed tests	Vaccines Statewide
1,056,699 total cases	1 <sup>st</sup> Dose 61%
2190 new cases Statewide (overnight)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Dose 58% fully vaccinated
1359 in Hospital with 92% reporting	
13,670 total deaths	
10.6% positive rate	

\*NC Public Health stated that 90% of cases are now the Delta Variant and 94% of the deaths occurring now are individuals that are unvaccinated.

\*18-24 year olds and 25-49 year olds have the highest increase in cases.

\*Vaccine (fully vaccinated individuals) is highly effective in preventing hospital stays and death in those that get the virus.

### **Columbus County (as of 4:00 p.m. on August 02, 2021)**

64,283 completed tests (July 28, 2021)

7431 total cases

17 in Hospital (14 CRHS, 3 NHRMC) THAT WE KNOW OF AT THIS TIME!

163 deaths

6769 Recoveries

482 Isolation

970 Quarantine

93 Regional Hospital cases with 86% of hospitals reporting

14.5% positive rate

809 cases/100,000 residents/14 days OR 81 cases/10,000 residents/14 days

1<sup>st</sup> Dose 19,451 35% (according to my staff we have not had an increase in

2<sup>nd</sup> Dose 17,936 32% calls requesting the COVID vaccine)

\*Have 10 offenders and 1 employee cases at Columbus Correctional at this time, total of 11.

\*Have 6 employees at Goshen Medical South Whiteville.

\*Have 1 resident and 2 employees at Liberty Commons.

\*Have 1 resident and 1 employee at Shoreland.

\*Have 2 resident at Tabor Commons

So we have 5 outbreaks at this time.

NO outbreak at Premier Living – have been in touch with the facility, they are ramping up precautions, including visitation.

Working with Columbus County Schools and StarMed to have regional vaccine clinics in each of the high schools, have not settled on dates as of yet.

### **VACCINE CLINICS (that we are aware of at this time)**

\*Confirmed from StarMed and WCS dates for vaccine clinic August 05, 2021 from 12 noon – 8PM 1<sup>st</sup> doses; 2<sup>nd</sup> doses August 26, 2021 from 12N – 8PM. Location: Whiteville High School

\*Confirmed with StarMed August 7, 2021 from 9AM – 12 noon 1<sup>st</sup> doses; 2<sup>nd</sup> doses September 4, 2021 from 9AM – 12 noon. Location: Brunswick Waccamaw Association Center.

\*Confirmed with StarMed August 14, 2021 from 10AM – 3PM Back to School Event sponsored by Chris Wilcox. Location: Southeastern Community College

\*Every Friday except for the week of August 10<sup>th</sup>, the Health Department will hold a clinic. Please call and pre-register, walk-ins will be accepted as well.

\*Local pharmacies currently giving COVID vaccines are McNeill's, Baldwin Woods, Cross Roads, Village Prescription Center, Koonce Drug, Dameron Drug, Medicine Mart, Walgreens, Walmart and CVS.

**Kim Smith, Health Director**, stated the following:

-I want to turn around because not only is it important to address the audience here, but I want to address those on the internet as well.

-Vaccination is the most important public health action to end COVID-19 and the pandemic.

-Areas of low vaccination coverage have rapidly increased cases.

- Nationally it has increased over 300% from June 19-July 23<sup>rd</sup> due mostly to the highly transmissible Delta Variant.
- We are in a race against time to increase vaccination coverage before anymore variants emerge.
- The Delta variant is extremely transmissible, you're more likely to have a hospital visit and you're also more likely to die.
- Vaccines have demonstrated that they do prevent serious illness and death. It is the best way to protect you, your family and your community.
- High vaccination rates will reduce the spread of the virus and prevent those new variants from emerging.
- Yes, there have been some vaccine breakthrough infections, but if you talk to those people, they've had maybe one day of not feeling well and then they start feeling better. They still have the 10-day isolation but it's not 10 days in the hospital.
- New data shows people infected with the Delta variant have a higher viral load, meaning more virus in their body, and that's why we have issues with hospitalizations and death.
- Concerning kids in school, my belief and other health care officials, believe children should be masked, even if they're vaccinated.
- The vaccine is currently available for children 12 years and up and these children need to get the vaccine.
- Most children who get the vaccine have less symptoms, however, the Delta variant is much more transmissible.
- To protect against exposure is more important than ever, especially for those who are unvaccinated and too young to get vaccinated.
- Variants are expected as long as transmission continues.
- Delta is more contagious than previous variants and cases due to this variant are rising rapidly.
- Unvaccinated individuals should get vaccinated and continue to mask, especially for the first 2 weeks following vaccination, because it takes about two weeks (with any vaccine) for you to be fully vaccinated.
- Breakthrough infections are anticipated, even with a highly effective vaccine.
- Breakthrough infections mostly result in mild disease and if you get vaccinated, your risk of infection, symptomatic disease, and especially hospitalization or death are far lower than in unvaccinated individuals.
- With COVID you are twice as likely to end up in the hospital.
- If you were infected with the original COVID virus, if you walked into a room, you might infect 2 or 3 people. With the Delta variant, when you walk into a room, you could infect up to 6 people.
- Then you can imagine those 6 people going out to do their normal routine and infect 6 other people.
- 97% of those hospitalized and of deaths are in unvaccinated individuals.
- In closing, I will quote the newspaper, "It is very important for each of us to understand that the Delta variant is far more contagious and deadly because that's what variants do. They find a way to survive and the effects are usually far worse."
- There are enough vaccines in this county that each person should take it upon themselves to take their family members to the nearest place to get vaccinated.
- Southeastern Regional Medical Center in Lumberton is not taking any more patients, they are full. What if that happens at our hospital? Or New Hanover? Or Grand Strand? Loris?
- We're going to have far more people dying at home.
- I cannot stress enough the importance of going to take the vaccine and taking your 12-year-old and up with you to get their vaccine.

**Commissioner Byrd:** Ms. Kim, the 32%, referring to the percentage of Columbus County residents fully vaccinated, does that include individuals who went to Bladen or New Hanover?

**Kim Smith:** Yes, sir.

**Commissioner Coleman:** The people who get the vaccination now and then get the variant, the symptoms are not as bad as those who do not have the vaccine?

**Kim Smith:** That is correct. I can tell you one of the breakthrough cases we had in our county, I spoke with him personally. The first day, he really felt bad, he ran a high temperature, but it was

like it was a 24-hour thing. The next morning, he was weak but he felt a lot better. He could do things around the house.

**Commissioner Coleman:** I'm encouraging people to take the vaccine, I think it's important. Do you think we'll get to a place where they're giving the vaccines in school? Like they did for polio? People need to realize that this is not new. We've had epidemics before. There were polio hospitals set up to contain the disease. Imagine being separated from your family in that way. If you get the shot, there's still a possibility that you could get COVID, but in most cases it is less severe.

**Commissioner McDowell:** Are the vaccines available at all doctor's offices now? Can you tell us where the vaccine is available to the public?

**Kim Smith:** The vaccine is free of charge. The federal government has paid for the research and the vaccine. Individuals that give the vaccine can charge your insurance an administration fee, but if you do not have insurance, they cannot charge you. The vaccine is free. Vaccine right now is available at the Health Department, McNeill's Drug Store, Baldwin Woods, Cross Roads (South Whiteville), Village Prescription Center (Lake Waccamaw), Koonce Drug, Dameron Drug, Medicine Mart, Walgreens (Whiteville and Tabor City), Walmart and CVS.

**Commissioner McDowell:** People may want to call to their local drug store to find out what days they are giving the vaccine because they don't do it every day.

**Kim Smith:** You can also go online and fill out an appointment time.

**Commissioner Smith:** I believe it's close to 99% of the severe cases of COVID boils down to the fact that they have not had their vaccination. It's cut and dry to me.

**Commissioner Watts:** Ms. Smith, you said on Friday the 10<sup>th</sup>, the Health Department will not be giving vaccines. Do you all do this every day?

**Kim Smith:** Not every day. We do them every Friday, except the week of August 10<sup>th</sup>, we'll give it that day, which is a Tuesday, because we have another clinic on that Friday.

**Commissioner Watts:** So you all are only giving them on Fridays at the Health Department.

**Kim Smith:** Correct. Right now, we've not received a lot of calls for the vaccine. My staff knows that if they start receiving calls for the vaccine, they need to let me know, so that we can add on more clinics.

**Commissioner Byrd:** Right now, in the near future, do you see the booster shot being available.

**Kim Smith:** Right now Pfizer drug is working on a booster. The literature I've seen is that they are holding trials in Israel. The state public health has said that will take 3 or 4 months. Moderna is also working on a booster and a vaccine for children 12 and up.

**Kim Smith:** To the public, if anyone has any questions, please call the Health Department and we'll work you through it.

**Agenda Item #9:      RESOLUTION – RESOLUTION on the APPROVAL and ACCEPTANCE of AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS:**

Jay Leather, Interim Finance Director, requested Board approval.



**Resolution to Accept American Rescue Plan Act Funds**

**WHEREAS**, Columbus County is eligible for funding from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds of H.R. 1319 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (CSLRF).

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina General Assembly will provide for the distribution of funds to eligible North Carolina Counties; and

**WHEREAS**, before receiving a payment, Columbus County is required to formally accept the CSLRF funds;

**WHEREAS**, revenue received under the CSLRF must only be spent for purposes authorized by the CSLRF, and applicable regulations, and by state law;

**WHEREAS**, revenue received under the CSLRF must be accounted for in a separate fund and not co-mingled with other revenue for accounting purposes; and

**WHEREAS**, Columbus County must comply with all applicable budgeting, accounting, contracting, reporting, and other compliance requirements for CSLRF funds.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Columbus County Board of Commissioners that we do hereby accept and request CSLRF funding to be distributed by the State of North Carolina; and

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that Columbus County affirms that the CSLRF revenue will only be used for the purposes prescribed in the CSLRF, and in US Treasury guidance in 31 CFR, Part 35, and any applicable regulations, and in accordance with state law; and

**FUTHER RESOLVED** that Columbus County will comply with procedures created by the North Carolina General Assembly and the US Treasury Department to receive funds under the act; and

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that Columbus County will account for CSLRF in a separate fund and not co-mingle it with other revenues for accounting purposes and will comply with all applicable federal and state budgeting, accounting, contracting, reporting, and other compliance requirements for CSLRF funds; and

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Columbus County Board of Commissioners designates and directs the County Manager and Finance Director to take all actions necessary on behalf of the board of commissioners to receive the CSLRF funds.

**ADOPTED**, this the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of August, 2021.

/s/**RICKY BULLARD, Chairman**  
/s/**AMANDA PRINCE, Deputy Clerk to the Board**

**Commissioner Byrd:** Do we have any idea how much money we’re speaking of here?  
**Jay Leatherman:** The county will receive a little more than \$10.7 million.

**MOTION:**  
Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve and accept the American Rescue Plan Act Funds, seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion passed unanimously.

**Agenda Item #10:     ADMINISTRATION – APPROVAL of the PROPOSED ATMC OLT SITE at the ACME-DELCO SCHOOL CONCESSION STAND/FIELD HOUSE:**

Eddie Madden, County Manager, requested Board approval.







**Kris Ward, Director of Business Development at ATMC,** stated the following:

- Since 2011, ATMC has been responsible for over \$40 million of fiber optic investments in Columbus County, thanks to our partnerships with the state, Columbus County, as well as the federal government through the USDA.
- We have been able to provide high-speed internet to some of the most rural areas of Columbus County.
- We continue to invest resources into areas without adequate internet service.
- Everyone agrees on broadband access and we cannot continue to be a world leader without adequate internet access in rural areas.
- Upon completion of all of our approved and funded projects in Columbus County, we will be able to serve over 10,000 business and residential addresses.
- ATMC is the only provider in Columbus County who is deploying 100% fiber optic network capable of providing symmetrical gigabyte internet speeds to both homes and businesses.
- Thanks to all the Commissioners for their work to make our county a better place to live, work and worship.
- Also, thanks to Mr. Gary Lanier, Mr. Harold Nobles and Mr. Eddie Madden for all of their assistance and expertise.
- We are requesting a 60 ft by 60 ft parcel to place an OLT fiber optic switch on the Acme Delco School property that the County intends to retain behind the Field House.
- That site will have the ability to serve over 2,200 addresses, while powering fiber optics over 108 route miles of fiber optics.
- We are currently working on partnerships to serve that area and upcoming grants to promote more growth in the Eastern End of the county.

**Chairman Bullard:** I appreciate you and ATMC for what you're doing here.

**Commissioner Coleman:** The Delco-Prosper area, did you say it would be one year and a half to two years before we have service there?

**Kris Ward:** No, we don't determine when the state's open up and allow grant funding applications and without applications that area doesn't make economic sense. The Broadband plan and Broadband Committee are working to make sure we have everything we need to apply for those grants when they become available so that we can get service in those areas.

**Commissioner Byrd:** I've worked with you in Hallsboro, where you went in to request letters from different businesses and residents about their service needs.

**Kris Ward:** Yes, sir. This is why the surveys that you're promoting now are so important. If we tell the state that someone doesn't have internet service, they won't believe us because we're trying to get money from them, but if you sign a letter saying I don't have internet service they'll believe it. It's critical for residents to have input.



**Commisioner Byrd:** It’s the same problem we’re having with the water. Everybody wants it but no one will come up and sign for it.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Coleman made a motion to approve the proposed ATMC site, seconded by Commissioner Byrd. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #11:    AGING – DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE:**

Kristie Massey, Director, provided a departmental update.

**COLUMBUS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES**

The Columbus County Department of Aging and Adult Services (CCDOA&AS) primary mission is to provide services that are needed to the Senior Citizens of Columbus County and to the adults ages 18 and up that are on Medicaid and qualify for Personal Care Services (PCS) and the Community Alternative Program for Disabled Adults (CAP/DA). We do this through our programs at the CCDOA&AS. We provide In-Home Services through our Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG), Family Caregiver Grant, and Medicaid for the PCS and CAP/DA program. We also provide assistance with meals with our Home Delivered Meal Program and Congregate Meal program. We also have an Ensure program that we sell at cost provided the client has a current prescription from their doctor. This has to be updated yearly. In order to help the seniors, stay healthy and active we have an exercise program at each of the 7 locations, we provide trips, we have one scheduled to Biltmore House the end of November, and activities for the seniors also, such as the Prom, Senior Day at the Fair, and a Senior Picnic every May, which was postponed due to COVID. We provide socialization at each of the 7 locations through informative programs regarding health issues, scam alerts, crafts, etc. We have a staff consisting of 23 Full Time Employees, 7 Site Managers at 20 hours per week, 2 contract workers, 3 employees provided part time through United Way, 6 volunteers and approximately 42 Certified Nursing Assistants. The following is a breakdown of some of the services we have provided since July 1, 2021 to our clients at the Department of Aging:

**MINOR HOME REPAIR (HCCBG money only)**

4 RAMPS COMPLETED TOTALING \$4,802.00. This does not include monies allocated to ramps through county funds nor CARES funding.

**ENSURE PROGRAM**

385 clients and has purchased \$65,510.00 of Ensure, Ensure Regular, and Glucerna.

**CONGREGATE MEALS**

- Bolton has served 4,815 meals to 52 seniors at their location.
- Bug Hill has served 3,546 meals to 39 seniors at their location.
- Chadbourn has served 4,185 meals to 68 seniors at their location.
- East Columbus has served 3,778 meals to 66 seniors at their location.
- Fair Bluff has served 4,021 meals to 52 seniors at their location.
- Tabor City has served 3,272 meals to 32 seniors at their location.
- Whiteville has served 5,267 meals to 119 seniors at their location.
- That is a total increase of 2,316 meals served this fiscal year than the prior fiscal year.

**HOME DELIVERED MEALS**

- Bolton has served 1,639 meals to the 4 clients on the program with one volunteer doing the delivery.
- Chadbourn has served 2,360 meals to the 11 clients on the program with two volunteers doing the delivery.
- Tabor City has served 2,095 meals to the 6 clients on the program with the Site Manager doing the delivery.

Whiteville has served 4,230 meals to the 12 clients on the programs with two volunteers doing the delivery.

**IN-HOME SERVICES**

**CAP – CASE MANAGEMENT**

We have served 163 clients a total of 1,294 units.

**CAP – IN HOME SERVICES**

We have served 22 clients for a total of 15,546 hours.

**PERSONAL CARE SERVICES**

We have served 15 clients for a total of 6,639 hours.

**HOME AND COMMUNITY BLOCK GRANT**

Level II – We have served 13 clients for a total of 5,862 hours.

Level III – We have served 22 clients for a total of 8,541 hours.

**FAMILY CAREGIVER**

We have served 6 clients with In-Home Services for a total of 484 hours. We also have helped 24 clients with Incontinence Supplies, 15 clients with Liquid Nutritional Supplements, and 17 clients with the Personal Emergency Response Systems.

We also have the Prescription Drug Program that is provided by one Part-Time Employee and one Volunteer. We have assisted 640 Medicare residents and saved Columbus County residents \$832,349.00 under the SHIP program. Also, under the Medication Assistance 351 low income or uninsured citizens a savings of \$418,665.44 in free or low cost medication.

**For CARES Funding** thus far we have completed 25 ramps, 1 flooring and A/C unit, 1 oven, one water tank and pump, and one roof. Activity bags for 300 seniors, 7 desktops one for each senior center, 4 laptops for in home services employees and web cameras, new microwaves for each senior center, 1 new refrigerator for Fair bluff senior center, new games and exercise bands for each center, 350 box fans for seniors, 250 portable heaters for seniors, 300 grocery cards, incontinent products and liquid nutrition, activity blankets and pet companions for Alzheimer clients, and foggers for sanitation of sites, PPE, and cleaning products for each site.

Presented by Kristie Massey, Director of Aging

07/12/2021

**Agenda Item #12: PARKS and RECREATION – REVISION of the COLUMBUS COUNTY RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD BY-LAWS:**

Julie Strickland, Director, requested Board approval to change the Advisory Board’s meeting time from 7:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

**BY-LAWS GOVERNING THE COLUMBUS COUNTY RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD**  
JULY 1, 1977- ADOPTED  
FEBRUARY 1, 2002- REVISED  
MARCH 9, 2009- REVISED  
JULY 13, 2009 – APPROVED/ ADVISORY BOARD  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2009 – ADOPTED/ BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**ARTICLE 1:**

- a. Regular meetings of the Recreation Advisory Board shall be held at 7:00 PM on the second Monday of each quarter in January, April, July and October, and shall be held in the office of the Director, or at some other designated place.
- b. Special meetings may be called by the Director or upon written request from a majority of the body.
- c. A majority of the members constitute a quorum.
- d. The order of business at regular meetings shall be as follows:
  - Meeting called to order
  - Invocation
  - Previous Board minutes approval
  - Reports of Director
  - Special reports

Old business  
New business  
Comments  
Adjournment

ARTICLE 2:

- a. The election of officers for the ensuing year, a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall take place at the regular meeting in January of each year.
- b. The new officers shall take office at the regular January meeting.
- c. The unexcused absence of any member from two consecutive regular meetings; except when such absence is made necessary by sickness or other emergency circumstance will declare the seat of such member vacant. The vacancy thus created shall be appointed from the same district from which the vacancy occurred from recommendations from the Recreation Advisory Board and the Recreation Director to the Board of County Commissioners.
- d. Board members appointed by a County Commissioner will serve a 4-year term concurrent with the appointing County Commissioner.
- e. Municipal appointees, approved by the board of commissioners, will serve a two-year term.

ARTICLE 3:

- a. The elected officers of the Recreation Advisory Board shall consist of a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.
- b. The Chairperson of the Board shall preside at all meetings and sign all approved minutes of previous meetings
- c. The Executive committee shall consist of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary (Recreation Employee). When the Chairperson is absent, the Vice-Chairperson shall perform the duties of the Chairperson. Those who are Present shall select when both the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson are absent, a temporary presiding officer.

ARTICLE 4:

The Recreation Director shall serve as secretary of the Recreation Advisory Board. The Director may delegate all or part of these duties to another department employee with the approval of the Board. It shall be the duty of the secretary to notify members of all meetings, to keep a permanent record of the proceedings of all meetings, and to have a copy of the proceedings of each meeting sent to each member, and the Board of County Commissioners.

ARTICLE 5:

The Recreation Advisory Board shall make recommendations with the Director concerning the administration of the affairs of recreation. The Director shall be the agent of the Recreation Advisory Board and to that end shall supervise the operation of all of the recreation department’s activities and administration of the program of the Recreation Department at the end of that program of activity. A copy of this report shall be sent to each member and to the Board of County Commissioners.

ARTICLE 6:

The Director shall submit preliminary annual reports of the program and of finances at the regular meeting in April of each year. The final annual report and the upcoming fiscal budget will be rendered no later than the July meeting.

ARTICLE 7:

Special committees may be appointed for such purposes as deemed necessary.

ARTICLE 8:

The Chairperson and Director shall be ex-officio members of all committees and, as such, notified of all committee meetings.

ARTICLE 9:

All amendments to these rules must be proposed in writing in one meeting and is acted upon at the next regular meeting.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve the change in meeting time from 7:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. for the Advisory Board, seconded by Commissioner McDowell. The motion unanimously passed.

Agenda Item #13: PARKS and RECREATION – RECOMMENDATIONN of AWARD for the COMPREHENSIVE PARKS and RECREATION MASTER PLAN:

Julie Strickland, Director, requested Board approval of the proposal submitted by WithersRavenel for \$47,600.

Parks & Recreation Master Plan for Columbus County Proposals

- 1. Project approach, content and timeline. (30%)  
WR - 30  
SC - 22  
SD - 25  
MA - 27
- 2. Past project experience and client references. (20%)  
WR - 18  
SC - 10  
SD - 15  
MA - 20
- 3. Qualifications and demonstrated competencies, specifically Municipal Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master and Strategic Planning (30%)  
WR - 30  
SC - 22  
SD - 26  
MA - 28
- 4. Staffing, capacity, availability and work in progress. (10%)  
WR - 10  
SC - 5  
SD - 7  
MA - 9
- 5. Project fee structure and cost estimate. (10%)  
WR - 8  
SC - 9  
SD - 10  
MA - 7

WithersRavenel	Approx. Cost	\$47,600
Site Collaborative	Approx. Cost	\$30,000
Sage Design	Approx. Cost	\$44,500
McAdams	Approx. Cost	\$51,400

MOTION:

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve the proposal submitted by WithersRavenel for \$47,600, seconded by Commissioner Watts. The motion unanimously passed.

Agenda Item # 14: PROCLAMATION – PROCLAMATION of APPRECIATION to UNITED METHODIST COMMITTEE on RELIEF (UMCOR):

Chairman Ricky Bullard requested Board approval and adoption.

**PROCLAMATION HONORING UMCOR**

**WHEREAS**, in seeking to address the aftermath of World War II, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), originally named The Methodist Committee on Overseas Relief (MCOR), was founded in 1940 by the Bishop Herbert Welch to serve as a “voice of conscience

among Methodists to act in the relief of human suffering without distinction of race, color, or creed”; and

**WHEREAS**, the mission of UMCOR is through hope and healing to alleviate human suffering caused by famine, hurricane, war, flood, fire or other natural or human-caused disasters; and

**WHEREAS**, UMCOR provides humanitarian relief in the United States and Internationally by focusing efforts on disaster response and recovery, migration, hunger, poverty, water, sanitation, global health, creation care, women, children, and sustainable development; and

**WHEREAS**, UMCOR seeks to engage in God’s work and is founded on the principles of local disaster response, partnerships with local churches to provide aid through ministry, financial assistance, training and volunteerism following a catastrophe; and

**WHEREAS**, UMCOR awarded grants to the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church in the amount of \$1,428,000 to support response efforts and vital survivor services, including disaster case management, reconstruction, and volunteer coordination; and

**WHEREAS**, UMCOR provided financial assistance, alleviated suffering, and offered hope to residents of Columbus County impacted by the devastation of Hurricane Florence.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, we the Columbus County Board of Commissioners would like to thank UMCOR for their dedication to doing God’s work, commitment to public service, and genuine love for community and the citizens of Columbus County.

Adopted this the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of August, 2021.

/s/ <b>RICKY BULLARD, Chairman</b>	/s/ <b>JEROME MCMILLIAN, Vice Chairman</b>
/s/ <b>CHRIS SMITH</b>	/s/ <b>GILES E. BYRD</b>
/s/ <b>LAVERN COLEMAN</b>	/s/ <b>BRENT WATTS</b>
/s/ <b>CHARLES T. MCDOWELL</b>	/s/ <b>EDWIN H. MADDEN, JR., County Manager</b>
/s/ <b>BOYD WORLEY, Board Attorney</b>	<b>ATTESTED BY:</b>
	/s/ <b>AMANDA B. PRINCE, Deputy Clerk to Board</b>

**MOTION:**  
Commissioner McDowell made a motion to approve and adopt the Proclamation of Appreciation to UMCOR, seconded by Commissioner Coleman. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #15: RESOLUTION – RESOLUTION DESIGNATING EDDIE MADDEN, COUNTY MANAGER, as the DESIGNATED AGENT for the HURRICANE FLORENCE HAZARD MITIGATION ASSISTNACE GRANT PROGRAM (HMGP):**

Kay Stephens requested Board approval and adoption.



<b>RESOLUTION</b>	
<b>DESIGNATION OF APPLICANT'S AGENT</b>	
North Carolina Division of Emergency Management	
Organization Name (hereafter named Organization)	Disaster Number:
Columbus County	HMGP 4393 Florence
Applicant's State Cognizant Agency for Single Audit purposes (If Cognizant Agency is not assigned, please indicate):	
Columbus County	
Applicant's Fiscal Year (FY) Start	
Month: July	Day: 1
Applicant's Federal Employer's Identification Number	
56 - 6000289	
Applicant's Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) Number	
<b>PRIMARY AGENT</b>	<b>SECONDARY AGENT</b>
Agent's Name Edwin H. Madden, Jr.	Agent's Name Kay Stephens
Organization Columbus County	Organization Columbus County
Official Position County Manager	Official Position Emergency Services Director
Mailing Address 111 Washington Street	Mailing Address 608 N. Thompson Street
City, State, Zip Whiteville, NC 28472	City, State, Zip Whiteville, NC 28472
Daytime Telephone (910) 640-6630	Daytime Telephone (910) 640-1243
Facsimile Number (910) 640-1654	Facsimile Number (910) 640-1241
Pager or Cellular Number (910) 640-7024	Pager or Cellular Number (910) 840-4077
BE IT RESOLVED BY the governing body of the Organization (a public entity duly organized under the laws of the State of North Carolina) that the above-named Primary and Secondary Agents are hereby authorized to execute and file applications for federal and/or state assistance on behalf of the Organization for the purpose of obtaining certain state and federal financial assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief & Emergency Assistance Act, (Public Law 93-288 as amended) or as otherwise available. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the above-named agents are authorized to represent and act for the Organization in all dealings with the State of North Carolina and the Federal Emergency Management Agency for all matters pertaining to such disaster assistance required by the grant agreements and the assurances printed on the reverse side hereof. BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT the above-named agents are authorized to act severally. PASSED AND APPROVED this 2nd day of , 20	
<b>GOVERNING BODY</b>	<b>CERTIFYING OFFICIAL</b>
Name and Title Ricky Bullard, Chairman	Name Amanda Prince
Name and Title	Official Position Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk to Board
Name and Title	Daytime Telephone (910) 642-5645
<b>CERTIFICATION</b>	
I, Amanda Prince, (Name) duly appointed and Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk to Board (Title) of the Governing Body, do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution passed and approved by the Governing Body of Columbus County (Organization) on the 2nd day of August, 2021.	
Date:	Signature:
Rev. 06/02	

/s/ RICKY BULLARD, Chairman  
/s/ AMANDA B. PRINCE, Deputy Clerk to Board

**MOTION:**  
Commissioner McDowell made a motion to approve and adopt the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #16: APPOINTMENTS/RE-APPOINTMENTS/REPLACEMENTS:**

Staff is requesting appointments, re-appointments or replacements to the following boards, committees and councils.

**Legend: EB = Entire Board**  
**Listed Zone # = Individual Commissioner**

- |           |                    |           |                     |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Zone I:   | Jerome McMillian   | Zone V:   | Brent Watts         |
| Zone II:  | Chris Smith        | Zone VI:  | Ricky Bullard       |
| Zone III: | Giles E. Byrd, Jr. | Zone VII: | Charles T. McDowell |
| Zone IV:  | Lavern Coleman     |           |                     |

COMMITTEE	ZONE/EB	PERSON(S)	EXPIR. DATE
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Beaver Management Program Committee	I	Vacant	<b>HOLD</b>
	I	Vacant	<b>HOLD</b>
	III	Vacant	<b>HOLD</b>
	V	Vacant	<b>HOLD</b>
	VII	Vacant	<b>HOLD</b>
Home & Community Care Block Grant Committee	IV	(Dan Watts)	<b>David Pattillo</b>

**Commissioner Byrd:** I think that each one of us Commissioners need to really examine our Planning Board and the members/appointees that we have. At our last workshop, I believe we only had 3 members of the Planning Board attend. All of the changes we’re making, we need good, qualified individuals interested and ready to provide input. The changes we make will be around long after we’re gone. So, we really need to get some good people in place to help us with this.

**Chairman Bullard:** Commissioner Byrd is absolutely right, we do need to stay on top of our appointees and make sure they are attending meetings and representing the County well.

**Commissioner Byrd:** I’m asking anyone in my district that would like to serve to please contact me.

**Agenda Item #17:     PLANNING – UPCOMING PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP:**

Samantha Alsup requested Board approval to schedule a joint workshop between the Board of Commissioners, the Planning Board and Mr. Rick Flowe on August 25, 2021 at 6:00 P.M.

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve the joint Planning Workshop on Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 6:00 P.M., seconded by Commissioner McDowell. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #18:     ADMINISTRATION – COUNTY OFFICE RELOCATION PLAN:**

Eddie Madden, County Manager, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the future use of and plans for County Facilities.

**FACILITIES PLAN – COLUMBUS COUNTY OFFICES**

Historic Courthouse – Begin Renovation

810 Pinckney Street – Relocate Finance and Utility Billing

110 Courthouse Square – Relocate County Administration (Administration, County Attorney, Human Resources, Clerk to Board, Economic Development)

111 Washington Street – Relocate District Attorney’s Office

612 N. Madison Street – Relocate HUD with Public Utilities Service

North Campus Bldg. A – For Economic Development Purposes – Available for Sale or Lease

North Campus Bldg. B – Relocate Board of Elections and Elections Storage to First Floor

North Campus Bldg. B – Relocate Probation & Parole to Second Floor

North Campus Bldg. E – Relocate Emergency Services, 911 Center, Fire Marshal

Phase 2 – 608 N. Thompson St. – Relocate Public Utilities Service Department

Phase 2 – Renovated Courthouse – Relocate Clerk’s Office and Superior Court Judge

Phase 2 – New Courthouse – Relocate Probation and Parole

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the County Office Relocation Plan, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

**RECESS REGULAR SESSION and enter into COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV, and V BOARD MEETING**

At 7:32 P.M., Commissioner McDowell made a motion to recess Regular Session and enter into a **combination meeting** of Columbus County Water and Sewer Districts I, II, III, IV, and V Board Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Coleman. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #19: COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV, and V BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

- A. June 21, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer Districts I, II, III, and V Board Meeting (4 sets).
- B. July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer Districts I, II, III, IV and V Board Meeting (5 sets).
- C. July 20, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer Districts V Board Meeting (1 set).

This information will be recorded in Minute Book Number 2 for each Water District, respectively.

**Agenda Item #20: ESTABLISHMENT of PUBLIC HEARING and 1<sup>ST</sup> READING for PUBLIC UTILITIES NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY for WATER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV and V:**

Jay Leatherman, Interim Finance Director, requested the Board to establish August 16, 2021, at 6:30 P.M., as the date and time for the Public Hearing and requested Board acceptance of the first reading.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to establish the public hearing and accept the first reading, seconded by Commissioner McDowell. The motion unanimously passed.

This information will be recorded in Minute Book Number 2 for each Water District, respectively.

**ADJOURN COMBINATION MEETING of COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV and V BOARD MEETING:**

At 7:44 P.M., Commissioner McDowell made a motion to adjourn the combination meeting of Columbus County Water and Sewer Districts I, II, III, IV and V Board Meeting, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #22: COMMENTS:**

Chairman Bullard opened the floor for comments. The following spoke.

**A. Board of Commissioners:**

**1. Commissioner Watts** stated the following:

-I just want to urge people to be cautious with COVID and do what they feel is the best for themselves and other people.

**2. Commissioner Byrd** stated the following:

-Yes, sir I also would encourage citizens to get vaccinated.

-The government doesn't need to come in and mandate it, you should just do it.

-Also, Mr. Leatherman do we know what the vehicle costs are going to be under the Enterprise Leasing deal?

**Mr. Leatherman** stated the following

-A representative is supposed to be coming the end of this week to meet with the administration.

-But as an example, take the Sheriff's Department, and I don't have the exact figures with me, but I think it was approximately 12 or 15 vehicles at a cost of half a million dollars.

-Enterprise will use that half a million-dollar budget for the Sheriff's Department to determine when the leases will start and how many vehicles they can provide.

**Commissioner Byrd** stated the following:

-I was interested in what each individual vehicle was going to cost us per year.

**Mr. Leatherman** stated the following:

-It will vary depending on the type of vehicle.

-They're estimating between \$500 - \$800 a month, the Sheriff's vehicles being on the higher end.

-Once we have more information on the specifics we'll be glad to share that with you.

**Mr. Madden** stated the following:

-Another issue we're having is obtaining vehicles because of the chip shortage.

-Also, dealers that we normally buy our vehicles from at the state contract amount are not willing to sell those vehicles to us for that price.

-So that may extend the replacement of some of our vehicles until the price point comes down and we can maximize the amount that's in our budget.

**3. Vice Chairman McMillian** stated the following:

-I would just like to reiterate what Ms. Smith said about the vaccinations.

-I urge everybody that will to go get the vaccination, they're free.

-Think about what we might have to do if the numbers in our county keep rising, so I would just encourage everyone to get vaccinated.

**4. Commissioner Smith** stated the following:

-Let's get Columbus County out of Code Red.

-Let's go out and get vaccinated.

-It will solve a lot of problems and a lot of sickness.

**5. Commissioner Coleman** stated the following:

-We met with the County Manager and the Sheriff last week about setting up a satellite office in the Delco area and we've come to the conclusion that the field house at the old football field is what they'd like to use.

-We look forward to getting some law enforcement down in our area.

-I appreciate the Sheriff, Mr. Madden and all the deputies who took part in trying to get officers in that area.

-I think it will help us greatly.

-I want to echo the same plea all the other Commissioners did about COVID.

-I've had several good friends that are in the hospital now and a good friend who has just passed away because of COVID.

-It's an international emergency.

-The vaccination helps; it doesn't eliminate it but it helps.

-Think of what would happen if you got COVID and took it home to your family, what position would you be in then.

-I just encourage people to think about it and do what you know in your heart to be right.

**6. Commissioner McDowell** stated the following:

-I had a conversation with a gentleman today who got the vaccination last week because of his children.

-He listed several reasons why he didn't want to get the vaccine including that he didn't trust it.

-Then a friend of one of his children contracted the virus and it changed his mind.

-He said he wasn't getting it for himself but for his child.

- I was one of those people who said they weren't going to get it and I joked about it.
- But as soon as I got the call saying it was available I changed my mind and I took the shot and I do not regret it.
- Secondly, all of us have met with the folks from the hospital, Mr. John Young and Mr. Jason Beck.
- They've shared a lot of very positive information with us.
- I was very impressed with some of the things that are taking place out there and the plans they are working on.
- We need to be proud of our hospital.
- I've heard people complain about it but my response is what if you had to drive 45 minutes or more to seek medical care.
- The hospital is making progress and they are making very positive strides to survive and we need them to survive because we need a hospital.
- I want to congratulate Justin Smith and thank the High family for the service they've provided this county.
- It's good to see the newspaper survive and it's good to see it go to someone local.

**7. Chairman Bullard** stated the following:

- The asbestos abatement should be started and well in place by the middle of August.
- The demo bids should begin sometime around the latter part of November and the demo should be going on through the month of December.
- The renovation plans should be around the 1<sup>st</sup> of February and by April construction should be started on the courthouse.
- As you know, things can vary but by spring time the asbestos abatement should be completed; and the demo on the inside so we can see what needs to be done about the electrical and plumbing; and the renovation to remodel the courthouse should begin next spring.
- I had a letter from several judges thanking the Commissioners, the Sheriff's Department, Maintenance and the Administration for their guidance and support through the last year with the use of Hallsboro Middle School as the Hallsboro court facility.
- I've had several people, including judges and department heads, to say they really appreciate the things these Commissioners have been doing for the County and they just want to say thank you.

**B. County Manager Eddie Madden** stated the following:

- On Friday, we sent out a directive to our department managers asking that their staff members resume wearing masks when interacting with each other and the general public.
- All this is due to the recent spike of the Delta variant infections in the County and following the guidance of Ms. Kim Smith, the Health Director, and Mr. Jason Beck, from the Hospital.
- All of this is to ensure we can continue to carry out the day to day operations of county government.
- I just want to reiterate that the ATMC broadband survey is underway and available at various facilities around the county and [columbusco.org](http://columbusco.org). We hope to wrap this up by the middle of August so that the information can be compiled and rolled into a grant application to the State and federal government.
- The County's Broadband committee will be meeting for the first time on August 9<sup>th</sup>, at 9am, to begin evaluating the results and putting together a plan of action for the future.
- I want to point out the working relationships that we've cultivated with court officials through very complex situations including office allocations.
- There's been a lot of discussion about what would be the best outcome and I believe we have that and we look forward to repositioning over the next several months.



-I will be in Raleigh on Wednesday. We have roughly \$35 million dollars' worth of capital requests that have been included in the state budget documents coming out of the House. I will be meeting with Representatives Jones and Smith, along with Senators Britt and Rabon to impress upon them the importance of supporting those budget documents and ultimately our budgetary requests.

**RECESS REGULAR SESSION and enter into CLOSED SESSION in ACCORDANCE with N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(A) (3) ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE:**

At 8:05 P.M., Commissioner Coleman made a motion to recess Regular Session and enter into Closed Session in accordance with N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(A)(3) Attorney-Client privilege, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian.

**Agenda Item #23: CLOSED SESSION in ACCORDANCE with N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (A)(3) ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE:**

No official action was taken.

**ADJOURN CLOSED SESSION and resume REGULAR SESSION:**

At 8:39 P.M., Commissioner Smith made a motion to adjourn Closed Session and resume Regular Session, Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

**READING and APPROVAL of CLOSED SESSION GENERAL ACCOUNT:**

Chairman Bullard requested Amanda Prince, Staff Attorney and Deputy Clerk to Board, to orally read the Closed Session General Account. Ms. Prince orally read the following: "The County Commissioners discussed future litigation, opioid litigation and possible conflict with bond counsel with Board Attorney Boyd Worley and County Manager Eddie Madden. No action was taken by the Board."

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve the Closed Session General Account, seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #24: ADJOURNMENT:**

At 8:42 P.M., Commissioner Coleman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed. These minutes were recorded by Amanda Prince, Staff Attorney and Deputy Clerk to Board, and typed by LaToya Williams.

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**AMANDA B. PRINCE, Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk**

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**RICKY BULLARD, Chairman**

**COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV, and V  
COMBINATION BOARD MEETING  
Monday, August 02, 2021  
7:32 P.M.**

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and time at the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex, 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina 28472, for the purpose of acting as the Columbus County Water and Sewer District I Board.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Ricky Bullard, **Chairman**  
Jerome McMillian, **Vice Chairman**  
Chris Smith  
Giles E. Byrd  
Lavern Coleman  
Brent Watts  
Charles T. McDowell

**APPOINTEES PRESENT:**

Edwin H. Madden, Jr., **County Manager**  
Boyd Worley, **Board Attorney**  
Amanda B. Prince, **Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk**  
Jay Leatherman, **Interim Finance Officer**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

At 7:32 P.M., Chairman Ricky Bullard called the **combination meeting** of Columbus County Water and Sewer District I Board Meeting to order.

**Agenda Item #19: COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICT I BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

- A. June 21, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District I Board Meeting.
- B. July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District I Board Meeting.

Vice Chairman McMillian made a motion to approve the June 21, 2021 and July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District I Board Meeting Minutes, seconded by Commissioner Coleman. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #20: ESTABLISHMENT of PUBLIC HEARING and 1<sup>ST</sup> READING for PUBLIC UTILITIES NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY for WATER DISTRICT I:**

Jay Leatherman, Interim Finance Director, requested the Board to establish August 16, 2021, at 6:30 P.M., as the date and time for the Public Hearing and requested Board acceptance of the first reading.

**COLUMBUS COUNTY**

## CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

### UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

#### A. SERVICE APPLICATION

##### Residential Accounts

Columbus County requires a completed APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature and deposit to start water service. With the application, we will need a copy of your Driver's License or state issued ID, payment of \$50.00 for property owner and \$100.00 for renter's deposit, and copy of lease/purchase agreement or form entitled Property Owner/Landlord Transfer of Responsibility for Account Charges (attached). Also, please fill out the part on the application that indicates whether you are owner of the house or renter. You will need to speak with one of our customer service representatives to obtain the deposit amount required with your application. Our customer service representatives are available via telephone from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 910-642-5257.

Same day service for existing customers can be done as long you stop by our office prior to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Otherwise, the service may be provided the following business day.

If the owner / resident has a meter (County owned equipment) located inside a locked fence/gate the owner/resident must provide a key to our Public Utilities Department for entry. The owner/resident is required to ensure the work area around the meter/water line is safe for workers to perform their duties and shall not block or impede access to the meter/water line. If the meter/water line is inaccessible to workers in the Public Utilities Department, services may be discontinued.

##### **The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

The deposit will be applied to the final bill when the account is closed. Customers who have multiple accounts (apartment complexes, etc.) are required to maintain a deposit equal to the deposit outlined in the adopted budget. Customers who have multiple accounts and are renting the property are required to pay an additional security deposit.

If the customer disconnects one account to relocate to another account within the County, the security deposit will be transferred to the new account when all previous balances at the former account are paid in full. Otherwise, the customer will be required to pay an additional security deposit on the new account. If the customer relocates without notification to the Public Utilities staff, leaving a balance on their account, then the balance on the previous account can / will be transferred to the current account and will be required to pay in full at the time of the new account being established.

The customer shall receive a final bill reflecting the total amount owed to Columbus County for said account.

Upon notification of the death of the customer/account holder, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a family member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Residential Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

#### **Commercial/ Industrial / Institutional Accounts**

Columbus County requires a completed COMMERCIAL APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature, security deposit and a copy of the rental agreement (if applicable) to start water service. Prior to the Public Utilities Department opening a commercial/industrial/institutional account, the owner/representative will need to review the proposed business operations with the Planning/Zoning department of the Town. Approval must be granted by the Planning/Zoning department prior to Finance staff opening the account.

**The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

Upon notification of the death of the owner/representative, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a corporate member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Commercial Application for Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

## **B. ACCOUNT BILLING**

Columbus County shall ensure that all customer meters are read in a manner which provides the County with the most efficient use for personnel. Each customer shall be billed for water usage during a specified billing period, along with all other applicable fees and charges.

### **1. UTILITY PAYMENT SCHEDULE REVISED**

In order to serve customers better and to have a clearer payment schedule, Columbus County is updating its Utility Payment Schedule/Policy. The changes are as follows:

- The billing date for Columbus County's utility bill will be mailed by the 5th of each month following the billing month(s).
- Bills will now be due upon receipt. If payment is not received by the beginning of business (8:30 a.m.) on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a \$35.00 late fee penalty will be applied to the affected account on the 6<sup>th</sup> (at the beginning of the business day 8:30 a.m.) of the month.
- If payment for the month that had a late fee applied is not received along with the late fee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a cut-off order shall be issued on the 21st (at the start of business 8:30 a.m.) to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.
- Once a customer's account is placed on the cut-off list, the past due amount including the late fee and the current balance must be paid in full before service is restored.

Columbus County is making these changes to better serve its customers and to make the late fee/utility cut-off policies and procedures more clear. This policy goes into effect with the bills that will be mailed out in September. If anyone has any questions about this matter, please call the Finance Office at 910-642-5257.

## **2. WATER CONNECTIONS:**

Connections to the County water system may be authorized by the Public Utilities Department with payment of proper fees (deposits, late fees, reconnect fees etc.,) and the connection will be handled the next business day.

Water connections should be at the Public Utilities office by 4:00 p.m. to get connections handled the same day.

New water connections requiring a tap will be handled after completion of an APPLICATION FOR SERVICE and payment of all fees and deposits. Service is usually provided within 10 business days, weather permitting, after the customer request.

If water connections for a customer crosses other property lines, it is the responsibility of the customer to secure all easements and other legal documents at their expense to permit the connection to occur.

If more than one heir is identified for a property that is requesting a water connection, all identified heirs are required to provide signed permission to allow one of the heirs to request connection to the water system.



If a customer connected to the water system requests to be disconnected the following will apply. The customer will not be disconnected until they have been connected for at least five (5) years. If after five (5) years they request disconnection, they will need to prepay a \$250 fee prior to Public Utilities performing the disconnection.

### **3. FEES, PENALTIES, CHARGES:**

All fees, penalties, and charges shall be listed as part of the rate schedule and shall be set from time to time by the Columbus County Board of Commissioners as deemed necessary.

### **4. EXTENSIONS:**

An extension of payment due date may be given to those customers determined to be in “*good fiscal standing*” with the Public Utilities Department. A customer in “*good fiscal standing*” shall be defined as any customer with no prior extensions, no returned check(s), and no service terminations for non-payment during the previous twelve (12) consecutive month period or since becoming a customer with Columbus County, whichever is less. The amount extended shall be paid in full on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the following month or by an agreement by a member of the Finance staff.

### **5. AUTHORIZATION OF EXTENSION:**

The Finance Officer or their designee, shall have the authority to authorize customer extensions.

### **C. ACCOUNT BALANCE:**

In the event a customer disconnects his or her service or the Public Utilities Department disconnects the service, for any reason, the account balance due for water usage, late penalties, and all other applicable fees are the sole responsibility of that customer. The Finance Department, on a quarterly basis, shall review all outstanding debt owed to the County for water services provided. Each month, the Finance Department shall make the following attempts to collect outstanding debt:

1. The Finance Department shall send to the customer a monthly bill. Customer is to make payment in full by the 5<sup>TH</sup> of each month. If no response; then,
2. The Department shall transfer the security deposit to the customer’s account, if any outstanding balance still remains; then,
3. The Department shall send notification to Debt Set-Off; a program with the North Carolina Treasurer’s Department, for payment to collect from IRS for any tax

refunds or lottery winnings that customer may receive which will go toward the utility bill.

4. The Department shall notify other utility operation systems throughout the State of North Carolina of this customer's indebtedness to the County.
5. All customers that have been disconnected with outstanding account balances shall **NOT** be reconnected until all indebtedness is paid in full to the County.
6. The first time a customer incurs a late fee, the late fee may be forgiven if the customer signs up for all future utility bills to be paid by direct bank draft from their bank account.

#### **RELEASES OF UNCOLLECTED UTILITY BILLS:**

All utility bills are to be presented to Columbus County Board of Commissioners for release consideration after they are three (3) months old and all possible collection methods have been exhausted. If the customer attempts to reinstate a utility account after the outstanding bill is released, the outstanding amount must be paid in full prior to any new services being activated.

#### **D. LEAK ADJUSTMENTS:**

##### **1. DEFINITIONS**

**The Customer side** shall be defined as that side of the meter (house side) where the customer connects to the meter provided by the County and beyond.

**The County's side** shall be defined as that side of the meter, including the meter, where the County service line (highway side) connects to the meter and back to the main.

A water bill adjustment can be provided when the following criteria are met:

- a. Exposed piping leak will not be considered for a leak adjustment.
- b. No adjustments will be made unless the gallons billed are at least twice the highest monthly billing in the previous twelve (12) months.
- c. The problem has been corrected.
- d. Evidence of repairs such as plumbing bills and/or a statement from a plumber that the leak repairs have been completed.
- e. Only one adjustment shall be made in a twelve (12) month period. If the leak is reflected on two consecutive water bills, adjustments will be made on both bills.

##### **2. LEAKS ON CUSTOMER'S SIDE OF METER:**

In the event that a leak occurred on the customer's side of the meter, customer is to make the repair(s) within (15) fifteen days of the leak and the customer shall obtain a Plumber's Statement (obtained from the Finance Department), signed and notarized by a licensed plumber that the leak repairs have been made. The customer's account will be adjusted to the average monthly minimum usage of the past six months. Any leak repair(s) that are not completed within the (15) fifteen day period will forfeit the leak adjustment. All leak adjustments must be approved and signed by the Finance Director or his designee.

### **3. REPAYMENT:**

Repayment of this extraordinary balance can be paid in full or the amount due may be paid in installments, so long as it is approved by the Finance Director or his designee.

The period of time allowed for the repayment of this extraordinary balance shall not exceed three (3) consecutive billing periods.

#### **E. DAMAGED LIABILITY:**

The County shall not be liable for damage of any kind resulting from water or the use of water on the customer's property, unless damage results directly from negligence on behalf of the County. The County shall not be responsible for damages done by or resulting from any defect in the piping, fixtures, and /or appliances on the customer's property.

The County shall not be responsible for negligence of third parties or forces beyond the control of the County resulting in any interruption of service. Otherwise, under normal conditions, all potentially affected customers shall be notified in advance of any interruption of service.

Customers who tamper or damage County meters (including all components thereof) and etc., will be reported to appropriate law enforcement and will be charged the appropriate fees as approved by the County Commissioners which will include the actual cost involved to repair/replace the property (see fee schedule). All applicable charges will be invoiced to the customer and will be due no later than 10 days from the date of the invoice. If payment is not received by the due date, a cut-off order will be issued during normal business hours to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.

Customers who intentional tamper with the meter a second time or steal water that is County property will have their service removed immediately and be reported to appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation. In order to reconnect to the County water system, they will be responsible for paying for new service at the current rate and pay all outstanding balances.

#### **F. SEPARATE WATER CONNECTIONS AND METERS REQUIRED:**

Each building shall have a separate meter, and where practicable, shall have a separate water lateral. In the event that one lateral is used for two (2) dwellings, commercial or

industrial buildings, or used to serve two or more meters for the same dwelling, commercial or industrial buildings, a separate cut-off shall be provided for each meter.

However, there shall be an exception to the requirement for separate water meters in the case of groups of mobile homes or apartment developments under single ownership. In the case of said groups of mobile homes or apartment developments of more than ten (10) units, one (1) meter may be used for the entire project unless additional meters are requested by the property owner or deemed necessary by the proper District authority, and the following conditions shall be met:

1. All bills will be rendered to the Owner of the property.
2. The bill will be calculated by a minimum charge for the master meter, which shall be based on the number of units served times the minimum charge per standard  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch meter. The remaining bill shall be based on the total consumption passing through the master meter times the unit commodity charge.
3. Should any portion of the development be sold, the owners shall be responsible for paying whatever additional costs would be involved in bringing the divided development into compliance.
4. Cost of service shall be included in the rent/lease of each unit, and no individual meters shall be allowed.
5. In the case of group mobile homes or apartment developments where ten (10) or fewer units are involved, and where ownership is in one party, the owner may elect to have a single meter used for the entire project. Where such election is made the owner shall comply with the conditions set forth as 1, 2, 3, and 4 above.

**G. PROFANE, INDECENT, AND THREATING CALL:**

It is against North Carolina General Statute 14-196 to use “*profane*, indecent or threatening language to any persons over the telephone; annoying or harassing by repeated telephoning or making false statement over the telephone.”

If a call of this nature is received, do the following:

1. At the first profane or indecent word, ask the caller to please refrain from that type of language. If the profane or indecent language continues, politely inform the caller that if that type of language does not cease that the call will be terminated.
2. Document the occurrence including the caller’s name, address and telephone number, if known. Report incident to your supervisor, including the above information.
3. If the calls continue, notify your supervisor.

**Commissioner Smith:** Mr. Leatherman, in the case of a cutoff order, will there be any notification given to the customer besides the regular bill.

**Gail Edwards:** We are actually trying to set something up with the County's Code Red to notify our customers and as long as we have the correct phone number that should not be a problem. However, this is not in place yet, it is something we are working on.

**Commissioner Byrd:** Will commercial bills be treated the same as residential bills?

**Mr. Leatherman:** Everyone will be treated the same.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to establish the public hearing and accept the first reading, seconded by Commissioner McDowell. The motion unanimously passed.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 7:44 P.M., Commissioner McDowell made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

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**AMANDA B. PRINCE, Deputy Clerk to Board**

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**RICKY BULLARD, Chairman**



**COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV, and V  
COMBINATION BOARD MEETING**

**Monday, August 02, 2021**

**7:32 P.M.**

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and time at the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex, 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina 28472, for the purpose of acting as the Columbus County Water and Sewer District II Board.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Ricky Bullard, **Chairman**  
Jerome McMillian, **Vice Chairman**  
Chris Smith  
Giles E. Byrd  
Lavern Coleman  
Brent Watts  
Charles T. McDowell

**APPOINTEES PRESENT:**

Edwin H. Madden, Jr., **County Manager**  
Boyd Worley, **Board Attorney**  
Amanda B. Prince, **Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk**  
Jay Leatherman, **Interim Finance Officer**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

At 7:32 P.M., Chairman Ricky Bullard called the **combination meeting** of Columbus county Water and Sewer District II Board Meeting to order.

**Agenda Item #19: COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICT II BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

- A. June 21, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District II Board Meeting.
- B. July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District II Board Meeting.

Vice Chairman McMillian made a motion to approve the June 21, 2021 and July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District II Board Meeting Minutes, seconded by Commissioner Coleman. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #20: ESTABLISHMENT of PUBLIC HEARING and 1<sup>ST</sup> READING for PUBLIC UTILITIES NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY for WATER DISTRICT II:**

Jay Leatherman, Interim Finance Director, requested the Board to establish August 16, 2021, at 6:30 P.M., as the date and time for the Public Hearing and requested Board acceptance of the first reading.

**COLUMBUS COUNTY  
CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

## UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

### A. SERVICE APPLICATION

#### Residential Accounts

Columbus County requires a completed APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature and deposit to start water service. With the application, we will need a copy of your Driver's License or state issued ID, payment of \$50.00 for property owner and \$100.00 for renter's deposit, and copy of lease/purchase agreement or form entitled Property Owner/Landlord Transfer of Responsibility for Account Charges (attached). Also, please fill out the part on the application that indicates whether you are owner of the house or renter. You will need to speak with one of our customer service representatives to obtain the deposit amount required with your application. Our customer service representatives are available via telephone from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 910-642-5257.

Same day service for existing customers can be done as long you stop by our office prior to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Otherwise, the service may be provided the following business day.

If the owner / resident has a meter (County owned equipment) located inside a locked fence/gate the owner/resident must provide a key to our Public Utilities Department for entry. The owner/resident is required to ensure the work area around the meter/water line is safe for workers to perform their duties and shall not block or impede access to the meter/water line. If the meter/water line is inaccessible to workers in the Public Utilities Department, services may be discontinued.

#### **The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

The deposit will be applied to the final bill when the account is closed. Customers who have multiple accounts (apartment complexes, etc.) are required to maintain a deposit equal to the deposit outlined in the adopted budget. Customers who have multiple accounts and are renting the property are required to pay an additional security deposit.

If the customer disconnects one account to relocate to another account within the County, the security deposit will be transferred to the new account when all previous balances at the former account are paid in full. Otherwise, the customer will be required to pay an additional security deposit on the new account. If the customer relocates without notification to the Public Utilities staff, leaving a balance on their account, then the balance on the previous account can / will be transferred to the current account and will be required to pay in full at the time of the new account being established.

The customer shall receive a final bill reflecting the total amount owed to Columbus County for said account.

Upon notification of the death of the customer/account holder, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a family member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Residential Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

#### **Commercial/ Industrial / Institutional Accounts**

Columbus County requires a completed COMMERCIAL APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature, security deposit and a copy of the rental agreement (if applicable) to start water service. Prior to the Public Utilities Department opening a commercial/industrial/institutional account, the owner/representative will need to review the proposed business operations with the Planning/Zoning department of the Town. Approval must be granted by the Planning/Zoning department prior to Finance staff opening the account.

**The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

Upon notification of the death of the owner/representative, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a corporate member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Commercial Application for Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

## **B. ACCOUNT BILLING**

Columbus County shall ensure that all customer meters are read in a manner which provides the County with the most efficient use for personnel. Each customer shall be billed for water usage during a specified billing period, along with all other applicable fees and charges.

### **1. UTILITY PAYMENT SCHEDULE REVISED**

In order to serve customers better and to have a clearer payment schedule, Columbus County is updating its Utility Payment Schedule/Policy. The changes are as follows:

- The billing date for Columbus County's utility bill will be mailed by the 5th of each month following the billing month(s).
- Bills will now be due upon receipt. If payment is not received by the beginning of business (8:30 a.m.) on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a \$35.00 late fee penalty will be applied to the affected account on the 6<sup>th</sup> (at the beginning of the business day 8:30 a.m.) of the month.
- If payment for the month that had a late fee applied is not received along with the late fee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a cut-off order shall be issued on the 21st (at the start of business 8:30 a.m.) to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.
- Once a customer's account is placed on the cut-off list, the past due amount including the late fee and the current balance must be paid in full before service is restored.

Columbus County is making these changes to better serve its customers and to make the late fee/utility cut-off policies and procedures more clear. This policy goes into effect with the bills that will be mailed out in September. If anyone has any questions about this matter, please call the Finance Office at 910-642-5257.

## **2. WATER CONNECTIONS:**

Connections to the County water system may be authorized by the Public Utilities Department with payment of proper fees (deposits, late fees, reconnect fees etc..) and the connection will be handled the next business day.

Water connections should be at the Public Utilities office by 4:00 p.m. to get connections handled the same day.

New water connections requiring a tap will be handled after completion of an APPLICATION FOR SERVICE and payment of all fees and deposits. Service is usually provided within 10 business days, weather permitting, after the customer request.

If water connections for a customer crosses other property lines, it is the responsibility of the customer to secure all easements and other legal documents at their expense to permit the connection to occur.

If more than one heir is identified for a property that is requesting a water connection, all identified heirs are required to provide signed permission to allow one of the heirs to request connection to the water system.

If a customer connected to the water system requests to be disconnected the following will apply. The customer will not be disconnected until they have been connected for at least five (5) years. If after five (5) years they request disconnection, they will need to prepay a \$250 fee prior to Public Utilities performing the disconnection.

### **3. FEES, PENALTIES, CHARGES:**

All fees, penalties, and charges shall be listed as part of the rate schedule and shall be set from time to time by the Columbus County Board of Commissioners as deemed necessary.

### **4. EXTENSIONS:**

An extension of payment due date may be given to those customers determined to be in “*good fiscal standing*” with the Public Utilities Department. A customer in “*good fiscal standing*” shall be defined as any customer with no prior extensions, no returned check(s), and no service terminations for non-payment during the previous twelve (12) consecutive month period or since becoming a customer with Columbus County, whichever is less. The amount extended shall be paid in full on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the following month or by an agreement by a member of the Finance staff.

### **5. AUTHORIZATION OF EXTENSION:**

The Finance Officer or their designee, shall have the authority to authorize customer extensions.

### **C. ACCOUNT BALANCE:**

In the event a customer disconnects his or her service or the Public Utilities Department disconnects the service, for any reason, the account balance due for water usage, late penalties, and all other applicable fees are the sole responsibility of that customer. The Finance Department, on a quarterly basis, shall review all outstanding debt owed to the County for water services provided. Each month, the Finance Department shall make the following attempts to collect outstanding debt:

1. The Finance Department shall send to the customer a monthly bill. Customer is to make payment in full by the 5<sup>TH</sup> of each month. If no response; then,
2. The Department shall transfer the security deposit to the customer’s account, if any outstanding balance still remains; then,
3. The Department shall send notification to Debt Set-Off; a program with the North Carolina Treasurer’s Department, for payment to collect from IRS for any tax

refunds or lottery winnings that customer may receive which will go toward the utility bill.

4. The Department shall notify other utility operation systems throughout the State of North Carolina of this customer's indebtedness to the County.
5. All customers that have been disconnected with outstanding account balances shall **NOT** be reconnected until all indebtedness is paid in full to the County.
6. The first time a customer incurs a late fee, the late fee may be forgiven if the customer signs up for all future utility bills to be paid by direct bank draft from their bank account.

#### **RELEASES OF UNCOLLECTED UTILITY BILLS:**

All utility bills are to be presented to Columbus County Board of Commissioners for release consideration after they are three (3) months old and all possible collection methods have been exhausted. If the customer attempts to reinstate a utility account after the outstanding bill is released, the outstanding amount must be paid in full prior to any new services being activated.

#### **D. LEAK ADJUSTMENTS:**

##### **1. DEFINITIONS**

**The Customer side** shall be defined as that side of the meter (house side) where the customer connects to the meter provided by the County and beyond.

**The County's side** shall be defined as that side of the meter, including the meter, where the County service line (highway side) connects to the meter and back to the main.

A water bill adjustment can be provided when the following criteria are met:

- a. Exposed piping leak will not be considered for a leak adjustment.
- b. No adjustments will be made unless the gallons billed are at least twice the highest monthly billing in the previous twelve (12) months.
- c. The problem has been corrected.
- d. Evidence of repairs such as plumbing bills and/or a statement from a plumber that the leak repairs have been completed.
- e. Only one adjustment shall be made in a twelve (12) month period. If the leak is reflected on two consecutive water bills, adjustments will be made on both bills.

##### **2. LEAKS ON CUSTOMER'S SIDE OF METER:**

In the event that a leak occurred on the customer's side of the meter, customer is to make the repair(s) within (15) fifteen days of the leak and the customer shall obtain a Plumber's Statement (obtained from the Finance Department), signed and notarized by a licensed plumber that the leak repairs have been made. The customer's account will be adjusted to the average monthly minimum usage of the past six months. Any leak repair(s) that are not completed within the (15) fifteen day period will forfeit the leak adjustment. All leak adjustments must be approved and signed by the Finance Director or his designee.

### **3. REPAYMENT:**

Repayment of this extraordinary balance can be paid in full or the amount due may be paid in installments, so long as it is approved by the Finance Director or his designee.

The period of time allowed for the repayment of this extraordinary balance shall not exceed three (3) consecutive billing periods.

#### **E. DAMAGED LIABILITY:**

The County shall not be liable for damage of any kind resulting from water or the use of water on the customer's property, unless damage results directly from negligence on behalf of the County. The County shall not be responsible for damages done by or resulting from any defect in the piping, fixtures, and /or appliances on the customer's property.

The County shall not be responsible for negligence of third parties or forces beyond the control of the County resulting in any interruption of service. Otherwise, under normal conditions, all potentially affected customers shall be notified in advance of any interruption of service.

Customers who tamper or damage County meters (including all components thereof) and etc., will be reported to appropriate law enforcement and will be charged the appropriate fees as approved by the County Commissioners which will include the actual cost involved to repair/replace the property (see fee schedule). All applicable charges will be invoiced to the customer and will be due no later than 10 days from the date of the invoice. If payment is not received by the due date, a cut-off order will be issued during normal business hours to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.

Customers who intentional tamper with the meter a second time or steal water that is County property will have their service removed immediately and be reported to appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation. In order to reconnect to the County water system, they will be responsible for paying for new service at the current rate and pay all outstanding balances.

#### **F. SEPARATE WATER CONNECTIONS AND METERS REQUIRED:**

Each building shall have a separate meter, and where practicable, shall have a separate water lateral. In the event that one lateral is used for two (2) dwellings, commercial or

industrial buildings, or used to serve two or more meters for the same dwelling, commercial or industrial buildings, a separate cut-off shall be provided for each meter.

However, there shall be an exception to the requirement for separate water meters in the case of groups of mobile homes or apartment developments under single ownership. In the case of said groups of mobile homes or apartment developments of more than ten (10) units, one (1) meter may be used for the entire project unless additional meters are requested by the property owner or deemed necessary by the proper District authority, and the following conditions shall be met:

1. All bills will be rendered to the Owner of the property.
2. The bill will be calculated by a minimum charge for the master meter, which shall be based on the number of units served times the minimum charge per standard  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch meter. The remaining bill shall be based on the total consumption passing through the master meter times the unit commodity charge.
3. Should any portion of the development be sold, the owners shall be responsible for paying whatever additional costs would be involved in bringing the divided development into compliance.
4. Cost of service shall be included in the rent/lease of each unit, and no individual meters shall be allowed.
5. In the case of group mobile homes or apartment developments where ten (10) or fewer units are involved, and where ownership is in one party, the owner may elect to have a single meter used for the entire project. Where such election is made the owner shall comply with the conditions set forth as 1, 2, 3, and 4 above.

**G. PROFANE, INDECENT, AND THREATING CALL:**

It is against North Carolina General Statute 14-196 to use “*profane*, indecent or threatening language to any persons over the telephone; annoying or harassing by repeated telephoning or making false statement over the telephone.”

If a call of this nature is received, do the following:

1. At the first profane or indecent word, ask the caller to please refrain from that type of language. If the profane or indecent language continues, politely inform the caller that if that type of language does not cease that the call will be terminated.
2. Document the occurrence including the caller’s name, address and telephone number, if known. Report incident to your supervisor, including the above information.
3. If the calls continue, notify your supervisor.

**Commissioner Smith:** Mr. Leatherman, in the case of a cutoff order, will there be any notification given to the customer besides the regular bill.



**Gail Edwards:** We are actually trying to set something up with the County's Code Red to notify our customers and as long as we have the correct phone number that should not be a problem. However, this is not in place yet, it is something we are working on.

**Commissioner Byrd:** Will commercial bills be treated the same as residential bills?

**Mr. Leatherman:** Everyone will be treated the same.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to establish the public hearing and accept the first reading, seconded by Commissioner McDowell. The motion unanimously passed.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 7:44 P.M., Commissioner McDowell made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

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**AMANDA B. PRINCE, Deputy Clerk to Board**

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**RICKY BULLARD, Chairman**

**COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV, and V  
COMBINATION BOARD MEETING  
Monday, August 02, 2021  
7:32 P.M.**

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and time at the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex, 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina 28472, for the purpose of acting as the Columbus County Water and Sewer District III Board.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Ricky Bullard, **Chairman**  
Jerome McMillian, **Vice Chairman**  
Chris Smith  
Giles E. Byrd  
Lavern Coleman  
Brent Watts  
Charles T. McDowell

**APPOINTEES PRESENT:**

Edwin H. Madden, Jr., **County Manager**  
Boyd Worley, **Board Attorney**  
Amanda B. Prince, **Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk**  
Jay Leatherman, **Interim Finance Officer**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

At 7:32 P.M., Chairman Ricky Bullard called the combination meeting of Columbus county Water and Sewer District III Board Meeting to order.

**Agenda Item #19: COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICT III BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

- A. June 21, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District III Board Meeting.
- B. July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District III Board Meeting.

Vice Chairman McMillian made a motion to approve the June 21, 2021 and July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District III Board Meeting Minutes, seconded by Commissioner Coleman. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #20: ESTABLISHMENT of PUBLIC HEARING and 1<sup>ST</sup> READING for PUBLIC UTILITIES NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY for WATER DISTRICT III:**

Jay Leatherman, Interim Finance Director, requested the Board to establish August 16, 2021, at 6:30 P.M., as the date and time for the Public Hearing and requested Board acceptance of the first reading.

**COLUMBUS COUNTY  
CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

## UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

### A. SERVICE APPLICATION

#### Residential Accounts

Columbus County requires a completed APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature and deposit to start water service. With the application, we will need a copy of your Driver's License or state issued ID, payment of \$50.00 for property owner and \$100.00 for renter's deposit, and copy of lease/purchase agreement or form entitled Property Owner/Landlord Transfer of Responsibility for Account Charges (attached). Also, please fill out the part on the application that indicates whether you are owner of the house or renter. You will need to speak with one of our customer service representatives to obtain the deposit amount required with your application. Our customer service representatives are available via telephone from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 910-642-5257.

Same day service for existing customers can be done as long you stop by our office prior to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Otherwise, the service may be provided the following business day.

If the owner / resident has a meter (County owned equipment) located inside a locked fence/gate the owner/resident must provide a key to our Public Utilities Department for entry. The owner/resident is required to ensure the work area around the meter/water line is safe for workers to perform their duties and shall not block or impede access to the meter/water line. If the meter/water line is inaccessible to workers in the Public Utilities Department, services may be discontinued.

#### **The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

The deposit will be applied to the final bill when the account is closed. Customers who have multiple accounts (apartment complexes, etc.) are required to maintain a deposit equal to the deposit outlined in the adopted budget. Customers who have multiple accounts and are renting the property are required to pay an additional security deposit.

If the customer disconnects one account to relocate to another account within the County, the security deposit will be transferred to the new account when all previous balances at the former account are paid in full. Otherwise, the customer will be required to pay an additional security deposit on the new account. If the customer relocates without notification to the Public Utilities staff, leaving a balance on their account, then the balance on the previous account can / will be transferred to the current account and will be required to pay in full at the time of the new account being established.

The customer shall receive a final bill reflecting the total amount owed to Columbus County for said account.

Upon notification of the death of the customer/account holder, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a family member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Residential Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

#### **Commercial/ Industrial / Institutional Accounts**

Columbus County requires a completed COMMERCIAL APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature, security deposit and a copy of the rental agreement (if applicable) to start water service. Prior to the Public Utilities Department opening a commercial/industrial/institutional account, the owner/representative will need to review the proposed business operations with the Planning/Zoning department of the Town. Approval must be granted by the Planning/Zoning department prior to Finance staff opening the account.

**The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

Upon notification of the death of the owner/representative, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a corporate member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Commercial Application for Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

## **B. ACCOUNT BILLING**

Columbus County shall ensure that all customer meters are read in a manner which provides the County with the most efficient use for personnel. Each customer shall be billed for water usage during a specified billing period, along with all other applicable fees and charges.

### **1. UTILITY PAYMENT SCHEDULE REVISED**

In order to serve customers better and to have a clearer payment schedule, Columbus County is updating its Utility Payment Schedule/Policy. The changes are as follows:

- The billing date for Columbus County's utility bill will be mailed by the 5th of each month following the billing month(s).
- Bills will now be due upon receipt. If payment is not received by the beginning of business (8:30 a.m.) on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a \$35.00 late fee penalty will be applied to the affected account on the 6<sup>th</sup> (at the beginning of the business day 8:30 a.m.) of the month.
- If payment for the month that had a late fee applied is not received along with the late fee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a cut-off order shall be issued on the 21st (at the start of business 8:30 a.m.) to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.
- Once a customer's account is placed on the cut-off list, the past due amount including the late fee and the current balance must be paid in full before service is restored.

Columbus County is making these changes to better serve its customers and to make the late fee/utility cut-off policies and procedures more clear. This policy goes into effect with the bills that will be mailed out in September. If anyone has any questions about this matter, please call the Finance Office at 910-642-5257.

## **2. WATER CONNECTIONS:**

Connections to the County water system may be authorized by the Public Utilities Department with payment of proper fees (deposits, late fees, reconnect fees etc..) and the connection will be handled the next business day.

Water connections should be at the Public Utilities office by 4:00 p.m. to get connections handled the same day.

New water connections requiring a tap will be handled after completion of an APPLICATION FOR SERVICE and payment of all fees and deposits. Service is usually provided within 10 business days, weather permitting, after the customer request.

If water connections for a customer crosses other property lines, it is the responsibility of the customer to secure all easements and other legal documents at their expense to permit the connection to occur.

If more than one heir is identified for a property that is requesting a water connection, all identified heirs are required to provide signed permission to allow one of the heirs to request connection to the water system.

If a customer connected to the water system requests to be disconnected the following will apply. The customer will not be disconnected until they have been connected for at least five (5) years. If after five (5) years they request disconnection, they will need to prepay a \$250 fee prior to Public Utilities performing the disconnection.

### **3. FEES, PENALTIES, CHARGES:**

All fees, penalties, and charges shall be listed as part of the rate schedule and shall be set from time to time by the Columbus County Board of Commissioners as deemed necessary.

### **4. EXTENSIONS:**

An extension of payment due date may be given to those customers determined to be in “*good fiscal standing*” with the Public Utilities Department. A customer in “*good fiscal standing*” shall be defined as any customer with no prior extensions, no returned check(s), and no service terminations for non-payment during the previous twelve (12) consecutive month period or since becoming a customer with Columbus County, whichever is less. The amount extended shall be paid in full on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the following month or by an agreement by a member of the Finance staff.

### **5. AUTHORIZATION OF EXTENSION:**

The Finance Officer or their designee, shall have the authority to authorize customer extensions.

## **C. ACCOUNT BALANCE:**

In the event a customer disconnects his or her service or the Public Utilities Department disconnects the service, for any reason, the account balance due for water usage, late penalties, and all other applicable fees are the sole responsibility of that customer. The Finance Department, on a quarterly basis, shall review all outstanding debt owed to the County for water services provided. Each month, the Finance Department shall make the following attempts to collect outstanding debt:

1. The Finance Department shall send to the customer a monthly bill. Customer is to make payment in full by the 5<sup>TH</sup> of each month. If no response; then,
2. The Department shall transfer the security deposit to the customer’s account, if any outstanding balance still remains; then,
3. The Department shall send notification to Debt Set-Off; a program with the North Carolina Treasurer’s Department, for payment to collect from IRS for any tax

refunds or lottery winnings that customer may receive which will go toward the utility bill.

4. The Department shall notify other utility operation systems throughout the State of North Carolina of this customer's indebtedness to the County.
5. All customers that have been disconnected with outstanding account balances shall **NOT** be reconnected until all indebtedness is paid in full to the County.
6. The first time a customer incurs a late fee, the late fee may be forgiven if the customer signs up for all future utility bills to be paid by direct bank draft from their bank account.

#### **RELEASES OF UNCOLLECTED UTILITY BILLS:**

All utility bills are to be presented to Columbus County Board of Commissioners for release consideration after they are three (3) months old and all possible collection methods have been exhausted. If the customer attempts to reinstate a utility account after the outstanding bill is released, the outstanding amount must be paid in full prior to any new services being activated.

#### **D. LEAK ADJUSTMENTS:**

##### **1. DEFINITIONS**

**The Customer side** shall be defined as that side of the meter (house side) where the customer connects to the meter provided by the County and beyond.

**The County's side** shall be defined as that side of the meter, including the meter, where the County service line (highway side) connects to the meter and back to the main.

A water bill adjustment can be provided when the following criteria are met:

- a. Exposed piping leak will not be considered for a leak adjustment.
- b. No adjustments will be made unless the gallons billed are at least twice the highest monthly billing in the previous twelve (12) months.
- c. The problem has been corrected.
- d. Evidence of repairs such as plumbing bills and/or a statement from a plumber that the leak repairs have been completed.
- e. Only one adjustment shall be made in a twelve (12) month period. If the leak is reflected on two consecutive water bills, adjustments will be made on both bills.

##### **2. LEAKS ON CUSTOMER'S SIDE OF METER:**

In the event that a leak occurred on the customer's side of the meter, customer is to make the repair(s) within (15) fifteen days of the leak and the customer shall obtain a Plumber's Statement (obtained from the Finance Department), signed and notarized by a licensed plumber that the leak repairs have been made. The customer's account will be adjusted to the average monthly minimum usage of the past six months. Any leak repair(s) that are not completed within the (15) fifteen day period will forfeit the leak adjustment. All leak adjustments must be approved and signed by the Finance Director or his designee.

### **3. REPAYMENT:**

Repayment of this extraordinary balance can be paid in full or the amount due may be paid in installments, so long as it is approved by the Finance Director or his designee.

The period of time allowed for the repayment of this extraordinary balance shall not exceed three (3) consecutive billing periods.

#### **E. DAMAGED LIABILITY:**

The County shall not be liable for damage of any kind resulting from water or the use of water on the customer's property, unless damage results directly from negligence on behalf of the County. The County shall not be responsible for damages done by or resulting from any defect in the piping, fixtures, and /or appliances on the customer's property.

The County shall not be responsible for negligence of third parties or forces beyond the control of the County resulting in any interruption of service. Otherwise, under normal conditions, all potentially affected customers shall be notified in advance of any interruption of service.

Customers who tamper or damage County meters (including all components thereof) and etc., will be reported to appropriate law enforcement and will be charged the appropriate fees as approved by the County Commissioners which will include the actual cost involved to repair/replace the property (see fee schedule). All applicable charges will be invoiced to the customer and will be due no later than 10 days from the date of the invoice. If payment is not received by the due date, a cut-off order will be issued during normal business hours to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.

Customers who intentional tamper with the meter a second time or steal water that is County property will have their service removed immediately and be reported to appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation. In order to reconnect to the County water system, they will be responsible for paying for new service at the current rate and pay all outstanding balances.

#### **F. SEPARATE WATER CONNECTIONS AND METERS REQUIRED:**

Each building shall have a separate meter, and where practicable, shall have a separate water lateral. In the event that one lateral is used for two (2) dwellings, commercial or



industrial buildings, or used to serve two or more meters for the same dwelling, commercial or industrial buildings, a separate cut-off shall be provided for each meter.

However, there shall be an exception to the requirement for separate water meters in the case of groups of mobile homes or apartment developments under single ownership. In the case of said groups of mobile homes or apartment developments of more than ten (10) units, one (1) meter may be used for the entire project unless additional meters are requested by the property owner or deemed necessary by the proper District authority, and the following conditions shall be met:

1. All bills will be rendered to the Owner of the property.
2. The bill will be calculated by a minimum charge for the master meter, which shall be based on the number of units served times the minimum charge per standard  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch meter. The remaining bill shall be based on the total consumption passing through the master meter times the unit commodity charge.
3. Should any portion of the development be sold, the owners shall be responsible for paying whatever additional costs would be involved in bringing the divided development into compliance.
4. Cost of service shall be included in the rent/lease of each unit, and no individual meters shall be allowed.
5. In the case of group mobile homes or apartment developments where ten (10) or fewer units are involved, and where ownership is in one party, the owner may elect to have a single meter used for the entire project. Where such election is made the owner shall comply with the conditions set forth as 1, 2, 3, and 4 above.

**G. PROFANE, INDECENT, AND THREATING CALL:**

It is against North Carolina General Statute 14-196 to use “*profane*, indecent or threatening language to any persons over the telephone; annoying or harassing by repeated telephoning or making false statement over the telephone.”

If a call of this nature is received, do the following:

1. At the first profane or indecent word, ask the caller to please refrain from that type of language. If the profane or indecent language continues, politely inform the caller that if that type of language does not cease that the call will be terminated.
2. Document the occurrence including the caller’s name, address and telephone number, if known. Report incident to your supervisor, including the above information.
3. If the calls continue, notify your supervisor.

**Commissioner Smith:** Mr. Leatherman, in the case of a cutoff order, will there be any notification given to the customer besides the regular bill.

**Gail Edwards:** We are actually trying to set something up with the County's Code Red to notify our customers and as long as we have the correct phone number that should not be a problem. However, this is not in place yet, it is something we are working on.

**Commissioner Byrd:** Will commercial bills be treated the same as residential bills?

**Mr. Leatherman:** Everyone will be treated the same.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to establish the public hearing and accept the first reading, seconded by Commissioner McDowell. The motion unanimously passed.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 7:44 P.M., Commissioner McDowell made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

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**AMANDA B. PRINCE, Deputy Clerk to Board**

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**RICKY BULLARD, Chairman**

**COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV, and V**  
**COMBINATION BOARD MEETING**  
**Monday, August 02, 2021**  
**7:32 P.M.**

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and time at the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex, 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina 28472, for the purpose of acting as the Columbus County Water and Sewer District V Board.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Ricky Bullard, **Chairman**  
 Jerome McMillian, **Vice Chairman**  
 Chris Smith  
 Giles E. Byrd  
 Lavern Coleman  
 Brent Watts  
 Charles T. McDowell

**APPOINTEES PRESENT:**

Edwin H. Madden, Jr., **County Manager**  
 Boyd Worley, **Board Attorney**  
 Amanda B. Prince, **Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk**  
 Jay Leatherman, **Interim Finance Officer**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

At 7:32 P.M., Chairman Ricky Bullard called the **combination meeting** of Columbus county Water and Sewer District V Board Meeting to order.

**Agenda Item #19: COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICT V BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

- A. June 21, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District V Board Meeting.
- B. July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District V Board Meeting.

Vice Chairman McMillian made a motion to approve the July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District V Board Meeting Minutes, seconded by Commissioner Coleman. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #20: ESTABLISHMENT of PUBLIC HEARING and 1<sup>ST</sup> READING for PUBLIC UTILITIES NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY for WATER DISTRICT V:**

Jay Leatherman, Interim Finance Director, requested the Board to establish August 16, 2021, at 6:30 P.M., as the date and time for the Public Hearing and requested Board acceptance of the first reading.

**COLUMBUS COUNTY**  
**CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

## UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

### A. SERVICE APPLICATION

#### Residential Accounts

Columbus County requires a completed APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature and deposit to start water service. With the application, we will need a copy of your Driver's License or state issued ID, payment of \$50.00 for property owner and \$100.00 for renter's deposit, and copy of lease/purchase agreement or form entitled Property Owner/Landlord Transfer of Responsibility for Account Charges (attached). Also, please fill out the part on the application that indicates whether you are owner of the house or renter. You will need to speak with one of our customer service representatives to obtain the deposit amount required with your application. Our customer service representatives are available via telephone from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 910-642-5257.

Same day service for existing customers can be done as long you stop by our office prior to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Otherwise, the service may be provided the following business day.

If the owner / resident has a meter (County owned equipment) located inside a locked fence/gate the owner/resident must provide a key to our Public Utilities Department for entry. The owner/resident is required to ensure the work area around the meter/water line is safe for workers to perform their duties and shall not block or impede access to the meter/water line. If the meter/water line is inaccessible to workers in the Public Utilities Department, services may be discontinued.

#### **The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

The deposit will be applied to the final bill when the account is closed. Customers who have multiple accounts (apartment complexes, etc.) are required to maintain a deposit equal to the deposit outlined in the adopted budget. Customers who have multiple accounts and are renting the property are required to pay an additional security deposit.

If the customer disconnects one account to relocate to another account within the County, the security deposit will be transferred to the new account when all previous balances at the former account are paid in full. Otherwise, the customer will be required to pay an additional security deposit on the new account. If the customer relocates without notification to the Public Utilities staff, leaving a balance on their account, then the balance on the previous account can / will be transferred to the current account and will be required to pay in full at the time of the new account being established.

The customer shall receive a final bill reflecting the total amount owed to Columbus County for said account.

Upon notification of the death of the customer/account holder, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a family member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Residential Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

#### **Commercial/ Industrial / Institutional Accounts**

Columbus County requires a completed COMMERCIAL APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature, security deposit and a copy of the rental agreement (if applicable) to start water service. Prior to the Public Utilities Department opening a commercial/industrial/institutional account, the owner/representative will need to review the proposed business operations with the Planning/Zoning department of the Town. Approval must be granted by the Planning/Zoning department prior to Finance staff opening the account.

**The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

Upon notification of the death of the owner/representative, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a corporate member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Commercial Application for Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

## **B. ACCOUNT BILLING**

Columbus County shall ensure that all customer meters are read in a manner which provides the County with the most efficient use for personnel. Each customer shall be billed for water usage during a specified billing period, along with all other applicable fees and charges.

### **1. UTILITY PAYMENT SCHEDULE REVISED**

In order to serve customers better and to have a clearer payment schedule, Columbus County is updating its Utility Payment Schedule/Policy. The changes are as follows:

- The billing date for Columbus County's utility bill will be mailed by the 5th of each month following the billing month(s).
- Bills will now be due upon receipt. If payment is not received by the beginning of business (8:30 a.m.) on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a \$35.00 late fee penalty will be applied to the affected account on the 6<sup>th</sup> (at the beginning of the business day 8:30 a.m.) of the month.
- If payment for the month that had a late fee applied is not received along with the late fee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a cut-off order shall be issued on the 21st (at the start of business 8:30 a.m.) to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.
- Once a customer's account is placed on the cut-off list, the past due amount including the late fee and the current balance must be paid in full before service is restored.

Columbus County is making these changes to better serve its customers and to make the late fee/utility cut-off policies and procedures more clear. This policy goes into effect with the bills that will be mailed out in September. If anyone has any questions about this matter, please call the Finance Office at 910-642-5257.

## **2. WATER CONNECTIONS:**

Connections to the County water system may be authorized by the Public Utilities Department with payment of proper fees (deposits, late fees, reconnect fees etc..) and the connection will be handled the next business day.

Water connections should be at the Public Utilities office by 4:00 p.m. to get connections handled the same day.

New water connections requiring a tap will be handled after completion of an APPLICATION FOR SERVICE and payment of all fees and deposits. Service is usually provided within 10 business days, weather permitting, after the customer request.

If water connections for a customer crosses other property lines, it is the responsibility of the customer to secure all easements and other legal documents at their expense to permit the connection to occur.

If more than one heir is identified for a property that is requesting a water connection, all identified heirs are required to provide signed permission to allow one of the heirs to request connection to the water system.

If a customer connected to the water system requests to be disconnected the following will apply. The customer will not be disconnected until they have been connected for at least five (5) years. If after five (5) years they request disconnection, they will need to prepay a \$250 fee prior to Public Utilities performing the disconnection.

### **3. FEES, PENALTIES, CHARGES:**

All fees, penalties, and charges shall be listed as part of the rate schedule and shall be set from time to time by the Columbus County Board of Commissioners as deemed necessary.

### **4. EXTENSIONS:**

An extension of payment due date may be given to those customers determined to be in “*good fiscal standing*” with the Public Utilities Department. A customer in “*good fiscal standing*” shall be defined as any customer with no prior extensions, no returned check(s), and no service terminations for non-payment during the previous twelve (12) consecutive month period or since becoming a customer with Columbus County, whichever is less. The amount extended shall be paid in full on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the following month or by an agreement by a member of the Finance staff.

### **5. AUTHORIZATION OF EXTENSION:**

The Finance Officer or their designee, shall have the authority to authorize customer extensions.

## **C. ACCOUNT BALANCE:**

In the event a customer disconnects his or her service or the Public Utilities Department disconnects the service, for any reason, the account balance due for water usage, late penalties, and all other applicable fees are the sole responsibility of that customer. The Finance Department, on a quarterly basis, shall review all outstanding debt owed to the County for water services provided. Each month, the Finance Department shall make the following attempts to collect outstanding debt:

1. The Finance Department shall send to the customer a monthly bill. Customer is to make payment in full by the 5<sup>TH</sup> of each month. If no response; then,
2. The Department shall transfer the security deposit to the customer’s account, if any outstanding balance still remains; then,
3. The Department shall send notification to Debt Set-Off; a program with the North Carolina Treasurer’s Department, for payment to collect from IRS for any tax

refunds or lottery winnings that customer may receive which will go toward the utility bill.

4. The Department shall notify other utility operation systems throughout the State of North Carolina of this customer's indebtedness to the County.
5. All customers that have been disconnected with outstanding account balances shall **NOT** be reconnected until all indebtedness is paid in full to the County.
6. The first time a customer incurs a late fee, the late fee may be forgiven if the customer signs up for all future utility bills to be paid by direct bank draft from their bank account.

#### **RELEASES OF UNCOLLECTED UTILITY BILLS:**

All utility bills are to be presented to Columbus County Board of Commissioners for release consideration after they are three (3) months old and all possible collection methods have been exhausted. If the customer attempts to reinstate a utility account after the outstanding bill is released, the outstanding amount must be paid in full prior to any new services being activated.

#### **D. LEAK ADJUSTMENTS:**

##### **1. DEFINITIONS**

**The Customer side** shall be defined as that side of the meter (house side) where the customer connects to the meter provided by the County and beyond.

**The County's side** shall be defined as that side of the meter, including the meter, where the County service line (highway side) connects to the meter and back to the main.

A water bill adjustment can be provided when the following criteria are met:

- a. Exposed piping leak will not be considered for a leak adjustment.
- b. No adjustments will be made unless the gallons billed are at least twice the highest monthly billing in the previous twelve (12) months.
- c. The problem has been corrected.
- d. Evidence of repairs such as plumbing bills and/or a statement from a plumber that the leak repairs have been completed.
- e. Only one adjustment shall be made in a twelve (12) month period. If the leak is reflected on two consecutive water bills, adjustments will be made on both bills.

##### **2. LEAKS ON CUSTOMER'S SIDE OF METER:**



In the event that a leak occurred on the customer's side of the meter, customer is to make the repair(s) within (15) fifteen days of the leak and the customer shall obtain a Plumber's Statement (obtained from the Finance Department), signed and notarized by a licensed plumber that the leak repairs have been made. The customer's account will be adjusted to the average monthly minimum usage of the past six months. Any leak repair(s) that are not completed within the (15) fifteen day period will forfeit the leak adjustment. All leak adjustments must be approved and signed by the Finance Director or his designee.

### **3. REPAYMENT:**

Repayment of this extraordinary balance can be paid in full or the amount due may be paid in installments, so long as it is approved by the Finance Director or his designee.

The period of time allowed for the repayment of this extraordinary balance shall not exceed three (3) consecutive billing periods.

#### **E. DAMAGED LIABILITY:**

The County shall not be liable for damage of any kind resulting from water or the use of water on the customer's property, unless damage results directly from negligence on behalf of the County. The County shall not be responsible for damages done by or resulting from any defect in the piping, fixtures, and /or appliances on the customer's property.

The County shall not be responsible for negligence of third parties or forces beyond the control of the County resulting in any interruption of service. Otherwise, under normal conditions, all potentially affected customers shall be notified in advance of any interruption of service.

Customers who tamper or damage County meters (including all components thereof) and etc., will be reported to appropriate law enforcement and will be charged the appropriate fees as approved by the County Commissioners which will include the actual cost involved to repair/replace the property (see fee schedule). All applicable charges will be invoiced to the customer and will be due no later than 10 days from the date of the invoice. If payment is not received by the due date, a cut-off order will be issued during normal business hours to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.

Customers who intentional tamper with the meter a second time or steal water that is County property will have their service removed immediately and be reported to appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation. In order to reconnect to the County water system, they will be responsible for paying for new service at the current rate and pay all outstanding balances.

#### **F. SEPARATE WATER CONNECTIONS AND METERS REQUIRED:**

Each building shall have a separate meter, and where practicable, shall have a separate water lateral. In the event that one lateral is used for two (2) dwellings, commercial or

industrial buildings, or used to serve two or more meters for the same dwelling, commercial or industrial buildings, a separate cut-off shall be provided for each meter.

However, there shall be an exception to the requirement for separate water meters in the case of groups of mobile homes or apartment developments under single ownership. In the case of said groups of mobile homes or apartment developments of more than ten (10) units, one (1) meter may be used for the entire project unless additional meters are requested by the property owner or deemed necessary by the proper District authority, and the following conditions shall be met:

1. All bills will be rendered to the Owner of the property.
2. The bill will be calculated by a minimum charge for the master meter, which shall be based on the number of units served times the minimum charge per standard  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch meter. The remaining bill shall be based on the total consumption passing through the master meter times the unit commodity charge.
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4. Cost of service shall be included in the rent/lease of each unit, and no individual meters shall be allowed.
5. In the case of group mobile homes or apartment developments where ten (10) or fewer units are involved, and where ownership is in one party, the owner may elect to have a single meter used for the entire project. Where such election is made the owner shall comply with the conditions set forth as 1, 2, 3, and 4 above.

**G. PROFANE, INDECENT, AND THREATING CALL:**

It is against North Carolina General Statute 14-196 to use “*profane*, indecent or threatening language to any persons over the telephone; annoying or harassing by repeated telephoning or making false statement over the telephone.”

If a call of this nature is received, do the following:

1. At the first profane or indecent word, ask the caller to please refrain from that type of language. If the profane or indecent language continues, politely inform the caller that if that type of language does not cease that the call will be terminated.
2. Document the occurrence including the caller’s name, address and telephone number, if known. Report incident to your supervisor, including the above information.
3. If the calls continue, notify your supervisor.

**Commissioner Smith:** Mr. Leatherman, in the case of a cutoff order, will there be any notification given to the customer besides the regular bill.

**Gail Edwards:** We are actually trying to set something up with the County's Code Red to notify our customers and as long as we have the correct phone number that should not be a problem. However, this is not in place yet, it is something we are working on.

**Commissioner Byrd:** Will commercial bills be treated the same as residential bills?

**Mr. Leatherman:** Everyone will be treated the same.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to establish the public hearing and accept the first reading, seconded by Commissioner McDowell. The motion unanimously passed.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 7:44 P.M., Commissioner McDowell made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

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**AMANDA B. PRINCE, Deputy Clerk to Board**

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**RICKY BULLARD, Chairman**

**COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV, and V  
COMBINATION BOARD MEETING  
Monday, August 02, 2021  
7:32 P.M.**

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and time at the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex, 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina 28472, for the purpose of acting as the Columbus County Water and Sewer District IV Board.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Ricky Bullard, **Chairman**  
Jerome McMillian, **Vice Chairman**  
Chris Smith  
Giles E. Byrd  
Lavern Coleman  
Brent Watts  
Charles T. McDowell

**APPOINTEES PRESENT:**

Edwin H. Madden, Jr., **County Manager**  
Boyd Worley, **Board Attorney**  
Amanda B. Prince, **Staff Attorney/Deputy Clerk**  
Jay Leatherman, **Interim Finance Officer**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

At 7:32 P.M., Chairman Ricky Bullard called the **combination meeting** of Columbus county Water and Sewer District IV Board Meeting to order.

**Agenda Item #19: COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICT IV BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

A. July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer Districts IV Board Meeting.

Vice Chairman McMillian made a motion to approve the July 06, 2021 Columbus County Water and Sewer District IV Board Meeting Minutes, seconded by Commissioner Coleman. The motion unanimously passed.

**Agenda Item #20: ESTABLISHMENT of PUBLIC HEARING and 1<sup>ST</sup> READING for PUBLIC UTILITIES NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY for WATER DISTRICT IV:**

Jay Leatherman, Interim Finance Director, requested the Board to establish August 16, 2021, at 6:30 P.M., as the date and time for the Public Hearing and requested Board acceptance of the first reading.

**COLUMBUS COUNTY  
CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

## UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

### A. SERVICE APPLICATION

#### Residential Accounts

Columbus County requires a completed APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature and deposit to start water service. With the application, we will need a copy of your Driver's License or state issued ID, payment of \$50.00 for property owner and \$100.00 for renter's deposit, and copy of lease/purchase agreement or form entitled Property Owner/Landlord Transfer of Responsibility for Account Charges (attached). Also, please fill out the part on the application that indicates whether you are owner of the house or renter. You will need to speak with one of our customer service representatives to obtain the deposit amount required with your application. Our customer service representatives are available via telephone from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 910-642-5257.

Same day service for existing customers can be done as long you stop by our office prior to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Otherwise, the service may be provided the following business day.

If the owner / resident has a meter (County owned equipment) located inside a locked fence/gate the owner/resident must provide a key to our Public Utilities Department for entry. The owner/resident is required to ensure the work area around the meter/water line is safe for workers to perform their duties and shall not block or impede access to the meter/water line. If the meter/water line is inaccessible to workers in the Public Utilities Department, services may be discontinued.

#### **The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

The deposit will be applied to the final bill when the account is closed. Customers who have multiple accounts (apartment complexes, etc.) are required to maintain a deposit equal to the deposit outlined in the adopted budget. Customers who have multiple accounts and are renting the property are required to pay an additional security deposit.

If the customer disconnects one account to relocate to another account within the County, the security deposit will be transferred to the new account when all previous balances at the former account are paid in full. Otherwise, the customer will be required to pay an additional security deposit on the new account. If the customer relocates without notification to the Public Utilities staff, leaving a balance on their account, then the balance on the previous account can / will be transferred to the current account and will be required to pay in full at the time of the new account being established.

The customer shall receive a final bill reflecting the total amount owed to Columbus County for said account.

Upon notification of the death of the customer/account holder, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a family member (next of

kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Residential Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

#### **Commercial/ Industrial / Institutional Accounts**

Columbus County requires a completed COMMERCIAL APPLICATION FOR SERVICE (attached), signature, security deposit and a copy of the rental agreement (if applicable) to start water service. Prior to the Public Utilities Department opening a commercial/industrial/institutional account, the owner/representative will need to review the proposed business operations with the Planning/Zoning department of the Town. Approval must be granted by the Planning/Zoning department prior to Finance staff opening the account.

**The security deposit is non-transferable and shall be non-interest bearing.**

Upon notification of the death of the owner/representative, services will be disconnected within ten (10) days of the date of said notice. If a corporate member (next of kin) or the Personal Representative of the customer/account holder's estate provides a death certificate along with one of the following: Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, Affidavit of Collection, or (if no estate has been opened), a letter from the family member stating that the letter-writer is an heir of the estate and is authorized to transfer water service into his/her name, then the account can be reopened in his/her name by following all requirements of the "Commercial Application for Service" policy mentioned above. Deceased customer's security deposit or credit balance is refunded to their estate through the Clerk of Court.

## **B. ACCOUNT BILLING**

Columbus County shall ensure that all customer meters are read in a manner which provides the County with the most efficient use for personnel. Each customer shall be billed for water usage during a specified billing period, along with all other applicable fees and charges.

### **1. UTILITY PAYMENT SCHEDULE REVISED**

In order to serve customers better and to have a clearer payment schedule, Columbus County is updating its Utility Payment Schedule/Policy. The changes are as follows:

- The billing date for Columbus County's utility bill will be mailed by the 5th of each month following the billing month(s).

- Bills will now be due upon receipt. If payment is not received by the beginning of business (8:30 a.m.) on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a \$35.00 late fee penalty will be applied to the affected account on the 6<sup>th</sup> (at the beginning of the business day 8:30 a.m.) of the month.
- If payment for the month that had a late fee applied is not received along with the late fee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the following month, a cut-off order shall be issued on the 21<sup>st</sup> (at the start of business 8:30 a.m.) to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.
- Once a customer's account is placed on the cut-off list, the past due amount including the late fee and the current balance must be paid in full before service is restored.

Columbus County is making these changes to better serve its customers and to make the late fee/utility cut-off policies and procedures more clear. This policy goes into effect with the bills that will be mailed out in September. If anyone has any questions about this matter, please call the Finance Office at 910-642-5257.

## **2. WATER CONNECTIONS:**

Connections to the County water system may be authorized by the Public Utilities Department with payment of proper fees (deposits, late fees, reconnect fees etc.,) and the connection will be handled the next business day.

Water connections should be at the Public Utilities office by 4:00 p.m. to get connections handled the same day.

New water connections requiring a tap will be handled after completion of an APPLICATION FOR SERVICE and payment of all fees and deposits. Service is usually provided within 10 business days, weather permitting, after the customer request.

If water connections for a customer crosses other property lines, it is the responsibility of the customer to secure all easements and other legal documents at their expense to permit the connection to occur.

If more than one heir is identified for a property that is requesting a water connection, all identified heirs are required to provide signed permission to allow one of the heirs to request connection to the water system.

If a customer connected to the water system requests to be disconnected the following will apply. The customer will not be disconnected until they have been connected for at least five (5) years. If after five (5) years they request disconnection, they will need to prepay a \$250 fee prior to Public Utilities performing the disconnection.

### 3. FEES, PENALTIES, CHARGES:

All fees, penalties, and charges shall be listed as part of the rate schedule and shall be set from time to time by the Columbus County Board of Commissioners as deemed necessary.

### 4. EXTENSIONS:

An extension of payment due date may be given to those customers determined to be in “*good fiscal standing*” with the Public Utilities Department. A customer in “*good fiscal standing*” shall be defined as any customer with no prior extensions, no returned check(s), and no service terminations for non-payment during the previous twelve (12) consecutive month period or since becoming a customer with Columbus County, whichever is less. The amount extended shall be paid in full on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the following month or by an agreement by a member of the Finance staff.

### 5. AUTHORIZATION OF EXTENSION:

The Finance Officer or their designee, shall have the authority to authorize customer extensions.

## C. ACCOUNT BALANCE:

In the event a customer disconnects his or her service or the Public Utilities Department disconnects the service, for any reason, the account balance due for water usage, late penalties, and all other applicable fees are the sole responsibility of that customer. The Finance Department, on a quarterly basis, shall review all outstanding debt owed to the County for water services provided. Each month, the Finance Department shall make the following attempts to collect outstanding debt:

1. The Finance Department shall send to the customer a monthly bill. Customer is to make payment in full by the 5<sup>TH</sup> of each month. If no response; then,
2. The Department shall transfer the security deposit to the customer’s account, if any outstanding balance still remains; then,
3. The Department shall send notification to Debt Set-Off; a program with the North Carolina Treasurer’s Department, for payment to collect from IRS for any tax refunds or lottery winnings that customer may receive which will go toward the utility bill.
4. The Department shall notify other utility operation systems throughout the State of North Carolina of this customer’s indebtedness to the County.



5. All customers that have been disconnected with outstanding account balances shall **NOT** be reconnected until all indebtedness is paid in full to the County.
6. The first time a customer incurs a late fee, the late fee may be forgiven if the customer signs up for all future utility bills to be paid by direct bank draft from their bank account.

#### **RELEASES OF UNCOLLECTED UTILITY BILLS:**

All utility bills are to be presented to Columbus County Board of Commissioners for release consideration after they are three (3) months old and all possible collection methods have been exhausted. If the customer attempts to reinstate a utility account after the outstanding bill is released, the outstanding amount must be paid in full prior to any new services being activated.

#### **D. LEAK ADJUSTMENTS:**

##### **1. DEFINITIONS**

**The Customer side** shall be defined as that side of the meter (house side) where the customer connects to the meter provided by the County and beyond.

**The County's side** shall be defined as that side of the meter, including the meter, where the County service line (highway side) connects to the meter and back to the main.

A water bill adjustment can be provided when the following criteria are met:

- a. Exposed piping leak will not be considered for a leak adjustment.
- b. No adjustments will be made unless the gallons billed are at least twice the highest monthly billing in the previous twelve (12) months.
- c. The problem has been corrected.
- d. Evidence of repairs such as plumbing bills and/or a statement from a plumber that the leak repairs have been completed.
- e. Only one adjustment shall be made in a twelve (12) month period. If the leak is reflected on two consecutive water bills, adjustments will be made on both bills.

##### **2. LEAKS ON CUSTOMER'S SIDE OF METER:**

In the event that a leak occurred on the customer's side of the meter, customer is to make the repair(s) within (15) fifteen days of the leak and the customer shall obtain a Plumber's Statement (obtained from the Finance Department), signed and notarized by a licensed plumber that the leak repairs have been made. The customer's account will be adjusted to the average monthly minimum usage of the past six months. Any leak repair(s) that are not completed within the (15) fifteen day period will forfeit the leak

adjustment. All leak adjustments must be approved and signed by the Finance Director or his designee.

### **3. REPAYMENT:**

Repayment of this extraordinary balance can be paid in full or the amount due may be paid in installments, so long as it is approved by the Finance Director or his designee.

The period of time allowed for the repayment of this extraordinary balance shall not exceed three (3) consecutive billing periods.

### **E. DAMAGED LIABILITY:**

The County shall not be liable for damage of any kind resulting from water or the use of water on the customer's property, unless damage results directly from negligence on behalf of the County. The County shall not be responsible for damages done by or resulting from any defect in the piping, fixtures, and /or appliances on the customer's property.

The County shall not be responsible for negligence of third parties or forces beyond the control of the County resulting in any interruption of service. Otherwise, under normal conditions, all potentially affected customers shall be notified in advance of any interruption of service.

Customers who tamper or damage County meters (including all components thereof) and etc., will be reported to appropriate law enforcement and will be charged the appropriate fees as approved by the County Commissioners which will include the actual cost involved to repair/replace the property (see fee schedule). All applicable charges will be invoiced to the customer and will be due no later than 10 days from the date of the invoice. If payment is not received by the due date, a cut-off order will be issued during normal business hours to the Public Utilities Department for the termination of service.

Customers who intentional tamper with the meter a second time or steal water that is County property will have their service removed immediately and be reported to appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation. In order to reconnect to the County water system, they will be responsible for paying for new service at the current rate and pay all outstanding balances.

### **F. SEPARATE WATER CONNECTIONS AND METERS REQUIRED:**

Each building shall have a separate meter, and where practicable, shall have a separate water lateral. In the event that one lateral is used for two (2) dwellings, commercial or industrial buildings, or used to serve two or more meters for the same dwelling, commercial or industrial buildings, a separate cut-off shall be provided for each meter.

However, there shall be an exception to the requirement for separate water meters in the case of groups of mobile homes or apartment developments under single ownership. In the case of said groups of mobile homes or apartment developments of more than ten (10) units, one (1) meter may be used for the entire project unless additional meters are

requested by the property owner or deemed necessary by the proper District authority, and the following conditions shall be met:

1. All bills will be rendered to the Owner of the property.
2. The bill will be calculated by a minimum charge for the master meter, which shall be based on the number of units served times the minimum charge per standard  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch meter. The remaining bill shall be based on the total consumption passing through the master meter times the unit commodity charge.
3. Should any portion of the development be sold, the owners shall be responsible for paying whatever additional costs would be involved in bringing the divided development into compliance.
4. Cost of service shall be included in the rent/lease of each unit, and no individual meters shall be allowed.
5. In the case of group mobile homes or apartment developments where ten (10) or fewer units are involved, and where ownership is in one party, the owner may elect to have a single meter used for the entire project. Where such election is made the owner shall comply with the conditions set forth as 1, 2, 3, and 4 above.

**G. PROFANE, INDECENT, AND THREATING CALL:**

It is against North Carolina General Statute 14-196 to use “*profane*, indecent or threatening language to any persons over the telephone; annoying or harassing by repeated telephoning or making false statement over the telephone.”

If a call of this nature is received, do the following:

1. At the first profane or indecent word, ask the caller to please refrain from that type of language. If the profane or indecent language continues, politely inform the caller that if that type of language does not cease that the call will be terminated.
2. Document the occurrence including the caller’s name, address and telephone number, if known. Report incident to your supervisor, including the above information.
3. If the calls continue, notify your supervisor.

**Commissioner Smith:** Mr. Leatherman, in the case of a cutoff order, will there be any notification given to the customer besides the regular bill.

**Gail Edwards:** We are actually trying to set something up with the County’s Code Red to notify our customers and as long as we have the correct phone number that should not be a problem. However, this is not in place yet, it is something we are working on.

**Commissioner Byrd:** Will commercial bills be treated the same as residential bills?

**Mr. Leatherman:** Everyone will be treated the same.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 7:44 P.M., Commissioner McDowell made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chairman McMillian. The motion unanimously passed.

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**AMANDA B. PRINCE, Deputy Clerk to Board**

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**RICKY BULLARD, Chairman**

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