

CITY OF BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

ORDINANCE NO. 6772

AN ORDINANCE amending chapter 24.10 of the Bellevue City Code to establish an assistance program to help low-income customers with delinquent accounts; to authorize the Utilities Department to receive donations to help fund said program and other similar programs; to provide for severability; and to establish an effective date.

WHEREAS, state law encourages public utilities to extend financial assistance to their low-income customers, helping to ensure equitable access to essential services;

WHEREAS, state law authorizes local governments to accept donations for any lawful purpose, including financial assistance to low-income utility customers and, thereby, fostering a culture of community support and shared responsibility;

WHEREAS, the City Council has recognized the inadequacy of existing assistance programs available through the utilities department, which leaves a gap in the support available to low-income customers who require temporary aid, but do not meet the eligibility criteria for existing programs;

WHEREAS, the City Council finds providing additional temporary assistance to low-income customers with delinquent accounts is in the public interest, as it promotes social equity, economic stability, and the continued reliability of the water, sewer, and storm services provided by the City; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds expanding the authority of the utilities department to accept donations ensures the continued viability of its assistance programs and their capacity to serve those most in need in our community; now, therefore,

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON, DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. A new Section 24.10.065, to be titled "Assistance with delinquent accounts – Neighbors helping neighbors program", is added to chapter 24.10 of the Bellevue City Code as follows:

- A. The utilities department may assist low-income customers with the payment of delinquent accounts consistent with this section.
- B. To be eligible to receive assistance under this section, the customer shall:
 1. Be a direct billing customer;

2. Reside at the address receiving utility services;
 3. Have a total household income at or below 50 percent of the area median income, consistent with BCC 24.10.030;
 4. Have a delinquent account; and
 5. Have submitted a completed application with proof of income and identification.
- C. The maximum amount of assistance available under this section shall be limited to an amount equal to two months of basic utility service charges. The term "basic utility service charges" means the minimum charges inclusive of service charges and average winter volume charges as defined in BCC 24.10.020 (C), (D), and (E). An eligible customer may only receive assistance under this section once per year.
- D. The assistance authorized under this section shall not be available to customers already enrolled in relief programs authorized under BCC 24.10.020.

Section 2. BCC 24.10.070 shall be retitled "Donations" and is hereby amended to read as follows:

The City is authorized to accept donations to provide utility assistance consistent with this chapter. Such donations shall be used solely to fund the utility assistance programs authorized by this chapter.

Section 3. BCC 24.10.080 is hereby amended to read as follows.

The several assistance programs provided through this chapter are contingent on the availability of sufficient funds to administer this chapter. The utilities department may suspend any assistance program authorized by this chapter in any given program year if sufficient funds are not available. Any assistance provided under this chapter shall be made on a first come, first served basis.

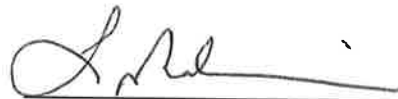
Section 4. Should any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance be held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the application or the provision to other person or circumstance shall not be affected.

Section 5. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force five (5) days after its passage and legal publication.

Passed by the City Council this 22nd day of JANUARY, 2024 and signed in authentication of its passage this 22nd day of JANUARY, 2024.


(SEAL)



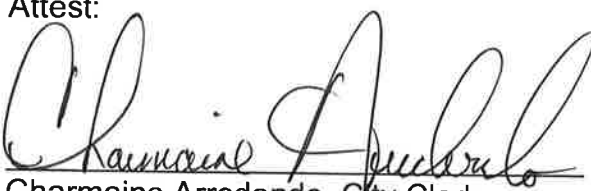


Lynne Robinson, Mayor

Approved as to form:
Kathryn L. Gerla, City Attorney



Brian Wendt, Assistant City Attorney

Attest:


Charmaine Arredondo, City Clerk

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