



THE CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND - AMERICA'S FIRST RESORT
DEPARTMENT OF UTILITIES

October 21, 2021

Julia A. Forgue, PE
Director

Ms. Luly Massaro, Clerk
Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers
89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, RI 02888

RE: The City of Newport, Utilities Department, Water Division - Docket 5022
In Re: Suspension Of Service Terminations And
Certain Collection Activities During The COVID-19 Emergency

Dear Ms. Massaro,

Please accept this letter from the City of Newport, Utilities Department, Water Division ("Newport Water") as its response to the September 29, 2021 Notice to Solicit Comments in Docket 5022 ("Notice") issued by the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission ("Commission"). As set forth in the Notice, on March 16, 2020, the Commission voted to enter an emergency order related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The order included various restrictions on several regulated utilities in the State of Rhode Island, many of which were subsequently lifted. However, in its July 15, 2020 Order, the Commission extended the prohibition on the assessment of late fees, interest charges, credit card fees, debit card fees, and ACH fees. The Notice indicates that the Commission will consider whether to lift these prohibitions at a future open meeting and will accept written comments from the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers and other interested parties as to whether the prohibitions should be lifted, the amount of notice to be given to customers prior to the lifting of the prohibition, and the rationale for the position.

Newport Water's position is that the prohibitions should be lifted as the inability to charge interest fees has had an adverse effect on our collections of overdue balances. In addition, Newport Water would like to reinstitute credit card fees, reverting the responsibility back to the customer. In Fiscal Year 2021, Newport Water incurred \$60,444.80 in charges, which is unbudgeted and not provided for in our cost of service. Newport Water does not assess fees on ACH/electronic check transactions.

As for notice to customers, Newport Water would like to reinstate interest and credit card fees thirty days after the Commission lifts the prohibition. We would provide notice to our customers through an insert with the monthly bill alerting customers to the reinstatement of the interest and credit card fees.

If you should have any questions/concerns please feel free to call my office at (401) 845-5600.

Respectfully,

Robert C. Schultz, Jr.
Acting Director of Utilities