



Kalama City Council - Council Agenda Item Information Form

Meeting Date: March 2, 2016

Agenda Item Number - 7A New Business

Prepared by: Coni McMaster, Clerk/Treasurer

Subject: Water Leak Adjustment Consideration Request – Glenda Eldred

Summary: The City has established a leak adjustment policy by Code (see attachment below) which allows for the City to absorb 50% of the leak once a leak has been repaired.

Billing Information: The account for Glenda Eldred of 7724 Old Pacific Highway showed consumption of 93,637 cubic feet on the bill that was issued at the end of December resulting in a bill for \$3575.94. A leak adjustment request was received and processed and the bill was reduced by (-\$1,687.72) leaving a balance of \$1888.22.

Ms. Eldred has submitted the attached letter, requesting that the City provide additional relief for the leak that occurred at her residence in December due to issues related to the flooding event. She states that due to the weather she was not able to detect the leak as the ground was saturated and since the City did not read the meters on time due to the flood, the leak went undetected longer. Once she was notified on “December 30, 2015” the leak was immediately fixed.

The City had the meter data logged for usage from the end of November through December. The data log shows that the usage increased to a continual high level beginning on November 26, 2015. This high usage continues until December 18, 2015. At that time the usage decreases to show regular levels of usage on and off depending on the time of day etc. There was a lot of rain as well as cold weather during this period. Chad Moon on the crew does remember Ms. Eldred’s son requesting the water be turned off by the City, but we are unclear of the exact date. The data log does not match Ms. Eldred’s assertion that she was unaware of the leak until December 30th as it appears to have been fixed on or around the 18th. While the City does notify customers of high readings when they are found during the meter reading process, it is not the City’s responsibility to detect the leaks. If we had read the meters at the normal time in December (around the 20th) the leak would still have been the same based upon the data log.

Recommendation : Based upon the information from the data log and the City’s policy the administrative staff could not find any reason to provide more than the regular leak adjustment as per code. Any additional adjustment would set a precedent that the City will have to be willing to apply to any events that happen under the same or very similar conditions. It is City policy to allow a customer with a very large bill due to a leak to make payments on that balance and we will work Ms. Eldred to do this.

Alternatives: The Council may decide to allow additional relief to Ms. Eldred and will need to decide what that amount might be. Possible Options:

An additional percentage of decrease: 10% - 25% - 50% - ?
All of the leak amount.

► **Draft/Suggested Motion**

No motion is necessary if the Council chooses to not grant any additional consideration.

I move the City Council authorize an additional reduction for the leak consumption in the amount of _____ for the December bill at 7724 Old Pacific Highway S due to the severe weather conditions and other circumstances beyond the control of the occupants.

KALAMA MUNICIPAL CODE

Chapter 12.14 - WATER RATES--LEAK ADJUSTMENT POLICY

Section 12.14.010 - Leak adjustment policy.

12.14.010 - Leak adjustment policy.

The city council of the city of Kalama, Washington, deems it appropriate that customers not absorb the entire cost of an increased water bill when there is a leak in the customers private plumbing system after the water meter. Therefore, the city council adopts a leak adjustment policy as follows:

A. If a customer brings a probable leak to the attention of the Kalama Public Works Department within ten days of discovering the leak, within ten days of notification by a city employee, or within twenty days of receiving a bill which they seek to challenge, and if within ten days of discovery the leak is fixed and such fix is confirmed by the director of public works or designate, the customer shall be entitled to an adjustment on the challenged water bill from the clerk-treasurer calculated as follows:

1. Adjustment to Water Charge.

a. The amount charged for water on the customer=s previous six representative water bills, comprising an approximate one-year period, shall be averaged to determine the average water charge. If there does not exist six previous billings to determine the average water charge, the average water charge shall be calculated based on the following usage:

Household with 1-2 persons	500 cf/billing
Household with 3 - 5 persons	1000 cf/billing
For each additional person	Add 150 cf/billing

b. To calculate the average for the customers with seasonal usage (those accounts that have months of little or no usage or have significantly higher bills during a portion of the year) an average will be taken from the previous six years of bills covering the same billing period as that in which the leak occurred. In the case of empty rental units, an active period of six representative consecutive bills will be used to compute the average.

c. In the case of a verifiable empty residence/ business/ building that would have otherwise had no usage except for the leak, the amount of the leak will be divided between the City and the property owner.

d. The difference between the water charge on the challenged bill and the average water charge shall be determined by subtracting the average water charge from the water charge on the challenged bill.

e. The customer shall be responsible for the average water charge plus one half of the difference between the water charge on the challenged bill and the average water charge.

2. Adjustment to Sewer Charge.

a. The amount charged for sewer on the customer=s previous six representative bills, comprising an approximate one-year period, shall be averaged to determine the average sewer charge. If there does not exist six previous billings to determine the average sewer charge, the average sewer charge shall be calculated based on the following usage:

Household with 1-2 persons	500 cf/billing per month
Household with 3-5 persons	1000 cf/billing per month
For each additional person	Add 150 cf/billing

b. To calculate the average for the customers with seasonal usage (those accounts that have months of little or no usage or have significantly higher bills during a portion of the year) an average will be taken from the previous six years of bills covering the same billing period as that in which the leak occurred. In the case of empty rental units, an active period of six representative consecutive bills will be used to compute the average.

c. The difference between the sewer charge on the challenged bill and the average sewer charge shall be determined by subtracting the average sewer charge from the sewer charge on the challenged bill.

d. The customer shall be responsible for only the average sewer charge.

B. The customer may apply for a leak adjustment on only one bill in a twelve-month period for the same leak unless the customer provides satisfactory evidence of an attempt to fix the leak or the leak spanned two billing periods, e.g., the meter was read between the time the leak started and when it was fixed.

C. In order to avoid a late penalty while a leak adjustment is pending, the customer must make a payment by the twentieth of the month following billing. The amount of the payment must equal the amount of the last previous unchallenged bill.

D. The water and sewer charges will not be adjusted for:

1. Fixtures, faucets and hose bibs left running;
2. Toilets left running;
3. Leaks not repaired within ten calendar days of notification;
4. Pipes which are in poor condition evidenced by persistent breaks and leaks.
5. Sprinkler system and water feature (fountains, ponds, etc) leaks - adjustment for sewer only

E. The Public Works Department is authorized to shut off customer=s water when the resident cannot be notified of a large leak which could damage his property or the city of Kalama Public Works Department facilities or jeopardize water service to other customers. No charge will be made for this unrequested service.

F. Nonprofit organizations may appeal to the city council for adjustments of more than fifty percent of excess water usage, provided:

1. All conditions of subsection (A) of this section are met; and
2. Extenuating circumstances resulted in the loss.

G. Customers may request consideration for additional adjustment or for exempt leaks to the City administration under extreme extenuating circumstances (i.e death, serious illness, hospitalization, vandalism).

H. If the customer fails to repair the leak within ten days of discovery, ten days of notification by a city employee or twenty days after receipt of the challenged water bill, any adjustment must be approved by the City Council. Any adjustment so approved must comply with the formula adopted by this chapter. (Ord. 1185, 2006)