

Water Billing (The Straight Story)

Water Billing is pretty straight forward. There's really no mystery involved, just some details that make it appear complicated. OK, so how does water billing work in practice?

Water bills are assessed according to the units used on your household or business water meter and sent out based on a quarterly billing cycle in the form of a Water/Sewer Bill (yes, I know it says water bill). It's a combined bill because there are two general parts to it, a water component managed by the Village Water Commissioner and a sewer component managed by the Village Sewer Commissioner. The common part is that water use generally is the multiplier applied to the sewer rate.

Water bill payments are collected in arrears. That means you use water from the system for three months then the Village asks for payment for the amount used in month four. The billing cycle follows a calendar year. Note the rate may increase or decrease on April 1st based on any rate changes approved by Council in a rate resolution. This is generally done at the second meeting in March.

Billing Cycle and Dates

Billing Cycle	Bill Date	Due Date	Quarter
1 Jan – 31 March	20 April	20 May	1
1 April – 30 June	20 July	20 August	2
1 July – 30 Sept.	20 October	20 November	3
1 Oct. – 31 Dec.	20 January	20 February	4

Payments are subject to various fees if submitted to the Village Office late, per the rate resolution.

The Village will take payment by walk in with cash or check, by a check in an envelope put in the drop off box right outside the Village Office main door, or by check through the mail. Please note that mail delivery no longer seems fully reliable. We do not waive a late fee if the Post Office delivers a payment late. It's best to plan accordingly to avoid a late fee.

It's Village policy to work with anyone who needs more time to repay a Water/Sewer bill by setting up a payment plan as long as it's done in good faith. A lack of good faith when under an agreement will cause that agreement to be cancelled and payment to be immediately due. We can also take estimated payments in advance if you are planning a trip or are otherwise out of town for an extended period.

So, how is my water bill determined? Water bills are very simply based on the amount of water used from one quarter to the next, and determined by the water meter reading. Meters are generally placed at the water line entry into the house and record all the water that passes through. They are actually flow meters, recording the amount of water that flows through the pipes from one actual or estimated reading to another.

The Village Department of Public Works (DPW) is physically required to read each meter at least once a year. However, most of the bill readings are estimated by the customer by self-reading the meter and putting the reading on the user response card the DPW periodically leaves on your door. No response to the card results in a usage number estimated by the Village based on your meters previous past averages.

A complaint we commonly get when a bill is high is that the meter is wrong or inaccurate. The reality is meters are precision instruments

designed to provide years of accurate readings with a very little error rate allowed from the factory. Can a meter go bad? The short answer is yes; however, the meter slows down or stops. They are mechanically incapable of speeding up. While a slower meter temporarily reduces the quarterly bills, once the meter is read by a Village DPW employee, the account will be brought up to date.

Manual readings after several quarters of estimated bills by themselves may be the cause of a high bill. So, in short, we only know how much water you used (based on the meter reading), we don't know what it was used for and we have no way to tell. The burden of proof that a reading is wrong belongs to the residence or business owner. They, far better than the Village, has knowledge of how and what the water was used for or can check for leaks . . . which can occur more often than we like to believe.

When asked, we can perform a DPW accuracy check or send it to the factory for an independent check if you doubt the meter reading, but the cost is borne by the homeowner/businessowner. Finally, the Village has a process to investigate unexpectedly high or low usage when it's detected. Those meters will automatically receive a manual meter reading.

The bottom line is water (and sewer) bills are pretty straight forward. You use the service, then we ask you to pay for what you used. A whole process exists to investigate abnormally high or low readings, and the Village will work (to a point) with a customer that works on good faith to pay a high or overdue water bill. . . . and NO, meters don't run fast!

For Further Information, Contact: Ross Boelke, Water Commissioner, 586-784-9151