

## **BILL APPEAL PROCESS – WATER RULE 17 AND ELECTRIC RULE 21**

**Customer Service Division**

Customer Relations/Finance Committee  
November 15, 2021

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### **BACKGROUND**

1. The RPU Bill Dispute Appeal Rules are adopted by the Board of Public Utilities and approved by City Council.
2. The approved processes for disputing Water bills is included in Water Rule 17, for Electric bills is included in Electric Rule 21.
3. Both were adopted by Board of Public Utilities on October 16, 2009 and approved by City Council on May 4, 2010.



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## DISCUSSION

1. The Public Utilities Customer Service Department is the first point of contact for any customer bill dispute.
2. Attempts to resolve customer disputes include having a meter re-read and having a meter tested for functionality.
3. If a customer continues to dispute the bill, they are referred to the Disputed Bill Appeal Process and a series of investigative reviews take place, and a decision is communicated to the customer.



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## GENERAL CLEAN UP RECOMMENDATIONS


1. Update the Customer Service billing address from 3460 Orange Street to 3901 Orange Street;
2. Allow the use of electronic mail for Customer initiated processes;
3. Replace all references to Public Utilities Director to Public Utilities General Manager;
4. Replace all references to the Assistant General Manager, Finance of Public Utilities to the Public Utilities Assistant General Manager for Customer Service and Business Systems; and
5. Update the Assistant General Manager and General Manager's address from 3901 Orange Street to 3750 University Avenue,




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## RULE DISCUSSION




- Customers contact C.S. within 5 days to initiate a complaint or request and investigation. Service is not discontinued for non-payment during the dispute process
- Recommendation: change to 10 Days




- If C.S. confirms the billing, the customer has 10 days from the billing explanation to contact the CS Manager or CS Supervisor by phone or by sending a written statement
- Recommendation: allow for email




- The bill is investigated and may involve other staff.
- The investigation includes consideration of whether a Customer may amortize the unpaid balance to not exceed 12 months
- Recommendation: Merge stage B and C into a single step

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## RULE DISCUSSION CONT.




- Customers that disagree with the finding from the Customer Service Supervisor/Manager may appeal within 10 days to the Assistant General Manager.
- The results will be communicated to the Customer in writing
- Recommendation: Include the commitment for a 10 Day response



- Customers that disagree with the finding from the Assistant General Manager may appeal within 5 days to the General Manager. The results will be communicated to the Customer in writing
- Recommendation: Increase the days to appeal to 10 days and include the commitment for a 10 Day response.



- Final bill appeal

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## RULE DISCUSSION - FINAL BILL APPEAL

Current

- If the Customer is not satisfied with the findings of the GM, the Customer may appeal to the Board of Public Utilities. The appeal must be submitted in writing within ten days. In the absence of a timely filed appeal, the Director's determination shall be final. Upon receipt of a timely appeal, the matter will be reviewed by the Board of Public Utilities within 45 days of receipt. A written decision of the Board of Public Utilities shall be delivered to the Customer by personal delivery or certified mail within fifteen days following the appeal hearing.
- The decision of the Board of Public Utilities is subject to appeal to the City Council pursuant to Section 10010 of the Public Utilities Code.

Recommended

- The Board process to include that the matter will be reviewed by the Board at a public meeting within 45 days of receipt and that the Customer will receive notification of the appeal date, time, and location.
- Correct the final decision language to "The City Council has designated the Board of Public Utilities as the appropriate governing body to decide on the appeal pursuant to Section 10010 of the Public Utilities Code. The determination of the Board of Public Utilities will be the final decision."



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## STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

1. The Bill Dispute processes contribute to Strategic Priority No. 5 High Performing Government and addresses Goal 5.3. to Enhance communication and collaboration with community members to improve transparency, build public trust, and encourage shared decision-making.
2. The Bill Dispute process aligns with all five Cross-Cutting Threads.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Customer Relations/Finance Committee:

1. Receive an introduction on the Bill Dispute processes in Water Rule 17 and Electric Rule 21; and
2. Provide feedback to staff regarding the recommended changes and direction on other changes to be provided to the Board of Public Utilities at a public hearing.

