



City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE JANUARY 27, 2026

FROM: PUBLIC UTILITIES WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: INCREASE SHARING HOUSEHOLDS ASSIST RIVERSIDE'S ENERGY (SHARE) PROGRAM DEPOSIT/URGENT NOTICE ASSISTANCE FROM \$150 TO \$250 EFFECTIVE FROM THE END OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA'S COVID-19 EMERGENCY ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023; AND CONTINUE TO INCREASE MONTHLY SHARE ASSISTANCE IN ALIGNMENT WITH PLANNED WATER AND ELECTRIC RATE INCREASES THROUGH 2028

ISSUE:

Consider approving increases to the Sharing Households Assist Riverside's Energy (SHARE) Program deposit/urgent notice assistance effective from the end of the State of California's COVID-19 emergency on February 28, 2023; and continue the increases to the monthly SHARE assistance in alignment with planned water and electric rate increases through 2028.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Approve increasing to the SHARE deposit/urgent notice assistance from \$150 to \$250, effective from the end of the State of California's COVID-19 Emergency on February 28, 2023; and
2. Approve continuing the SHARE monthly assistance increases in alignment with planned water and electric rate increases through 2028.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION:

On January 12, 2026, the Board of Public Utilities voted unanimously, with two members absent to approve increasing the SHARE deposit/urgent notice assistance from \$150 to \$250, effective from the end of the State of California's COVID Emergency on February 28, 2023, and continuing the SHARE monthly assistance increases in alignment with planned water and electric rate increases through 2028. The Board members noted that since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SHARE program benefits have helped to reduce the amount delinquent in RPU's Accounts Receivable (Attachment 1) by helping those customers who may be struggling to pay their utility and other bills.

BACKGROUND:

The Sharing Households Assist Riverside's Energy (SHARE) is a low-income assistance program that has been in place since 1989. Originally the program was funded by customer donations, and today the program is funded through a combination of customer donations and Public Benefits funds. SHARE comprises two elements, a monthly credit on electric and water bills and a \$250 deposit/urgent notice element, which is applied to assist qualified customers who cannot meet the utility account deposit requirement, or those who have received a 48-hour notice of disconnection. Both elements of SHARE have been brought to City Council for approval at different times. Approval to increase the deposit/urgent notice assistance was approved by City Council on March 23, 2021, as part of COVID-19 support; the monthly bill credit assistance was approved by City Council as part of utility rate increases that were approved on September 19, 2023. This report seeks to confirm SHARE assistance amounts, so the deposit/urgent notice assistance remains at \$250, and monthly assistance increases in alignment with annual future utility rate increases through 2028.

SHARE Assistance	City Council Approval Date	Program Details
Deposit/Urgent Notice Assistance	March 23, 2021	Deposit assistance was increased from \$150 to \$250 as part of COVID-19 support, it was anticipated to revert to \$150 when the State Emergency ended.
Monthly Assistance	September 19, 2023	Monthly electric and water bill credit assistance was approved through 2024 but was intended to align with future rate increases through 2028.

SHARE Deposit/Urgent Notice Assistance

During the COVID-19 pandemic, to alleviate the economic hardship experienced by Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) low-income customers, City Council approved an increase in the SHARE emergency/deposit credit from \$150 to \$250, which was originally established for the duration of the state emergency. Many low-income customers were required to work during the COVID-19 shut down, which meant that they did not qualify for the Emergency Recovery Assistance Program (ERAP) assistance. ERAP was available for residential customers who had lost their job, were furloughed or experienced a reduction of income due to the pandemic.

The increase to the SHARE deposit/urgent assistance was linked to the pandemic and was expected to revert to \$150 upon management approval post-COVID, however, due to staff changes, the change back to \$150 was inadvertently not administered, and the assistance has remained at \$250 since it increased during the pandemic.

SHARE Monthly Assistance

SHARE monthly assistance has been provided as a part of the program since 2018, when qualified customers would receive monthly credits of \$14 electric and \$2.25 water on their utility bill. Since 2018, there have been regular increases to SHARE monthly credits, these have typically aligned with planned rate increases. The table below outlines electric and water increases through 2022.

City Council Approval Date	Monthly Electric Credit	Monthly Water Credit
July 2, 2019	\$14.50	\$2.50
July 21, 2020	\$15.00	\$2.75
August 3, 2021	\$15.50	\$3.00
May 17, 2022	\$16.00	\$3.25

On August 28, 2023, the Board of Public Utilities recommended that the City Council approve the SHARE program increases as described in the staff report which included annual increases to SHARE in alignment with annual rate increases for both water and electric. On September 19, 2023, the City Council approved water and electric rate increases through 2028, but the recommendation was re-worded for the City Council approval and inadvertently limited the increases to only provide for SHARE water and electric monthly assistance increases through 2024.

DISCUSSION:

The SHARE program continues to see steady participation rates and with recent economic fluctuations, the demand for SHARE assistance remains consistent. Income qualification for the SHARE program remains as it has since 2022 at 250% of Federal Poverty Guidelines. The following table outlines income thresholds:

Number in Household	Total Annual Income Does Not Exceed	Total Monthly Income Does Not Exceed
1	\$39,125	\$3,260
2	\$52,875	\$4,406
3	\$66,625	\$5,552
4	\$80,375	\$6,697
5	\$94,125	\$7,843
6	\$107,875	\$8,989
7	\$121,625	\$10,135
8	\$135,375	\$11,281

For each additional person add:

Total annual income: \$13,750

Total monthly income: \$1,145

The table below highlights the number of customers who have accessed the SHARE Deposit/Urgent Assistance since 2020/21:

Year	Customers Receiving Deposit/Urgent Assistance
2020/21	1918
2021/22	2467
2022/23	5397
2023/24	4672
2024/25	4538
2025/26 (as at 10/2025)	1653

When a customer receives an urgent notice (which means they have a 48-hour notice of

disconnection), bills typically average about \$300 in past due amounts and so the current \$250 urgent notice assistance can address a large proportion of arrears. Reverting to the previous \$150 assistance level would mean that after receiving SHARE urgent assistance, most customers would still be behind on their bill and remain at risk of disconnection or in arrears. Since the end of the emergency was declared on February 28, 2023, RPU provided 12,315 qualified customers with \$250 deposit/urgent assistance, which totals an additional \$1,231,500 in assistance that has been dispersed to customers. Staff requests that the expenditure for already dispersed funds be approved and that the emergency deposit/urgent assistance remain at the \$250 level.

On September 19, 2023, City Council approved water and electric rate increases through 2028. The report included proposed future monthly SHARE increases which were intended to align with the rate increases. However, the recommendations on the City Council report neglected to include all SHARE monthly assistance increases and inadvertently requested increases only through 2024. The tables below highlight the proposed SHARE increase which were intended to be approved in the original report but were not actionable by the City Council.

Year	Monthly Electric Credit
As of January 1, 2023	\$16
January 1, 2024	\$20
January 1, 2025	\$24
January 1, 2026	\$28
January 1, 2027	\$29
January 1, 2028	\$30

Year	Monthly Water Credit
July 1, 2022	\$3.25
October 1, 2023	\$4.25
July 1, 2024	\$4.75
July 1, 2025	\$5.25
July 1, 2026	\$5.75
July 1, 2027	\$6.25

To mitigate against any similar situation in the future, RPU will ensure that Council recommendations proposing any changes to rates also accurately reflect any corresponding SHARE increase to synchronize appropriately.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The total annual fiscal impact for the SHARE program is \$2,950,000. Sufficient funds of \$2,800,000 were budgeted and are available in Electric Public Benefit Program Fund, Low Income Assistance account 6020100-456010 and \$150,000 in the Water Fund, Low Income Senior/Disable Reliability Refund account 6200000-456075. Future increases to SHARE assistance will be funded from available Public Benefit funds and included in subsequent budgets.

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Certified as to availability of funds:	Julie Nemes, Interim Finance Director

Approved by: Gilbert Hernandez, Interim Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Rebecca McKee-Reimbold, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Accounts Receivable and Delinquency Graph
2. Presentation