

Sanitary Sewer Charge Exemption Authority Delegation

ISSUE

The current sanitary sewer charge exemption approval process is not as efficient as it could be, resulting in delays from the time that a sanitary sewer charge exemption request is confirmed to be eligible, and the charge exemption being approved by City Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services recommend to City Council:

1. That approval for sanitary sewer exemption charges be delegated to the Administration; and
2. That Bylaw No. 9466, The Sewage Use Bylaw, 2017, be amended by the City Solicitor, to include the ability of the General Manager of Utilities and Environment, or designate, to approve requests for sewer service charge exemptions, subject to the request being aligned with the Bylaw.

BACKGROUND

Customers that have a dedicated water service connection to provide water that does not return to the sanitary sewer system may apply for a sanitary sewer charge exemption, as per Bylaw No. 9466, The Sewage Use Bylaw, 2017, which states:

“Adjustment for Water Not Discharged to Sanitary Sewer System

60. (1) If a substantial portion of the water purchased by a person is not discharged to the sanitary sewer system, the person may apply to the City for an appropriate adjustment in the sewer service charge.”

Currently, City Council approval is required for sanitary sewer charge exemptions for customers who have a dedicated water service connection that does not return to the sanitary sewer system. The following criteria is used to confirm alignment with Bylaw No. 9466, The Sewage Use Bylaw, 2017:

- The applicant must have an account in good standing at the time of the application;
- The adjustment is only available for metered water that is consumed and does not flow into a sanitary sewer service connection;
- The meter that is used to measure the water consumed for the adjustment, must be a dedicated meter, a mixed-use meter would not qualify; and
- The adjustment does not curtail or eliminate that the meter be read and that the water consumed be reported to the City.

Examples of meters that could be exempted are those solely dedicated to irrigation, or in a commercial setting, and those that are connected to a process that does not connect to the sanitary sewer.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Current Status

The current process for consideration of requests for sanitary sewer charge exemptions is as follows:

- Customer believes they have a water meter that does not return water to the sanitary sewer system, or no water is being discharged to the sanitary sewer system.
- Customer contacts the Saskatoon Water, Meter Department to request an exemption from the sanitary sewer charge.
- Saskatoon Water, Meter Department staff attend the site to assess the meter and its use.
- If the meter is eligible for exemption, a report is prepared recommending City Council approve the meter for exemption.
- If the exemption is approved by City Council, the sanitary sewer charge is removed from the account in question and backdated to the date of inspection.

The current approach can cause a delay in the responsiveness for the request for exemption, which could result in a period of over billing. Although the overbilled amounts are ultimately returned via credit to the customer, the customer pays upfront until approval is received. Furthermore, the additional time required for the Administration to prepare the reports to City Council, and correct the overbilling, could be reallocated to other priorities.

Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

Approval for sanitary sewer charge exemptions is delegated to the Administration in the City of Regina.

Process Change to Delegate Approval to the Administration

The following process is proposed to improve the efficiency of the response to requests for exemption:

- Customer contacts the Saskatoon Water, Meter Department to request an exemption from the sanitary sewer charge.
- Saskatoon Water, Meter Department staff attend the site to assess the meter and its use. It is reported at that time if the meter is eligible for the sanitary sewer charge exemption in alignment with Bylaw No.9466, The Sewage Use Bylaw, 2017.
- Recommendation for exemption is forwarded to the Revenue Department to confirm the account is in good standing.
- Recommendation is forwarded to the General Manager, Utilities and Environment or delegate for approval.
- If approved, the account is adjusted to the date of the inspection.

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- If not approved, a letter containing the reasons would be provided to the customer by the General Manager, Utilities and Environment or designate.

FINANCIAL/OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Although the number of requests on an annual basis are not significant, streamlining the process and delegating approval to the Administration will create internal efficiencies; however, the financial impact has not been quantified. There are no legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS - COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

If approved, the process will be adjusted on the City's website within the Sewer Use Bylaw section. Saskatoon Water will report the number of exemptions approved in their annual report.

Report Approval

Written by: Cam LeClaire, Meter Shop Superintendent, Saskatoon Water
Reviewed by: Russ Munro, Director of Saskatoon Water
Approved by: Angela Gardiner, General Manager, Utilities and Environment

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