



VIRTUAL TOWN HALL MEETING

11.29.11

AGENDA

- ▶ Introductions
 - ▶ About Customer Care
 - History
 - Purpose
 - Services
 - ▶ Utility Rate Increase
 - Why The Increase
 - How It Was Calculated
 - New Rates
 - ▶ Utility Assistance Programs
 - ▶ Q&A
- 

HOUSE KEEPING ITEMS

- ▶ PowerPoint presentation is run by the Presenters and displayed on your computer without you having to click a button
- ▶ Attendees automatically muted for duration of meeting for recording purposes and to avoid unnecessary background noise
- ▶ Questions may be submitted at anytime in the question box located in the control panel on the right... you will receive a verbal response
 - Unanswered questions due to time constraints will be addressed via e-mail by a Customer Care Representative within 24-48 hours

HOUSE KEEPING ITEMS

- ▶ The presenter may send out a quick poll at various times during the meeting that will appear on your computer screen and require a simple click on the appropriate response “Yes” or “No”
- ▶ We would appreciate your participation in brief survey at the conclusion of the Virtual Town Hall Meeting

About Customer Care

Jaunius Simokaitis
Customer Care Director

Jerald Wolff
Meter Services Manager



Customer Care Department

- ▶ Created in 2009 by East Point City Council
 - ▶ A dedicated Customer Care facility became a reality when the Council approved the purchase of the Wachovia Bank property
 - ▶ This facility allows us to provide support to customers paying their utilities and property taxes
 - ▶ Designed to enhance the customer experience
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Enhanced Services

- ▶ Extended hours of operations:
 - ▶ Lobby 8am – 6pm
 - ▶ Call Center 7am – 7pm
- ▶ Payment Kiosk in the Lobby
- ▶ IVR (Interactive Voice Response)
- ▶ Recurring Online Payments
- ▶ Drive Thru
- ▶ Drop Box



Billing

Call Center

Customer Care
Department

Cashiers / Customer Service

Meter Reading

Customer Care Department

- ▶ 45 full time positions:
 - Billing – 4
 - Call Center – 6
 - Customer Service/Cashiers – 13
 - Meter Readers – 15
 - Supervisors – 2
 - Managers – 3
 - Admin. Assistant – 1
 - Director – 1

42 positions are currently filled and 3 positions remain open

Billing Process

- ▶ Our billing system contains 18 cycles
- ▶ The billing date is determined by the service location and should not vary more than three or four days during a month
- ▶ All billing cycles are arranged geographically to make our meter reading process as efficient as possible
- ▶ Billing Coordinators and Auditors:
 - ▶ Generate monthly utility bills
 - ▶ Review meter reading data for accuracy
 - ▶ Review accuracy of the actual rates on an account

Call Center

- ▶ Answers calls from residents concerning:
 - Utility billing
 - Research accounts
 - Power outages
 - Water outages
 - Sewer leaks
 - Energy audit requests
 - General information related to the City's operations
 - Serve as a general point of contact for the customer
- ▶ Provide assistance to other departments by:
 - Creating work orders
 - Communicating with customers
 - Updating work orders



Cashiers/ Customer Service

- ▶ Accepts utility payments
- ▶ Accepts tax payments
- ▶ Accepts business license payments
- ▶ Accepts permit payments
- ▶ Accepts alcohol license payments
- ▶ Accepts hotel tax payments
- ▶ Establish new accounts
- ▶ Close accounts
- ▶ Transfer service
- ▶ Research utility accounts
- ▶ Support other City departments
- ▶ Provide general information



Meter Services

- ▶ Read water and electric meters
- ▶ Connect new service
- ▶ Disconnect service on closed accounts
- ▶ Replace electric residential meters
- ▶ Perform energy audits





- ▶ Currently 100% of City's water meters are being read manually
- ▶ Meters are read every 30 days
- ▶ If for any reason an actual reading cannot be obtained, consumption on that month's bill will be based on historical usage
- ▶ Meter Reading accuracy is 99.9%



- ▶ Dirt around the meter has no impact on the accuracy of the meter
- ▶ We clean the glass of the meter dial in order to obtain a reading
- ▶ Meters are checked for any defects
- ▶ If there is water in the meter box we have pumps to pump it out and read the meter

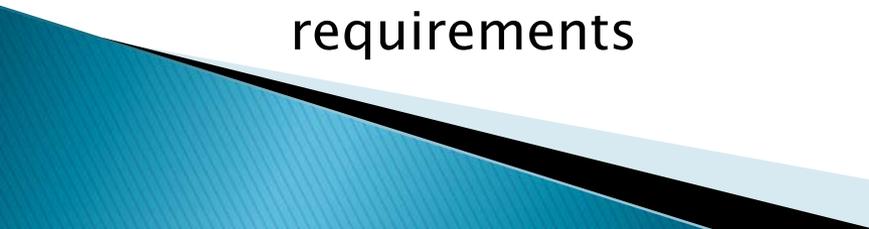




- ▶ Average life expectancy for solid state watt hour meters is 20 years
- ▶ About 80% of our electric meters are automated
- ▶ They have a radio transmitter and are read remotely by driving down the street with a reception device
- ▶ This technology is very efficient and minimizes a possibility of human errors



Why was there a need to increase my utility rates?

- ▶ East Point's General Fund could no longer support the revenue shortfall in the utilities based on its own operational needs, and a weak economy
 - ▶ The City has the following bond covenants it is required to meet:
 - ▶ Utility costs and capital maintenance needs, which have not been addressed in two decades
 - ▶ Utility costs associated with federal clean air requirements
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Why was there a need to increase my utility rates?

- ▶ For the past few years a portion of your utilities were covered by the property tax revenue, in our General Fund, since the utilities were not generating enough revenue to pay for themselves
 - ▶ It is critical that East Point's utilities are self-sustaining to ensure financial sustainability and service delivery for our citizens
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How was the new utility rate increase calculated?

- ▶ The rates were calculated based on the costs absorbed by East Point for utilities inclusive of the following:
 - ▶ \$4 million in debt from the refinancing of water bonds in 2006–07
 - ▶ \$5 million to recover costs for Federal regulations associated with air quality improvements for coal powered plants, of which the City is invested in

Water Rates

Base Charge

*Charge Per Meter Size
(Includes 3,000 gallons of usage)*

3/4"	\$24.25
1"	\$43.03
1 1/2"	\$74.33
2"	\$111.89
3"	\$199.53
4"	\$324.73
6"	\$637.73
8"	\$1013.33

Multi-Family (per unit)

3/4" meter	\$21.77
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Volume Charge (per 1,000 gallons)

4,000 gal to 7,000 gal	\$3.91
8,000 gal to 15,000 gal	\$4.89
16,000 gal and more	\$6.84

Sewer Rates

Base Charge

*Charge Per Meter Size
(Includes 3,000 gallons of usage)*

3/4" (Residential)	\$23.55
1" (Multifamily)	\$32.87
1 1/2" (Commercial)	\$48.39
2"	\$67.02
3"	\$110.49
4"	\$172.59
6"	\$327.84
8"	\$514.14

Multi-Family (per unit)

3/4" meter	\$22.32
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Volume Charge (per 1,000 gallons)

Usage above 3,000 gal	\$5.78
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Atlanta Area Rate Comparison

Water and Sewer Only
3/4-inch Meter – Average Usage

Water and Sewer costs per month based on average usage of 5,000 gallons per month:

Community	Water	Sewer	Total
East Point	\$32.07	\$35.11	\$67.18
Atlanta	\$35.53	\$87.44	\$122.97
College Park	\$32.11	\$28.59	\$60.70
Douglasville	\$29.70	\$31.85	\$61.55
Fairburn	\$44.00	\$32.00	\$76.00
Fulton County	\$18.55	\$32.15	\$50.70
Henry County	\$30.95	\$30.95	\$61.90
Gwinnett	\$29.40	\$34.45	\$63.85
Union City	\$46.70	\$28.60	\$75.30

If you use less than 4,000 gallons per month, your total combined water and sewer bill will be \$47.80. This is the minimum charge.

The rates include a subsidy from the City that reduces the rates for an average residential customer by \$17.15 (base charge only) or \$21.57 (5,000 gallons used per month).

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Atlanta	\$35.53	\$87.44	\$122.97
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Douglasville	\$29.70	\$31.85	\$61.55
Fairburn	\$44.00	\$32.00	\$76.00
Fulton County	\$18.55	\$32.15	\$50.70
Henry County	\$30.95	\$30.95	\$61.90
Gwinnett	\$29.40	\$34.45	\$63.85
Union City	\$46.70	\$28.60	\$75.30

- ▶ This comparison is based on a consumption of 5,000 gallons, which is the average for our customers
- ▶ Our rates remain very competitive even after the increase

- ▶ We are confident that bill irregularities are not as a result of the rate increase, but because of some other underlying issues
- ▶ The most common reason for a severe bill irregularities are water leaks
- ▶ A resident that is using about 5000 gallons monthly (an average residential monthly water consumption for East Point), will see an increase of \$37.18

Old Rates

- Water Base Charge – \$13.00
- Water Usage Charge – \$5.00
- Sewer Base Charge – \$6.50
- Sewer Usage Charge – \$5.50

Total: \$30.00

Current Rates

- Water Base Charge – \$24.25
- Water Usage Charge – \$7.82
- Sewer Base Charge – \$23.55
- Sewer Usage Charge – \$11.56

Total: \$67.18

UTILITY FAQ BROCHURE

Pick-up your complimentary copy at the following locations while supplies last:

- ▶ East Point Customer Care
- ▶ Jefferson Station
- ▶ Jefferson Park Recreation Center
- ▶ Law Enforcement Center



Utility Assistance Programs

LaLisa Winfrey
Customer Service Supervisor



Programs and Services Offered

- ▶ Budget Billing
- ▶ Payment Plans
- ▶ Bill Dispute
- ▶ Senior Citizen Discount

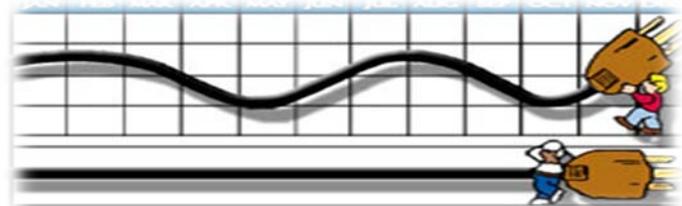
Coming Soon . . .

- ▶ Open enrollment for Budget Billing



Budget Billing

- ▶ Currently signup is offered once a year – March
- ▶ Starting December 5th the signup will be offered all year long. Twelve (12) months of good payment history is needed to qualify for this program
- ▶ The Budget Bill Amount remains the same throughout the 12 month period as long as there are no late fees assessed on the account
- ▶ If there is a late fee assessed then it is added to the next bill and is due the following month (this would change the Payment Due amount for that month)



Payment Plans

- ▶ Plans associated with high balance due to Budget Billing
- ▶ Plans associated with high balance due to a leak or non-payment
- ▶ Financial/medical hardship



High Balance Due to Budget Billing

- ▶ Utility Task Force recommended that Council authorize the Customer Care Department to establish a 12 to 48 month payment plan program for customers that owe the City due to budget billing
- ▶ The established 12 to 48 month payment plan program shall be as follows:
 - \$1.00 to \$1,999 = 12 months
 - \$2,000 to \$2,999 = 24 months
 - \$3,000 to \$3,999 = 36 months
 - \$4,000 and more = 48 months

High Balance Due to Leak or Non-Payment

- ▶ Utility Task Force recommended that Council authorize East Point Customer Care to establish the following payment plan arrangements for customers:
 - **Commercial/Multi-family Accounts:**
 - 75% down and the remaining balance payable within three months
 - **Residential Accounts:**
 - 1/3 down and the remaining balance payable within two months
- ▶ Residents are granted one (1) payment arrangement every six (6) months

Medical/Financial Hardship

- ▶ If a customer is unable to pay a utility bill in full due to a hardship, the Customer Care Director or designee may halt the disconnection of utilities under the following reasons:

Medical – The customer must be pre-registered with written confirmation by his or her doctor for the need to sustain life on life-support equipment (i.e. – oxygen tank) to any member of the household

- ▶ City shall confirm the existence of the equipment by an inspection of the premises, and the maximum time for a medical hold shall be sixty (60) days

Financial – A customer in good standing may request a payment arrangement through the customer service division

- ▶ To be in good standing, a customer must have had no more than one check returned in the preceding twelve months and not been disconnected for non-payment during that same time period

Bill Dispute

- ▶ Customers may dispute a bill if they do not agree with the charges
 - ▶ A dispute is reviewed by the Customer Service Manager and if determined valid an appropriate adjustment is made
 - ▶ If not valid, the customer is informed and has the option to request another review by the Customer Care Director
 - ▶ All undisputed balances must be paid while the dispute is being investigated
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Senior Citizen Discount

- ▶ Seniors eligible for this program must continually meet all of the following criteria:
 - Senior Citizen must be the named residential account holder and full-time resident where utility services are provided, 65 years old or older with an income not exceeding fifteen thousand dollars per year (\$15,000)
 - Account must remain in good standing with no overdue balance
 - Any billing cycle for which there accrues or remains an overdue balance will not have the senior discount applied
 - The Senior Citizen Account holder must provide evidence of continued residency and qualification every year by their birthday to continue eligibility for the Senior Discount
- ▶ Once eligibility is determined residents receive a \$7.00 per month discount on electric service for one residential account

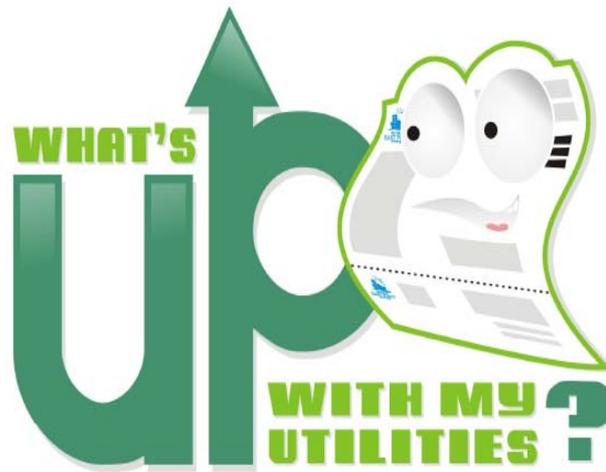
Q & A

You have

Questions

We have

Answers



THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

This Virtual Town Hall Meeting is being hosted again
Wednesday, December 7, 2011 ► 7:00 P.M.

Tell your family and friends . . .

For more information contact:

vthm@eastpointcity.org