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# Sewer Bill Abatement Policy

Wiscasset (Maine). Municipal Officers

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# Sewer Bill Abatement Policy

## Abatements

The costs associated with the operation of the Wiscasset sewer services are paid for by sewer use fees determined by the Board of Selectmen. Sewer charges are determined by the amount of the service consumed, i.e., cubic feet of water used by the property. The District obtains water usage data for its customers from the Wiscasset Water District.

From time to time, there may be circumstances where customers can quantify water use that was clearly not discharged to the sewer, such as a new pool fill up. Additionally, customers may run into circumstances where there has been an error in the calculation of their bill. These calculation errors can occur due to bad data reported to the Town or prior payments being recorded incorrectly. Billing adjustments and abatements are made in accordance with this Abatement policy adopted by the Board of Selectmen on February 20, 2018.

For billing purposes the Town assumes that sewerage use equals water use. When a customer can demonstrate that a quantity of water billed to the user did not go into the sewerage system, the Town ***may*** make a reasonable adjustment in the user's bill.

In general, for an abatement to be considered the customer must file an [Abatement Request](#) within 30 days of the usage bill date, the account must otherwise be in good standing with no late payments due, and the abatement must fit into one of the four general categories in the policy.

This policy establishes a formal process by which a customer can obtain a determination regarding a customer's abatement/adjustment request. If the user is not satisfied by a decision by the Wiscasset Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor, the customer can appeal to the Board of Selectmen.

## Requests

Requests for billing changes (adjustments or abatements) must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the usage bill date.

Those customers requesting an abatement of charges must complete a [Sewer Usage Abatement Request Form](#) signed by the property owner and submit it to the Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor. Customers seeking an abatement of charges due to a leak or pool filling must submit repair invoices and proof of payment with their application.

No application for abatement or adjustment will be accepted on any account unless all amounts due on that account, including interest and penalties, for all billing periods prior to the contested period covered by the abatement or adjustment application have been paid in full.

The filing of a [Sewer Use Abatement Request Form](#) does not relieve the applicant of the responsibility to pay their current sewer usage bill in full by the due date specified.

Customers are eligible to apply for abatement adjustments for specific one-time incidents such as pool fill-ups or water leaks once every three years. It is incumbent upon the customer to correct the issues causing the need for the abatement in as timely a manner as possible. This provision may be waived by the Wiscasset Board of Selectmen extraordinary cases.

### **Abatement Types**

The Town categorizes abatements into four different uses: Seasonal Outdoor, Pool Abatements, Leak/Meter Abatements and Miscellaneous One-Time Abatements. Applications for abatements or requests for adjustments for reasons other than those stated in this policy must be made in writing to the Town which will determine the validity of the request and the amount of any abatement or adjustment. A customer's inability to pay a water or sewer bill shall not be grounds for abatement under this policy.

1. **Seasonal Outdoor Water Use Abatements:** For metered seasonal outdoor water use will only be considered when a second water meter is installed and pre-approved by the Town. Please review the Second Meter and Seasonal Outdoor Water Use Abatements section for more details.
2. **Pool Abatements:** For abatements of water volumes used for one time pool fill-ups. This adjustment does not apply to seasonal refilling or topping off. A calculation will be performed (based on the size of the pool) to determine the

amount of water used to fill the pool. The sewer charge for that volume of water will be abated. Customers requesting a pool abatement must provide details on the capacity and size of the pool and must state the billing period in which the filling of the pool occurred.

3. **Leak and Meter Abatements:** For abatements of water volumes caused by leaks that were not discharged to the sewer. This includes leaks on outdoor water pipes or on pipes prior to plumbing fixtures. ***This does not include leaking toilet valves or faucets.*** If the actual volume of the leak cannot be confirmed, the total usage for the period in which the leak occurred will be compared to the averaged usage for the same period from the preceding three years. The abated amount will be equal to the amount of water usage recorded less the calculated average.
4. **Miscellaneous One-Time Abatements:** For one time abatements and billing adjustments not anticipated by the Town. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis and any adjustment granted will be based on the circumstances described by the customer and by review of historical usage data.

### **Submission of Requests for Adjustments and Abatements**

Customers seeking abatements or requesting adjustments must file a [Sewer Use Abatement Form](#) with the Town as soon as possible after identification of a need for abatement. Forms may be downloaded and submitted in paper form. The Form shall be filled out to the best of the Customer's ability and include all requested documentation.

The completed form, and any applicable documents and fees, must be submitted as a complete package for consideration. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

If the customer has not submitted a [Sewer Use Abatement Form](#) or needs assistance in filing the form a representative of the Town may assist and fill out the form for the customer. By so doing, the Town undertakes no responsibility for the correctness or the completeness of the application or request except with regard to information furnished from the records of the Wiscasset Wastewater Treatment Department.

**Submission of a Sewer Use Abatement Form does not guarantee that an abatement will be granted nor does it relieve the customer from paying any outstanding bills on time.**

The Town will review all outstanding abatement requests as part of the regular public meeting agenda and customers are encouraged to attend and further explain the basis for their request. If the Town determines that a billing adjustment or abatement as provided in this policy is necessary, the Town will approve the abatement at a meeting of the Town and provide notice to the customer noting that the approved amount has been credited to their account. If the Town determines that an adjustment or abatement is not due on the account the customer will be notified in writing as to the reasons for denial.

The Town will endeavor to respond promptly to abatement applications and requests for adjustment within 30 days after the date that a completed application is submitted. In some circumstances additional information may be needed which may delay response times.

In a small number of cases abatements have been submitted that are speculative, fraudulent, or clearly do not meet the criteria for an abatement. These abatement requests take up valuable staff time to process and review. If a submission is determined to fall into this category or if extensive hand calculations and account research is necessary to quantify a request the Town may charge an administrative calculation fee.

### **2nd Meter Program**

The 2nd meter program enables customers to utilize a second meter, which makes calculation of outdoor water use clear and accurate.

The second meter is installed to measure outdoor water sources. The Town relies on self-reporting for second meter readings submitted for abatement. This meter will not be read automatically as part of the Wiscasset Water District's meter reading program. Once per year, from **October 1st to November 30th**, 2nd Meter readings may be submitted via telephone, [e-mail](#) or in [paper form](#) to the Town office.

The outdoor water use will be abated on your next scheduled bill in accordance with the Town's Sewer Usage Abatement Policy. Your seasonal water use abatement will be based on actual metered outdoor water use.

Please note, only customers with [second meter installations](#) will be considered for a seasonal outdoor water use abatement. Calculations or estimations for outdoor water use abatements will not be considered.

The process for installing and using the second meter is as follows:

1. Customer submits a [Second Meter Permit](#)
2. Customer/Customer's plumber purchases a direct meter for installation on a line feeding outdoor water fixtures. These can be purchased by your plumber at most plumbing supply houses. Meter kits can also be purchased directly from the Town at cost. The kit includes the meter and two pipe fittings. Please contact us if you wish to purchase a meter from our office.
3. Customer/Customer's plumber installs the second meter in accordance with applicable rules and regulations and calls for inspection by Town.
4. Town inspects the meter.
5. Customer records meter reading, photographs meter face, and submit a [Seasonal Abatement Request Form](#) using the paper form to receive an abatement for full amount of meter reading.

**Eligibility** This program is offered to all Town sewer customers.

This program is primarily intended for customers with lawn irrigation systems and large gardens. Other customers who expect to have to have high outdoor water use are also free to take advantage of this program however the customer should evaluate individual circumstances based on actual use to calculate cost effectiveness.

### **Permitting**

Prior to being able to use an installed second meter the Customer must complete a [Second Meter Permit application](#). The completed permit constitutes an agreement between the Customer and the District confirming that the use of the meter will be in compliance with applicable sewer use regulations. This permit is specific to the Customer. New property owners with second meters must apply for a [new permit](#) and inspection before being eligible for abatement benefits from the second meter.

### **Allowed Meters**

The Town requires that Customers install a meter that is made for measuring clean water that is consistent with the residential water meters in use by the water industry and meets current AWWA standards. These meters are readily available at most plumbing supply houses. The meter should be sized to match existing residential meters and will typically be 5/8" meters for most customers. The meter needs to record use in Cubic Feet.

### **Installation**

The second water meter is installed after the primary meter so that all water passes through the primary meter first.

The second meter must be installed in an area that will be easily accessible should the meter need repairs or replacement. If possible, the meter should be installed in a horizontal orientation. A shut-off valve must be installed on the supply side of the meter and must be the same size as the meter itself (5/8"meter, use 5/8" valves for example). It is also recommended that a shut-off valve is installed on the inlet side of the meter.

There are absolutely no inside connections (draw-offs, spigots, etc.) allowed after the second water meter inside the dwelling.

When connected to a lawn irrigation system, the system must have the appropriate backflow prevention device installed on the water supply to the system as approved by the Town.

Second water meters are to be installed so as to meter outside usage only. Any customer that is found using the second water meter for inside use, will permanently lose the second water meter privileges and will be fined.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to install the meter in compliance with any other applicable codes and regulations.

Only one (1) second water meter will be allowed per property.

## **Inspection**

Once the meter has been installed the customer should call the Wiscasset Wastewater Treatment Plant at 207-882-8222 or contact by email at [wwwtp@wiscasset.org](mailto:wwwtp@wiscasset.org) to schedule an inspection. The Town will make every effort to inspect in a timely manner but due to high seasonal demand during the spring and summer months, your inspection process may take several weeks to be completed.

The inspector must be able to access the second meter easily and the Customer may be asked to demonstrate that no indoor water supplies are connected to the meter by running several indoor plumbing fixtures.

After the connection is determined to be in compliance the initial meter reading will be verified and recorded and a Town seal will be attached to the meter.

Customers are responsible for any additional permitting or inspections by others that may be required.

## **Maintenance**

Second water meters are the **CUSTOMER'S RESPONSIBILITY**. If the meter breaks or fails to record use, the **CUSTOMER** is responsible to purchase and install a new meter if they wish to utilize the abatement program. The Town reserves the right to re-inspect the meter installation if reported readings appear to be inconsistent.

Second meters must be replaced and inspected every 15 years which is the typical meter lifespan.

## **Cost**

The cost of the meter and installation is entirely the responsibility of the Customer. Plumbing charges will vary depending upon the complexity of the changes required to install the second meter.

There are no annual fees anticipated at this time although the Town reserves the right to institute an annual fee as this program grows and if needs dictate.

## **Meter Reading and Abatement Process**

The Town relies on self-reporting for second meter readings submitted for abatement.



This meter will not be read automatically as part of the Wiscasset Water District's meter reading program. Once per year, from **October 1st to November 30th**, 2nd Meter readings may be submitted to the Wastewater Treat Plant Supervisor via the telephone (207-882-8222), **e-mail ([wwtp@wiscasset.org](mailto:wwtp@wiscasset.org))**; or by mail (**51 Bath Road, Wiscasset, 04578**).