

ID#21-1290

ID#21-1289

**Consideration of COVID Disaster Declaration
Extension and Thirteenth Order of Council**

June 22, 2021



Overview

- A local Disaster Declaration and Order for the COVID Public Health Emergency and the Twelfth Order of Council are in effect through June 30, 2021
- Staff received direction regarding the declaration and order on June 15, 2021
- Staff has prepared two items for Council consideration:
 - An extension of the Declaration of Disaster through Sept. 30, 2021 (ID#21-1290)
 - A Thirteenth Order of Council to be effective through Sept. 30, 2021 (ID#21-1289)



Background: Declaration and Order

- The local disaster declaration and order has extended numerous times by Council throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency as shown below:
 - March 13, 2020 – Mayoral Declaration of Local Disaster and Order
 - March 17, 2020 – Adoption of Ordinance 20-720 Extending and Modifying Mayoral Declaration
 - March 20, 2020 – Adoption of Ordinance 20-740 Amending Council Declaration of Local Disaster and Order
 - March 24, 2020 – Second Mayoral Declaration of Disaster and Order
 - March 31, 2020 – Council postponed item for consideration on Second Mayoral Declaration of Disaster and Order
 - April 6, 2020 – Council approved a new Declaration of Disaster and Order
 - April 30, 2020 – Council extended the Declaration of Disaster and Approved a New Order
 - May 5, 2020 – Council approved a New Order
 - May 29, 2020 – Council extended the Declaration of Disaster and Approved a New Order
 - June 23, 2020 – Council extended the Declaration of Disaster (Ordinance #20-1199)
 - June 30, 2020 – On June 26, Council approved a New Seventh Order (Ordinance #20-1255)
 - July 28, 2020 – Council approved a New Eighth Order (Ordinance #20-1423)
 - August 25, 2020 – Council approved a New Ninth Order (Ordinance #20-1597)
 - Sept. 22, 2020 - Council extended the Declaration of Disaster and Approved a Tenth Order (Ordinance #20-1845)
 - Dec. 17, 2020 – Council extended the Declaration of Disaster and Approved an Eleventh Order (Ordinance #20-2467)
 - March 16, 2021 – Council extended the Declaration of Disaster and Approved a Twelfth Order (Ordinance #21-432)



Background: Declaration and Order

- The **local disaster declaration** establishes a state of disaster
 - Serves as the basis for orders of Council
 - Can be a prerequisite for state and federal disaster funding
- The **orders of Council** have provided staff authorization to take appropriate actions to address the public health emergency
 - Have evolved through the course of the pandemic based upon the public health situation and based upon Governor's orders
- Both the current disaster declaration and Twelfth Order of Council are set to expire as of **June 30, 2021**



Analysis of the *Disaster Declaration*

Considerations:

- Through the pandemic, staff has recommended continuation of the disaster declaration to continue eligibility for state or federal disaster funding
 - However, upon reviewing current funding sources, a local declaration is not required for receipt of grant funds, including the American Rescue Plan and CARES Act
 - It is also not required for any potential FEMA reimbursement as long as a federal disaster declaration is still in place
- Continuing a local disaster declaration could enable and keep the path open for Council to more quickly adopt a new order in the future should state orders or the public health situation change

Recommendation:

- Staff has drafted the IC item for Council to consider extending the declaration until Sept. 30, 2021



June 15, 2021 Council Action/Direction

Declaration:

- Council postponed an item to extend the declaration of disaster to June 22
 - Would allow extension to be considered alongside a new order of Council.

Order of Council:

- Council provided direction to prepare a Thirteenth Order of Council for consideration:
 - Removes majority of provisions under Twelfth Order of Council
 - Retains the waiving of certain utility fees and additional utility assistance funding



Utility Assistance

- Original FY 2020-21 Budget: \$125,000
- Eleventh Order of Council (adopted Dec. 17, 2020) provided authority to use an additional \$125,000 from utility reserves.
 - Currently 53% of these funds are available (as of May 31)
 - Benefitted from availability of UWDC utility assistance program
 - In normal years, assistance requests peak in the summer
- Council will consider a budget adjustment on June 22 agenda that will move funds from reserves to utility assistance budget



Waiving of Utility Fees

- Fees have been waived since March 2020
- Provides relief to those with past due balances
- Adversely impacts operations:
 - Est. value of non-applied fees: \$1.8M
 - Increase interruption-related notification calls
 - Cost of interruptions/reconnections borne by all ratepayers
- Reinstatement of fees will require early planning/communication
 - Acclimation to the lack of fees will have an impact
 - City can continue to waive fees for utility assistance recipients

Waived Fees

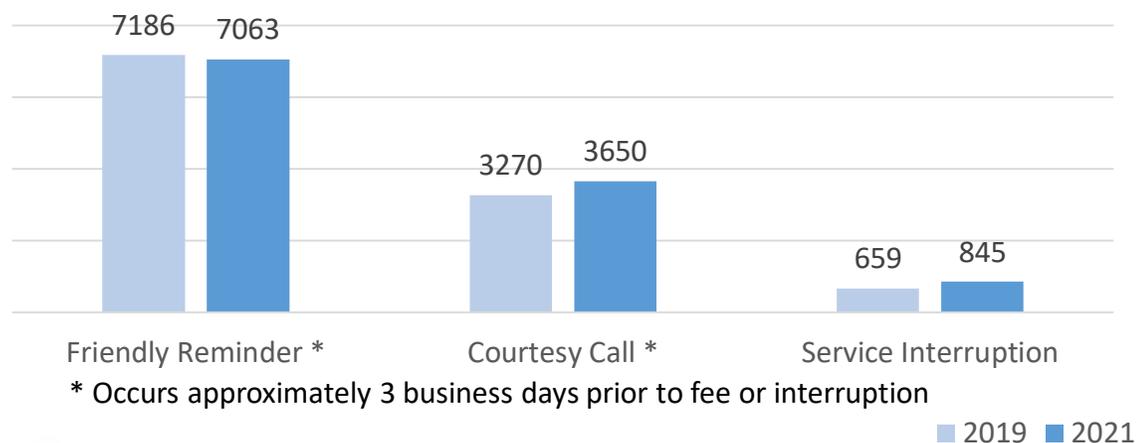
- Late Fees
- Cut Non-Pay Fee
- Same Day Reconnect Fee



Current vs. Pre-Pandemic States

- While fewer accounts are past due (compared to 2019), those past due accounts are not addressed as quickly by customers
 - 28% more past due accounts are not addressed until service is interrupted
 - Likely due to a lack of fees providing the “trigger” for action

Past Due Account Statistics
(Monthly Averages)



- Utility pledges make up 2% of past due accounts
 - 170 accounts per month, on average
- Any customer expressing payment difficulties is offered any or all of the following to prevent service interruption proactively:
 - Referral for assistance
 - Extended time to pay
 - Opportunity to move to pre-paid service



Options

1. Approve Declaration (#21-1290) and Thirteenth Order (#21-1289)

- Extending the disaster declaration until Sept. 30, 2021
- Adopting a new Thirteenth Order of Council (effective June 30 through Sept. 30)

2. Approve the Declaration item only (#21-1290)

- Extending the disaster declaration until Sept. 30, 2021
- Letting the Twelfth Order of Council expire on June 30, 2021

3. Do not approve either item

- Expiring both the disaster declaration and the Twelfth Order of Council on June 30, 2021



Questions?

