



September 10, 2020

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507- 1967

Dear Mayor Selby and Councilmembers:

SUBJECT: UAC Support of Charitable Fund and Donation Program

This letter provides the City's Utility Advisory Committee (UAC) recommendation to support the establishment of a charitable fund and donation program to assist low income City of Olympia utility customers.

The UAC received a briefing from staff in June 2020. Staff proposed the following in regard to the new customer assistance program:

- Execute a Professional Services Agreement with the Community Action Council (CAC) of Thurston County (local non-profit). The Agreement would establish the CAC as the agency to administer and distribute funds to qualified Olympia citizens. The Agreement would also detail the program eligibility requirements, such as income limits, and the financial assistance amounts offered (\$75 per customer, twice a year).
- Add a message on the City's utility bill explaining how customers can donate to the fund to help their neighbors in need.
- Set up one time "startup" funds of \$5,000, split proportionally between the four City utility funds, to seed the charitable fund.
- Transfer the funds to CAC to assist Olympia customers in paying their drinking water, wastewater, storm and surface water and garbage/recycle utilities.

City staff received approval from City Legal Counsel and the new program is compliant with Washington State laws. The Cities of Lacey and Tumwater utilize the CAC to administer their charitable assistance program funds. There is no cost for the CAC to provide this service.

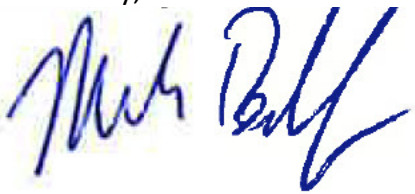
It should be noted that the City's Lifeline Rate Program will also continue. The Lifeline Program has specific criteria (62 years or older or disabled and low income). We feel the new Charitable Fund will help to serve those in our community that are not eligible for the Lifeline Rate program, such as young, low income families that are struggling in these tough economic times.

Recommendation to City Council

We recommend you also support this newly created customer assistance program as detailed above. City staff will bring this item forward to the Council by the end of the year for your approval. We also recommend that City staff review both the funding level of the program, and the number of households accessing the program. City staff should recommend changes to the program as necessary to balance the funding level with the level of need in the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments and support. Please contact me, or Vice Chair Cullen Stephenson, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



MIKE BUFFO

Chair, Utility Advisory Committee

ec. UAC Members