

# **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 (Board). Sewer charges are determined by the amount of the service cubic feet of water used by the property. The Town 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. 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 or prior payments being recorded incorrectly. When a customer can demonstrate that a quantity of water billed to the user did not go into the sewer system, the Town ***may*** make a reasonable adjustment in the user's bill. Billing adjustments and abatements are made in accordance with this Abatement policy adopted by the Board of Selectmen.

## **Requests**

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

## **Abatement Types**

The Town categorizes abatements into four different uses: Seasonal Outdoor, Pool Abatements, Leak/Meter Abatements and Miscellaneous One-Time Abatements. A customer's inability to pay a water or sewer bill shall not be grounds for abatement under this policy.

1. **Outdoor Water Use Abatements:** Abatements for 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/or Meter Malfunction 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**

Those customers requesting an abatement of charges must complete a Sewer Usage Abatement Form signed by the property owner and submit it to the Town Office.

Customers seeking an abatement of charges due to a leak or defect must submit proof of repair, such as a paid repair invoice. The completed form must be submitted as a complete package for consideration. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Abatement requests will be forwarded to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Supervisor for review. The WWTP Supervisor shall review the circumstances of the request and if, in his opinion, the water did not enter the sewer system, shall forward the request to the Board so stating and whether the requested amount is appropriate. If the abatement request is questionable or unclear the WWTP Supervisor may request additional information from the customer before forwarding the request to the Board. If, in his opinion, the requested amount is incorrect or suspect, the water did enter the sewer system or the request is otherwise suspect, he shall forward the request to the Board and so state his reasons along with the recommended calculations if necessary.

Abatements submitted that are speculative, fraudulent, or clearly do not meet the criteria for an abatement 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 reduce the amount of the abatement to cover administrative costs.

**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 Board of Selectmen will review all abatement requests as part of the regular public meeting agenda. If the Board agrees that a billing adjustment or abatement as provided in this policy is necessary, the Board shall instruct the Town Manager as to the amount of the adjustment and the Town Manager shall forward the request to the Wiscasset Water District for an account adjustment. If the Board determines that an adjustment or

abatement is not due on the account they shall instruct the Town Manager to notify the customer 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.

### **Installation of 2<sup>nd</sup> meters**

Customers with outside seasonal water shall install a 2<sup>nd</sup> meter to accurately record water usage. Customers are solely responsible for having a 2<sup>nd</sup> meter installed and must contact the Wiscasset Water District prior to installation.

Your seasonal water use abatement will be based on actual metered outdoor water use.

Please note, only customers with 2<sup>nd</sup> meter installations will be considered for a seasonal outdoor water use abatement. Calculations or estimations for outdoor water use abatements without a 2<sup>nd</sup> meter will not be considered.

### **Cost**

The cost of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meter and installation is entirely the responsibility of the customer.

Approved September 1, 2020