



# TOWN OF RUTHERFORD COLLEGE

## UTILITY BILLING POLICY

*Updated July 1, 2016*

### 1. Utility Office Hours

The utility office is to be open and accepting payments, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am till 5:00 pm. Holiday hours and approved closings must be posted on the front door and drive-up window. Office closings must be approved by the town manager.

### 2. Water Rate Schedule

Basic Monthly Water Rate.....	\$15.50
Basic Monthly Outside Town Limit Rate (for New Customers as of July 1, 2016).....	\$31.00
Additional Water Usage (per thousand after the first 3,000 gallons) .....	\$ 5.00
Administrative Fee (per customer).....	\$ 14.00
Infrastructure Fee (Tap Only).....	\$15.50

### 3. Sewer Rate Schedule

Basic Monthly Sewer Rate .....	\$17.50
Basic Monthly Outside Town Limit Rate (effective July 1, 2015).....	\$35.00
Additional Sewer Usage (per thousand after the first 3,000 gallons)	
Next 3,000 gallons (each per thousand) .....	\$ 5.30
After 6,000 gallons (each per thousand).....	\$ 3.05
Industrial Sewer Rate (per each 1,000 gallon).....	\$ 4.50
Infrastructure Fee (Tap Only).....	\$17.50

### 4. Tap Fees

Water tap (3/4 inch).....	\$1,200.00
Water Tap (1 inch) .....	\$1,950.00
Sewer tap.....	\$ 1,000.00
Harbor Ridge tap .....	\$1,750.00
Administrative fee .....	\$ 25.00

### 5. Application Process

Applicant/s must appear in person to the Utility Office to complete the application process. The following will be required to obtain service:

- Valid Driver's License, Government Issued ID, or Birth Certificate
- Proof of Residency or Ownership

The town will request a voluntary disclosure of the applicant's social security number pursuant to NC General Statute 105A-3(c). The collection of social security numbers and other forms of identification can be used in order to collect a debt through the NC Debt Set-off Program.

The applicant will be required to review and agree to the terms of the Rutherford College Utility Policy.

Applications for service may be denied if the applicant has a delinquency related to a prior utility service with the Town of Rutherford College. In compliance with the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), an Adverse Action Notice will be mailed to the applicant within 30 days explaining why the application was denied.

### 6. Meter Readings

Meters are read on the 20<sup>th</sup> of every month. (If the 20<sup>th</sup> falls on holidays or weekends, the date may vary.) Burke County readings should be received by fax or email by the 21<sup>st</sup> of each month. Should the reading not be received, you must call the Burke County utility office to verify the reading of those meters.

**7. Late Payment Penalty**

Payments must be made in full by the 20th of every month. Should the 20th fall on a weekend or holiday, the next workday will be considered as the penalty date. All monies shall be collected from the mail and drop box before penalties are issued. Penalties equal 10% of the current bill.

**8. Cut-Off Procedure**

Letters notifying customers of a possible interruption of service will be sent out the next business day after the due date. Customers will have 15 calendar days to pay the past due amount or the water will be cut off. (If dates fall on holidays or weekends, they may vary.) If the customer tampers with their meter by turning it back on, fees will be applied to their account and their meter will be locked. If a lock is cut off a meter, then fees will be added to the customer’s account and misdemeanor charges may be filed. **Once a customer’s account has been cut off, they must pay their account in full to have their service restored.** Fees pertaining to interruption of service will be as follows:

Cut-off penalty.....	\$ 25.00
Tampering with meter.....	\$100.00
Cutting of lock.....	\$150.00 & possible misdemeanor charges

**9. Payment Application**

Payments will be applied to the customer's service in the following order:

1. Garbage
2. Administrative Fees
3. Penalties
4. Sewer
5. Water

*(For Example: Total bill equals \$80.00, only \$50.00 was paid; this will be applied as Garbage \$4.50, Admin. Fee \$14.00, Penalties \$3.00, Sewer \$23.50, Water \$5.00. This will leave \$30.00 in water service unpaid and may result in disconnection of service.)*

**10. Payment Adjustments**

- a) The Finance Officer has discretionary say in whether a customer is granted financial hardship. The basis of the agreement should be an equitable payment arrangement that details the individual customer’s obligation and time limits for the account to be made solvent. The final document will be a legally binding contract which authorizes the town to enforce reasonable collections efforts or take legal action if necessary
- b) The Town Manager must approve hardship adjustments and will only approve adjustments recommended by the Finance Officer
- c) No customer who has bad credit with the town shall be considered for any financial adjustment
- d) Utility Department staff can allow a customer up to 5 days to make a payment past the cut-off date, should the customer call and request such allowance
- e) Any payment adjustments or arrangements made by the Town Manager or the utility department prior to the adoption of this policy are considered retroactive and will continue to be honored by utility department staff

**11. Leak Forgiveness**

- a.) Approval for leak forgiveness is given if one or both of the following evidence is provided:
  - A plumbing invoice or receipts for plumbing materials
  - Confirmation by public works personnel
- b.) The leak forgiveness formula is:
 

**Total Bill (minus) all sewer usage above and beyond the average use (minus) HALF of reported water usage above and beyond the average use.** *The average use is determined by averaging the last six months of water usage.*
- c.) Leak forgiveness will not exceed two consecutive billing cycles.

**12. Pool Fill Adjustments**

No adjustment of water usage may be applied to a customer’s account due to the filling of a pool. However, additional sewer usage above and beyond the average use may be adjusted off.

**13. Non-Sufficient (Returned) Checks**

Once a returned check is received by the utility office, the utility clerk will call the customer giving them 48 hours to pay the check in full, or a letter will be sent giving them one week from the date of the letter to pay. Methods of payment allowed are cash, money order, or cashier’s check. Personal checks will not be allowed. If payment is not received within the specified time, then a \$25.00 fee will be added to the account and the water will be turned off, at which point, the account must be paid in full for the water to be turned back on. Once two NS checks are received from the same customer, their account will be flagged and no personal checks will be allowed thereafter.

**14. Harbor Ridge Delinquent Accounts**

Once the account is 6 months delinquent, the town will send a letter requesting payment by a specified due date. Should the amount not be paid in full, a \$50.00 charge will be added to their account. Once 9 months of accumulated debt has occurred, the property owner will receive a letter telling them that they have 90 days to pay the account in full or their meter will be removed and the owner will have to pay a reconnection fee for their service to be restored. If the harbor ridge account has an active meter, then the customer should be treated as other in-town customers.

**15. Property Owner/ Tenant Agreement**

Utility accounts must be placed in the property owners name if the property owner has not signed an owner/tenant agreement. If an agreement has been signed than tenants of that property may have the accounts placed in their names. Owners will receive delinquency notices regarding the tenants account. If the tenant’s service is cut-off than the account automatically reverts back to the property owner and the property owner will then be responsible for the balance. Deposits are not required; however the property owner may require deposits at their own discretion.

**16. Pulling Meters by Request or Non-payment**

Meters may be pulled at the property owner’s request due to non-use or the town may pull a meter due to non-payment that exceeds 3 months. Fees will be applied for the removal of the meter as well as the replacement of the meter. Fees are as follows:

Removal of meter .....	\$100.00
Replacement of meter.....	\$100.00

**17. Broken Water Mains & Repair**

The utility director must be contacted immediately if a water main break has occurred. The director will then be responsible for contacting the persons needed to make the repairs. Customers should be notified of water outages and other effects due to the repairs. Notices should be given on the town’s facebook, website, and digital sign. If a repair is scheduled days in advance, a notice in the newspaper is also required. The utility office should directly contact College Pines (nursing home facility) and Rutherford College Elementary if their water is affected.

**18. Sewer Only Accounts**

Once 6 months of accumulated debt has occurred, the customer will receive a letter giving them 30-days to pay in full or a \$50.00 service charge will be added to their bill. Per the town’s discretion, legal action may be taken to resolve delinquent accounts exceeding 12 months of non-payment.

**19. Definition of NEW CUSTOMERS**

New Customers shall be defined by ownership of property. If a customer purchases property outside of the town limits in which the town supplies water and sewer service, after July 1, 2016, they shall pay double water and sewer rates. This applies to properties where water and sewer tap/meter already exist as well as if the customer purchases new taps. \*See Rate Schedules on Page 1 of Utility Policy

**20. Vacant Property**

If vacant property has a water/sewer tap, then the property owner must a monthly Infrastructure Fee. \*See Rate Schedules on Page 1 of Utility Policy

**21. Foreclosures**

Once a property has been determined as a foreclosure, then the meter should be pulled and billing discontinued unless instructed differently by the bank or real estate office in charge of the property. They should be made aware that should the meter stay in place only to be locked, than minimum bill will be sent for collection monthly.

**22. New Construction**

Once water and sewer tap are installed, the billing process will begin.

**23. Drop- Box**

Customers have the option of using the town's drop box during evenings and weekends. The drop box must be checked every morning and after lunch.

**24. Money Drawer**

The utility office is responsible for maintaining a money drawer. This drawer should maintain a balance of \$275.00 and should be counted after each daily deposit is made. Shortages and overages must be documented and reported to the Finance Officer. The drawer must be locked up every night in a location of the utility clerk's choosing.

**25. Drive-thru Window**

The drive-thru window must be open during regular business hours. Notification of closings must be posted on display in the window.