



RESOLUTION NO. 40974

1 A RESOLUTION relating to utility bill payment assistance; amending the
2 income eligibility for the Emergency Assistance Program to allow more
3 households to qualify for assistance, and the reallocation of funds from
4 the Bill Credit Assistance Plan to the Emergency Assistance Program.

5 WHEREAS the City Council and the Public Utility Board (“Board”) have
6 consistently budgeted funds for the Bill Credit Assistance Plan (“BCAP”),
7 through moneys from Tacoma Public Utilities (“TPU”) and Environmental
8 Services (“ES”) funds, and

9 WHEREAS BCAP is available to eligible electricity, drinking water,
10 sanitary sewer, stormwater and solid waste utilities customers, and provides
11 assistance in the form of a utility bill credit up to \$564 annually, and

12 WHEREAS households eligible to receive BCAP assistance previously
13 needed to meet applicable household income guidelines of not more than 150
14 percent of the poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health
15 and Human Services, and

16 WHEREAS as a result of the impacts of COVID-19 and the state of
17 emergency that has been declared to respond to COVID-19, it was determined
18 that more TPU and ES customers may be in need of utility bill payment
19 assistance than was available through BCAP, and a new Emergency
20 Assistance Program (“EAP”) was created on March 17, 2020, pursuant to
21 Second Amended Resolution No. U-11149 and Resolution No. 40575, with up
22 to one million dollars of the fund used for Power low-income assistance and the
23 fund used for Water Utility operations to be used for the EAP, and
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1 WHEREAS the number of requests for assistance through the EAP that
2 was created on March 17, 2020, demonstrated a need for expansion and
3 additional funding of the Program, and

4 WHEREAS on April 22, 2020, the Board recommended by Resolution
5 No. U-11159, additional funding for the EAP from TPU funds and from
6 Environmental Services Department funds, and

7 WHEREAS on April 28, 2020, the City Council approved by Resolution
8 No. 40596, the establishment of an EAP within the Environmental Services
9 Department sanitary sewer, stormwater and solid waste utilities and approved
10 allocations from rate stabilization reserves and from funds established for low-
11 income assistance to support the Environmental Services portion of the
12 Program and to further increase the overall funding of the Program with funds
13 used for low income assistance and the fund used for Water Utility operations,
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16 WHEREAS the Director of Utilities and the City Manager were delegated
17 authority to establish criteria for the EAP, except that the income eligibility
18 criteria was set by the Board and the City Council at not more than 200 percent
19 of the poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and
20 Human Services, and
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22 WHEREAS in January of 2021, as part of the 2021-2022 budget
23 process, the Public Utility Board and the City Council approved a change of
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1 income levels for BCAP eligibility to 60 percent of the area median income
2 ("AMI"), and

3 WHEREAS the requests for customer assistance through the existing
4 EAP have demonstrated the need to serve additional households beyond those
5 currently eligible for assistance under the Program or under BCAP and have
6 also demonstrated a need for additional funding of the EAP, and
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8 WHEREAS TPU recommends changing the income eligibility criteria for
9 the EAP from not more than 200 percent of the poverty guidelines established
10 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to 80 percent of the
11 AMI, and
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13 WHEREAS TPU requests that the Board recommend the City Council
14 approve the use of funds currently budgeted to BCAP for low-income
15 assistance to the EAP, and that the Council give the City Manager and the
16 Utilities Director authority to determine the appropriate reallocation of existing
17 BCAP funds where such reallocation will result in additional households
18 becoming potentially eligible to be assisted in response to the state of
19 emergency, and
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21 WHEREAS TPU requests that in addition to amending the income
22 eligibility requirements for funds in the EAP that were contributed by TPU, the
23 Board recommends by Resolution No. U-11319 that the City Council approve a
24 similar amendment to the eligibility requirements for funds in the EAP that were
25 contributed by Environmental Services; Now, therefore,
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BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That to allow for more households to qualify for assistance in this time of emergency, the City Council hereby concurs and approves the recommendation for changing the income eligibility requirement for Tacoma Public Utility and Environmental Services funds in the Emergency Assistance Program ("EAP") from not more than 200 percent of the poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to 80 percent of the area median income.

Section 2. That the City Council approves the same change in income eligibility requirements for all funds in the EAP.



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Section 3. That the City Council approves the use of the funds currently budgeted to Bill Credit Assistance Plan (“BCAP”) for low-income assistance for the EAP, and that the Council delegate to the City Manager and the Utilities Director authority to determine the appropriate reallocation of the existing BCAP funds in order for additional households to be potentially eligible for assistance in response to the state of emergency.

Adopted _____

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk

Approved as to form:

Deputy City Attorney