



RESOLUTION NO. U-11319

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

5 WHEREAS the City Council and the Public Utility Board have
6 consistently budgeted funds for the Bill Credit Assistance Plan (BCAP), through
7 moneys from Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) and Environmental Services (ES)
8 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 customers may be in need of utility bill payment assistance than
19 was available through BCAP, and a new Emergency Assistance Program was
20 created on March 17, 2020, pursuant to Second Amended Resolution No.
21 U-11149 and Resolution No. 40575, with up to one million dollars of the fund
22 used for Power low income assistance and the fund used for Water Utility
23 operations to be used for the Emergency Assistance Program, and
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1 WHEREAS the number of requests for assistance through the
2 Emergency Assistance Program that was created on March 17, 2020,
3 demonstrated a need for expansion and 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 Emergency Assistance Program from
6 TPU funds and from Environmental Services Department funds, and

7 WHEREAS on April 28, 2020, the City Council approved by Resolution
8 No. 40596, the establishment of an Emergency Assistance Program within the
9 Environmental Services Department sanitary sewer, stormwater and solid
10 waste utilities and approved allocations from rate stabilization reserves and
11 from funds established for low-income assistance to support the Environmental
12 Services portion of the Program and to further increase the overall funding of
13 the Program with funds used for low income assistance and the fund used for
14 Water Utility operations, and
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16 WHEREAS the Director of Utilities and the City Manager were delegated
17 authority to establish criteria for the Emergency Assistance Program, except
18 that the income eligibility criteria was set by the Board and the City Council at
19 not more than 200 percent of the poverty guidelines established by the
20 U.S. Department of Health and 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
24 income levels for BCAP eligibility to 60 percent of the area median income
25 (AMI), and
26

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1 WHEREAS the requests for customer assistance through the existing
2 Emergency Assistance Program have demonstrated the need to serve
3 additional households beyond those currently eligible for assistance under the
4 Program or under BCAP and have also demonstrated a need for additional
5 funding of the Emergency Assistance Program, and

6 WHEREAS TPU recommends changing the income eligibility criteria for
7 the Emergency Assistance Program from not more than 200 percent of the
8 poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human
9 Services to 80 percent of the area median income (AMI), and

10
11 WHEREAS TPU requests that the Board recommend the City Council
12 approve the use of funds currently budgeted to BCAP for low-income
13 assistance to the Emergency Assistance Program, and that the Council give the
14 City Manager and the Utilities Director authority to determine the appropriate
15 reallocation of existing BCAP funds where such reallocation will result in
16 additional households becoming potentially eligible to be assisted in response
17 to the state of emergency, and

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19 WHEREAS TPU requests that in addition to amending the income
20 eligibility requirements for funds in the Emergency Assistance Program that
21 were contributed by TPU, the Board recommend that the City Council approve
22 a similar amendment to the eligibility requirements for funds in the Emergency
23 Assistance Program that were contributed by Environmental Services; Now,

24
25 therefore,
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BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PUBLIC UTILITY BOARD OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

1 Section 1. That to allow for more households to qualify for assistance in
2 this time of emergency, the Public Utility Board of the City of Tacoma hereby
3 concurs and approves the recommendation for changing the income eligibility
4 requirement for TPU funds in the Emergency Assistance Program from not
5 more than 200 percent of the poverty guidelines established by the U.S.
6 Department of Health and Human Services to 80% of the area median income
7 (AMI).
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9 Section 2. That the Board recommends that the City Council approve the
10 same change in income eligibility requirements for all funds in the Emergency
11 Assistance Program.
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13 Section 3. That the Board recommends that the City Council approve the
14 use of the funds currently budgeted to BCAP for low-income assistance for the
15 Emergency Assistance Program, and that the Council delegate to the City
16 Manager and the Utilities Director authority to determine the appropriate
17 reallocation of the existing BCAP funds in order for additional households to be
18 potentially eligible for assistance in response to the state of emergency.
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20 Approved as to form: _____
21 _____
22 /s/ _____ Chair
23 Chief Deputy City Attorney Secretary
24 _____ Adopted _____
25 Clerk
26



Board Action Memorandum

TO: Jackie Flowers, Director of Utilities
COPY: Charleen Jacobs, Director and Board Offices
FROM: Francine Artis, Interim Customer Services Manager
MEETING DATE: May 11, 2022
DATE: April 28, 2022

SUMMARY: Tacoma Public Utilities requests a resolution to modify the income eligibility level for the Emergency Assistance Program and to request that Bill Credit Assistance Plan (BCAP) funds be reallocated by the Director of Utilities and the City Manager to the Emergency Assistance Program in order to assist eligible households with outstanding utility balances accrued prior to March 31, 2022.

BACKGROUND: BCAP is funded by the City Council through the Tacoma Public Utilities budgets and the Environmental Services budgets.

BCAP is available to eligible electricity, drinking water, sanitary sewer, stormwater and solid waste utilities customers, and provides assistance in the form of a utility bill credit up to \$564 annually, which is applied to the utility account each time the bill is paid in full and on time. As of January 1, 2020 the BCAP household income eligibility levels are set at not more than 60 percent of the area median income (AMI); prior to then the eligibility level was not more than 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services .

During the state of emergency declared in response to COVID-19, in March of 2020 the Board approved by Second Amended Resolution No. U-11149 the creation of a new Emergency Assistance Program (Program). The Program uses funds allocated to BCAP, but by setting eligibility levels at not more than 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, allowed households beyond those served by the BCAP to become potentially eligible for assistance. The City Council approved the Program and its funding from the fund used for Power low-income assistance and from the fund used for Water Utility operations.

In April of 2020 the Board recommended by Resolution U-11159, and the Council approved by Resolution 40596, establishment of an Emergency Assistance Program within the Environmental Services Department sanitary sewer, stormwater and solid waste utilities. Allocations were correspondingly approved from rate stabilization reserves and from funds established for low-income assistance to support the Environmental Services portion of the Program and to further increase the overall funding of the Program with funds used for Power low income assistance and the fund used for Water Utility operations.

An emergency related moratorium on utility disconnections was in place up to March 31, 2022. Accounts with outstanding balances as of March 31, 2022 have been automatically placed on 24-month extended payment plans, which will remain in place so long as the customer remains up to date on the payment plan installments and on current utility charges. In order for more households to utilize the Emergency Assistance Program to obtain assistance to be used to retire outstanding balances, staff is requesting that the Board approve a change to the Program income eligibility requirement from 200% of the poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to 80% of the area median income (AMI) and to recommend the City Council approve reallocation of BCAP funds from Power, Water and Environmental Services to the Emergency Assistance Program and to delegate to the City Manager and Utilities Director the authority to determine the appropriate manner for reallocation of such funds.



Board Action Memorandum

The amount of BCAP funds that are currently expected to be repurposed by the Director of Utilities and the City Manager to the Emergency Assistance Program is a total amount of \$2,746,595 which would come from the following sources:

Amount Per Division to be Repurposed	Power	Water	Wastewater	Surface Water	Solid Waste
Reallocate to Emergency Assistance Program	\$2,067,578	\$357,530	\$111,968	\$54,542	\$154,977

The Director of Utilities and the City Manager have been delegated with the authority to establish criteria for the Emergency Assistance Program. The funds being moved to the Emergency Assistance Program will be used for TPU account holders with open accounts who meet the 80% AMI requirement, and have completed and returned the designated paperwork to establish eligibility. The assistance will be a one-time grant for homeowners or renters that is applied to outstanding balances for charges billed directly by TPU. If the outstanding balance exceeds the maximum grant, the customer will continue on an extended payment plan (which requires keeping current on existing charges and installments). Customers may also seek additional assistance from other non-TPU sources.

ARE THE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES PLANNED AND BUDGETED? Yes. The funds are currently budgeted to BCAP but will be reallocated the Emergency Assistance Program.

IF THE EXPENSE IS NOT BUDGETED, PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW THEY ARE TO BE COVERED.
N/A

IF THE ACTION REQUESTED IS APPROVAL OF A CONTRACT, INCLUDE LANGUAGE IN RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING \$200,000 INCREASE IN ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY TO DIRECTOR? N/A

ATTACHMENTS: List any attachments (contracts, policies, agreements, etc.).

CONTACT: Francine Artis, Interim Customer Services Manager, (253) 502-8691