

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES  
MANUAL

FOR

TOWN OF VANCEBORO  
BILLING AND COLLECTIONS  
DEPARTMENT

# CONTENTS

- I. Personnel
- II. Billing Procedures
- III. A. Collections Procedures  
B. New Services & Terminated Services
- IV. Delinquency Procedures
- v. Customer Service
- VI. Adjustments
- VII. Return Check Policy
- VIII. Mail & Drop Box Collection

# I. Personnel

## a. Internal Procedures

The Billing and Collection Department operates with two employees.

- Town Clerk
- Assistant Clerk

Lunch hours are scheduled to operate the counter collections during a period between 12:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. One personnel is in attendance during this time.

Vacation is scheduled through the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk schedules with the governing body.

The department personnel must call the town clerk to report in sick or for any other emergency **as soon as possible**. The town clerk must report to the governing body.

## **II. Billing Procedures**

Utility billing is completed in one cycle: 25<sup>th</sup> of each month.

Reading and processing period for each billing cycle is within 2 to 4 days.

The town clerk and the public works director must communicate for dates to be completed.

The assistant clerk is responsible for the following during the billing period:

- loading data into Asyst for billing procedures.

- Printing data and mailing eight to ten days prior to bill date.

## 111 a. Collection Procedures

There is only one collection station. Both the town clerk and assistant clerk has access to the cash drawer and are responsible for each day. The cash drawer is locked at the end of the business day.

The door to the town hall is unlocked during business hours and locked during non-business hours.

### Weekly balancing procedures

The following steps are performed each day at 8:30 a.m.

the cash drawer is balanced down to a maximum of \$130.00.

any monies over the \$130.00 is kept in a fireproof safe.

A deposit is made each day as needed.

Types of collections may include the following:

payment of water/sewer/garbage accounts  
new service and connections  
transfer of service  
privilege license  
zoning permits  
cemetery plots  
civil penalties

Collections or payments can be made by the following:

cash, check, or money order  
mailing payments  
drop-box payments  
automatic bank drafts

\*A receipt is given for all transactions. If the receipt is misplaced or lost.

\*\* Note: We do not accept two party checks.

### **III b. Collections for new services & Terminated services**

The Town Clerk and the Assistant Clerk will be responsible for all new customers, customers who wish to transfer service, and terminated services. They both may receive new customers, transfers, or terminates, but will need to be available for payments collections at all times.

#### **New Customers**

All new customers are required to pay a deposit in order to establish service with the town of Vanceboro. The new customer must be present to establish service and be able to show picture identification and the town of Vanceboro will request a social security number for collection purposes (NCGS105a-3(c)).

We do not accept co-signers or credit references.

#### **Rates for New Deposits** on current Rate Schedule

The clerks will generate a work request and update the computer records with the new information. The customer can have service connected within the same day by 4:00 p.m., unless otherwise scheduled.

The deposit fee becomes part of the customer master file and kept on record until the customer discontinues service with the town of Vanceboro. In the event that service is discontinued, the deposit will be applied towards the final bill.

**\*\*Note:** customers who wish to change the name on an account must do one of the following:

- a) deposit owner must sign a signature card indicating their deposit is to be designated to new customer, therefore changing the account in the new customer's name. the new customer will assume all responsibility for account and balance.

- b) The new customer would pay a new deposit only and assume the account. The previous customer will be refunded for their deposit.

## **Transfers**

When a customer moves from one service address to another, the customer must be present at the town of Vanceboro to transfer service. The customer must also be able to show proof of address by a lease agreement or buyer's agreement.

The customer must pay the present account in full for a zero balance and pay a transfer fee. This procedure is required of all customers transferring service. The clerk will generate work requests for the proper address changes. The customer may schedule the previous service for disconnect at a later date in order to clean-up premises. The service at the new location can be connected same day of payment, unless otherwise scheduled.

## **Owners of Rental Property**

The owners of rental property are required to pay a service charge for utilities service. The account will be established and billed each month for utility service until the property is rented/lease. The account will remain in owner's name until new customer has service established. The owner is responsible for the account as long as the account is active and in their name. The property owners need to provide their mailing address for billing purposes and pay the service fee. This fee can be collected by mail, drop-box, or counter collections. This is a requirement of all rental property owners wanting service connected.

## **Terminated Services**

In order to terminate services with the town of Vanceboro, the (account holder) customer can call or come into the office to submit an order to terminate. The following information will be required upon request: name on the account, address to terminate, customer's SSN or verification of SSN on file (last four digits), date of termination, forwarding mailing address for final billing.



\*If the person or calling is NOT the customer on the account, you must collect the following information: the name of the termination requestor, relation to account holder (noted on work order), customer's SSN or verification of SSN (last four digits), forwarding address, date of termination. If this person is unavailable to give SSN number - DO NOT terminate account until proper party has provided correct information.

\*If the person present or calling is a P.O.A. or Executor of an Estate, complete simple terminate order, request a copy of the Power of Attorney or Executor of Estate legal document and reference requestor on work order.

On the work order request, detailed information will be recorded if the situation is unusual. This information will be useful for future reference.

### **Reactivating Services after Termination Request**

The account holder is allowed to reactivate services if the account has not been final billed. The customer must properly identify him/herself from the information recorded on the account.

On the work order request, full detail of circumstances will be documented.

### **Water & Sewer Taps/Connections**

The Public Works Director creates the new location address. New water and sewer connection fees are listed on the current Rate Schedule.

All builders/construction companies will be responsible for monthly billing during the construction period. At the time of meter purchase or when new tap is made to the main line, a monthly statement will be billed for **water only** availability, and water consumption based upon the current Rate Schedule. The builder will be responsible for the service during construction period. The builder must take precautions to avoid meter tampering or unnecessary water waste.

## IV. Delinquency Procedures

The Town Clerk will select the dates for delinquency cut-off lists for the Town of Vanceboro. The list is processed approximately four to five days before the bill due date.

Delinquency cut-off lists are compiled of customers with a balance past due for 30 days or more on their account. The cut-off list is printed by the billing department. A preliminary list is printed one day prior to the actual scheduled cut off day. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month bills are due, unless the 10<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend. If so, cutoffs are done the falling business day. As a courtesy, we contact those that we have numbers for. On cut-off day morning, the drop box is opened and all payments received are immediately posted. If a customer pays on their account before the cut off list leaves the building, they have the option to pay one month in arrears to avoid disconnection.

The public works employees are responsible for completing the cut-off list on site.

**\*THE PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEES DO NOT COLLECT MONEY\***

**\*ALL ACCOUNTS SCHEDULED MUST BE DISCONNECTED\***

Collections of non-payment accounts are as follows:

- two months in arrears on account must be paid in full  
reconnection fee is applied (\$75.00 as of 6/24/13 - subject to change\*)

The mail collection on the morning of cut-off is closely checked for any payments by customers scheduled for disconnection. A call is made immediately to the service person if any payments are found in the mail.

After payment is made for disconnection, a work request is generated for the service person to reconnect the service. A call is dispatched by radio, also. The water service must be reinstated within the same day that payment was made.

## **Locklist Procedures**

This list is completed approximately ONE WEEK after the original cut-off list was generated. The cut-off list is checked again by the clerk for any outstanding customers who have not paid. The lock list is completed by the service person by locking the meter.

Collections are as followed:

- account must be paid in full up to the current month
- reconnection fee

**\*\*Note:** other fees apply for damages to city property during this period**\*\***

## **Active/Inactive Services**

It is the occupant's responsibility to establish service provided by the Town of Vanceboro. If the service is discovered to be active at the location and inactive on the billing records, the water meter will be immediately shut off and locked until service has been established.

In addition to the procedure listed above, all "**final**" reading" work requests will be locked at the meter location when water is turned off. This procedure will help to control inactive accounts. The service will not be available to new occupants until a deposit has been paid to the Town of Vanceboro.

## **V. Customer Service**

The Town of Vanceboro Town Hall assists the general public with information concerning the Town of Vanceboro. We are responsive to all persons coming in town hall, not only utility customers.

The town clerk and assistant clerk receive complaints from utility customers or the public in general. We are responsible for directing them to the proper department for information. The complaints for utility service customers are handled within our department.

The following is the grievance ladder for unsatisfied customers:-

- Town Clerk
- Mayor

We are employed by the Town of Vanceboro to serve the citizens of Vanceboro. We are subject to verbal abuse from unsatisfied customers. We must listen to problems concerning Town of Vanceboro service and attempt to satisfy their grievance. If we cannot solve the problem, we must seek higher management for assistance. However, we are not subject to personal abuse and an employee may remove themselves from the situation if needed.

## VI. Adjustments

### A. Leaks and Swimming Pool Fill-ups

Adjustments are made for customers with water and sewer service with the Town of Vanceboro. Adjustments are made on high bills due to leaks or swimming pool fill-ups. The procedure is as followed: the customer's sewer account is averaged for twelve months (or history available) for an average consumption. The sewer charge is calculated from this average consumption. The highest bill for a leak or pool fill-up is adjusted on the sewer charge. All of the water consumption will be charged and collected.

On swimming pool adjustments, they are limited to **one** adjustment per season.

**\*\*Adjustments made for a leak in the pool after initial fill-up will be done only if the owner produces a receipt from materials bought for repair or plumber's receipt.\*\***

**Leaks on all customer's property can be adjusted with proof of repair. A plumber's receipt or receipt of materials bought from store must be produced before adjustment is made. The leak must be repaired before adjustment is made on the highest bill.**

Procedure for making an adjustment on sewer charges:

- look-up history account for customer needing the adjustment
- calculate the average usage (minus the high month) for twelve months or whatever is available from the account history consumption.

### B. Correction and Credits for Billing Errors

In the event of a billing error on an account, the Town of Vanceboro will make the correction as follows:

- 1) The Billing Department will submit the account through Cancel-Rebill processing for corrections to calculate accurate consumption and charges.
- 2) If a credit is accrued, the account will carry the credit to be applied towards future billing to the active account. If the account is inactive, a refund will be issued to the customer.
- 3) If a correction incurs charges against the account, the charges are "back" billed for (\*see note below) two years through adjustments. A statement is submitted to the customer for collection purposes. In the event that the customer is unable to pay the balance in full, payment arrangements can be made upon request to the Town Clerk.

**Note:** If the error has occurred for a long period of time, the Town of Vanceboro is obligated only two years for refunds and back charges, as per North Carolina General Statute 1-53 (1).

### **C. Limitations of Adjustments**

The policy for adjustments was created for the purpose of aiding a customer on the monthly billing statement effected by large water usage. The usage causes a large water and sewer charge calculation. Adjustments are allowed only if a preventive repair has been made to the source of the water leak. If proof of repair is not available, the billing will not be adjusted until the following month after average billing occurs again. Adjustments are made to **sewer only accounts**, after calculations and proof of repair has been presented to the billing & collections department.

Adjustments made to an account for repairs will not exceed more than two per calendar year.

## VII. Return Check Policy

For checks returned from the bank for non-sufficient funds, the following procedures are taken:

- Reverse Payment Entry through Asyst for payments of utility accounts.
- The system will generate a return check fee automatically to the customer's account.
- All entries must be listed and posted by the end of day.
- WE DO NOT REDEPOSIT CHECKS!! (Exceptions will be only when a bank official calls to let us know that the bank was in error, not the customer. The bank official needs to let us know also that the check will be "good".
- Return Check Fee is \*\*\$25.00 - subject to change\*\*

The water service is **disconnected** for the following actions:

- 1) A NSF check is written to reinstate service after disconnection for nonpayment. The total check amount plus a return check fee of \$25.00\* is collected before service is restored.
- 2) A NSF check is written prior to cut-off to avoid disconnection of service. To reinstate service, the two months in arrears plus a reconnect fee is collected. The account is treated the same as a nonpayment account.



## VIII. Mail and Drop-Box Procedures

### Mail

Morning mail is picked up from the Post Office by the public works employees each day. (In their absence, the clerk will pick up).

The Town Clerk sorts the mail and delivers to the Assistant Clerk.

The Assistant Clerk will work through the mail each morning. The mail must be completed by 2:30 p.m. daily. Town Clerk will assist, if needed.

All outgoing mail is taken to the post office at 5:00 p.m.

### DROP-BOX

The Town Clerk or Assistant Clerk will open the drop-box vault each morning for after-hours payments.

Assistant Clerk will work drop-box payments. This procedure must be done by 9:30 a.m.

It is the intent of this policy to abide by all government laws, rules, regulations, executive orders, court decisions, and procedures.

The Town of Vanceboro must abide by this Policies and Procedures Manual. You may not deviate any policy or procedure without prior approval from the Town Mayor.

Town Mayor Chad E. Briston

Town Clerk Beverly W. Drake

