



MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners Mital, Schlossberg, Helgeson, Brown and Carlson
FROM: Julie McGaughey, Chief Customer Officer; Rene Gonzalez, Customer Solutions Manager; Anna Wade, Business Line Manager
DATE: April 27, 2020
SUBJECT: Covid-19 Customer Assistance Update
OBJECTIVE: Information Only

Issue

This memo is provided to update the Board on the implementation of Covid-19 crisis response initiatives, and to inform the Board of ongoing work related thereto.

Background

On March 14th, EWEB announced the suspension of power and water shut-offs for non-payment, and late fees; the option for loan deferment; increased funding for EWEB Customer Care benefits (ECC); and expanded ECC assistance eligibility to include job loss. This customer crisis package was implemented swiftly, and remains in place at this time until further notice.

For the safety of customers and staff, the EWEB lobby was closed on March 17th. A robust communication plan was carried out to alert all customers and to minimize lobby traffic from in-person ECC applicants on April 1st. This effort was widely successful. In addition to increased on-line activity, over 100 customers have taken advantage of the new mail-in option. The mail-in option is provided exclusively to senior and disabled applicants and remains open throughout the month.

Finally, the announcement of federal stimulus includes funding for utility assistance. Staff estimate ~\$9M for the State of Oregon. The funds will be delivered through standard LIHEAP channels. Locally, Lane County Human Services Department will accept applications from EWEB customers. Timing, methodology and funding levels for the additional federal assistance are not yet known.

Discussion

Given the severity of local unemployment, EWEB immediately altered the 2020 planned ECC allocation schedule to commit more funds in the near term. The original allocation included \$90,000 in ECC payments during each month from April through June (See Attachment A).

On April 1, EWEB accepted 900 applications in the first hour, equivalent to \$234,000 in assistance. Additional applications from senior and disabled customers, put the assistance equivalent at \$260,000. The increased allocation for May and June is \$225,000 and \$200,000 respectively. ECC allocation increases are planned to be drawn from customer donation funds.

Concurrent with relief implementation, staff are developing strategies to support recovery and reintroduction of standard customer payment schedules. As configured, CIS currently limits payment plans to next payment due date, a maximum of 30 days. Customer Solutions is working with IS staff to evaluate system-managed payment arrangements that will offer greater flexibility to customers during recovery.

General Service programs are also being developed. Options under consideration may include CIS payment plans, loan deferrals and/or temporary payment deferrals. Current funding strategy will rely on Business Growth & Retention reserves.

Recommendation

This memo has been provided for informational purposes only

Requested Board Action

None at this time.

ATTACHMENT A

2019 Assistance													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
ECC Credits	\$76,404	\$79,231	\$98,500	\$61,100	\$54,130	\$41,690	\$45,480	\$60,750	\$70,830	\$293,815	\$94,595	\$67,315	\$1,043,840
LIHEAP Credits	\$183,100	\$107,290	\$120,005	\$110,475	\$73,755	\$51,214	\$13,630	\$710	(\$230)	\$3,985	\$271,425	\$202,039	\$1,137,398
ECC Recipients	402	440	495	322	279	201	240	305	370	524	439	274	4291
LIHEAP Recipients	597	303	326	303	200	143	39	2	2	12	833	603	3363

2020 ECC													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
ECC 2020 (prior)	\$133,380	\$171,860	\$147,160	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$1,472,400
ECC 2020 (updated)	\$133,380	\$171,860	\$147,160	\$260,000	\$225,000	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$1,737,400
													LIHEAP RENEWS

