



SUBJECT: DISPUTES RELATED TO WATER AND SEWER BILLS

POLICY: PURPOSE:

The intent of this policy is to provide uniformity in the investigation and disposition of disputes related to water and sewer bills. This policy was designed to provide specific standards for Village response to customer inquiries which are consistent with good public relations. These standards should also reduce unnecessary rereading of meters, and provide for the prompt and efficient handling of disputes. It also details options available to all parties should an impasse occur between the Village and the claimant.

POLICY:

In the event that a customer has a dispute with their water bill they should call The Village of Fonda Water Clerk at 518-853-4335 (In the proceeding the title Water Clerk refers to the actual clerk or a designated representative.)

1. The Water Clerk will record the name, address, account information and phone number of complainant and assure them that they will receive a return phone call in 24 hours or the next business day.

2. The Water Clerk will examine the billing records for inaccuracies and compare current readings to previous year readings for the same time period. The Water Clerk will also verify if there have been any estimated readings and that this bill may be a correction to a previously estimated bill.

3. The Water Clerk will inform the customer of the findings within the specified time limit. The Water Clerk will assist the customer in understanding their bill. The Water Clerk will also inform the customer how their usage compares with the average usage of similar customers. If the customer still believes there is a problem with the meter, the Water Clerk may create a work order for the designated representative of the Water Department. The creation of the work order and the details of the order are at the discretion of the Water Clerk.

4. Work orders are reviewed by the Water Department personnel every morning. The work order will be completed as quickly as personnel and materials are available.

5. The Water Department will verify the functionality of the water meter in question and at the same time attempt to discern if any leaks are present. This is done by asking the customer to cease using all water on their property. When all water use is stopped, the water meter usage indicator is observed for any signs of movement.

a. This is the extent of the Water Department personnel involvement in leak detection.

b. The Village of Fonda does not conduct leak detection beyond the customer's meter.

c. The Water Department lacks the man power to provide this service to every customer every month and must limit this service to once every three months. A fee of \$30.00 per visit will be applied to customers who habitually request Water Department personnel recheck and reread meters each month.

d. If a leak is determined the Water Clerk will inform the customer of the leak.

e. Customers are responsible for all the water that goes through their meter. The Village however cannot excuse a bill for water usage that occurred on the customer's property regardless of the circumstances. If the leak is at the meter or a result of faulty meter installation the Village will accept responsibility and make the necessary corrections. If the Customer is not satisfied with the accuracy of the water meter, they can request an independent company perform a certification and calibration test. The Customer will be responsible for the charge of the test if it is determined that results are within accuracy limits derived from AWWA (American Water Works Association). The Customer will not be responsible for the charge of the test if the results are not within the accuracy limits derived from AWWA meaning they are higher than the accuracy limits and the account will be adjusted to reflect the percentage of difference up to six months previous water usage.

6. If the meter is determined to be functioning properly and no billing errors have been found the customer will be held responsible for the payment of the bill.

7. Customers may, if they wish, purchase a new meter from the Village of Fonda, which we will install. The meter will be billed at the actual cost to the Village (\$166 plus shipping at this time) plus installation costs (\$50.00 labor at this time).

8. In the event that the customer is still unsatisfied, the customer should be given a Water Bill Complaint Form.

a. This form must be filled out by the customer and signed.

b. The completed complaint form must be returned within 30 days of the date of the bill. Complaints for bills over 30 days will not be reviewed.

c. Complaints should be mailed or delivered to Village of Fonda, Att: Water Bill Complaint Form, PO Box 447, Fonda, NY 12068.

9. Upon receipt of the Water Bill Complaint Form, the statements will be reviewed by the Public Works Manager, the supervisor in charge of water meters, the Finance Manager, the Water Clerk and any additional Village staff necessary to reach a conclusion. During the time period of investigation, the account will be placed on management hold to avoid shut-off or any legal ramifications (liens, collections)

10. The Water Bill Complaint Forms will be reviewed once per month at an appointed time when all necessary parties are available.

11. If a customer requests to be present, the Water Clerk will contact that customer with the time, date and location of the review.

12. The final disposition of all water bill review cases rests with the review committee, which will notify you of the disposition of your complaint.

13. If at any time the customer feels they are being treated unfairly, they have the ability to appeal to the Village Mayor or the Village Board of Trustees.



### Village of Fonda Water Bill Complaint Form

1. Name of property owner(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Owner(s) address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Other Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Customer Code \_\_\_\_\_ Location of property \_\_\_\_\_

2. Contact representative information of property owner if applicable

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Other Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Grounds for Complaint

Briefly state below the grounds or basis upon which you believe the water rents and/or sewer rents are incorrect. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I certify that all statements made on this application are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and I understand that the making of any false statement of material fact herein will be subject to the provisions of Penal Law relevant to the making and filing a false instruments.

\_\_\_\_\_  
signature of owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
signature of representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

#### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date rec'd \_\_\_\_\_

Actions performed: Examine the billing records for inaccuracies  date \_\_\_\_\_

Assist the customer in understanding their bill  date \_\_\_\_\_

Create a work order  date \_\_\_\_\_ DPW verify functionality of water meter  date \_\_\_\_\_

Discern if any leaks are present Yes  No  date \_\_\_\_\_ Customer requests meter accuracy test Yes  No

Complaint Forms review  Contact customer with date/time of review date \_\_\_\_\_

Final disposition \_\_\_\_\_

Appeal to the Village Mayor or the Village Board of Trustees Yes  No  Date \_\_\_\_\_

Board determination: \_\_\_\_\_

Customer informed of results: Date \_\_\_\_\_ by phone in person via written form Date \_\_\_\_\_