

**Department Requesting Code Change:**

Department of Public Utilities / Columbus Water & Power

**Drafter:**

Jon Lee

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**Columbus City Code Title Being Amended/Created/Repealed:**

Code Sections 1105.04, 1105.041, 1105.055, 1105.12, 1105.17 and 1105.21

**What is the overall purpose of this code change?** *Summarize the general themes of the code change(s) and the need for these changes. Please utilize language and descriptors that would be easily understandable by the general public.*

To increase water rates 18% effective January 1, 2026 to cover operating, maintenance, and debt service expenses. The ordinance also updates outdated capacity fees and adjusts the current commercial commodity charge block structure from declining block to a uniform rate.

CWP is slowly rolling out our system-wide switch from quarterly billing to monthly billing for residential water services, which was made possible by our Enhanced Meter Project.

Updating our rate language to reflect the reality that all residential customers are charged on a monthly basis even if they are billed quarterly. It also makes clear that all residential customers are charged equally whether they are billed quarterly or monthly.

**Why is this code change needed?** *Examples: Correcting a drafting error; bringing code into alignment with changes to state law. For other policy changes, it may be necessary to provide a much more in-depth rationale in the section.*



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**What would be the impact of not adopting this code change?**

**Are there any operating or capital budget cost/savings implications for this code change?**

*These may be direct or in-direct, and please also consider long-term impact.*

The average water customer is likely to see their quarterly water bill increase from \$109.10 to \$128.74 in 2026. This rate increase is estimated to generate \$40 million for the Water Operating Fund.

Capacity fee adjustments will result in additional revenue to the Division of Water. The amount of additional revenue is unknown and is dependent on the number of new taps to the water system.

The commercial uniform rate change from declining block to uniform rate will generally result in customers needing less capacity paying less, and customer needing more capacity paying more.

Cost implications include mailing of additional bills to customers and cost increases for e-bill notifications, portal payment fees, banking fees, and processing fees. Increases in cost may be mitigated through the expected implementation of the new billing system and customer portal in 2026.

An indirect budget implication is that leaks after the meter may be able to be determined earlier. This will result in a slight reduction in department revenue however the result will be much higher customer satisfaction.

Some of the savings expected are a reduction in the number of delinquent accounts as well as the amount of funds that are delinquent from those accounts.



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**Describe the community engagement process regarding this code change. What residents, impacted parties, and constituents may be affected? Have they been engaged, and how so? How was their feedback incorporated (or not incorporated) into this code change?**

Press release information, social media postings, and bill insert information on the Water rate and charge increases will be provided to customers.

All residential customers within the water and sewer service area will eventually be moved from a quarterly billing to a monthly billing cycle. The transition will occur slowly over the next 18-24 months. The roll out is based on the when areas are completed by the Enhanced Meter Project.

When moving customers from quarterly billing to monthly billing, they will receive one letter and two postcards prior to conversion to monthly billing. The information will include FAQs about the transition. Information is also included in the FAQs on the ColumbusEMP.org website as part of the Enhanced Meter Project.

Benefits to the customer include smaller, more manageable water and sewer bills that will allow customers to budget easier. Having smaller, more frequent bills allows customer to understand their usage patterns better and therefore have better control over their usage and ultimately their bills. Having their bills more often will allow for leaks and other abnormal usage patterns to be detected sooner by the customer.

Based on the recent pilot program for this initiative, customers have responded favorably to the transition.

**Will this code change take effect with the ordinance, or is there a delayed effective date?**

This ordinance and the water rate increases will have an effective date of January 1, 2026. The capacity fee increase will have an effective date of April 1, 2026 to ensure developers have adequate time to adjust to the new fee requirements. The actual switch to a monthly bill will be rolled out by zones over the next two years as the enhanced meters are installed.



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