



City of San Marcos

City Council Work Session

September 3, 2024



Receive a staff presentation regarding the utility assistance program and provide direction to the City Manager.



Purpose

- Provide response to utility assistance information requested at the August 20 Budget presentation
- Provide short-term and long-term recommendations on identifying agencies to administer City-funded utility assistance



Utility Payment Plans

- Extended payment requests may be made at least one day prior to the date of disconnection
 - Payment extensions are authorized up to 2 weeks
- Utility Billing Clerks also provide customers with agency contact information for further assistance
 - Community Action
 - Southside Community Center
 - Salvation Army
 - St. Vincent De Paul
 - Blanco River Regional Recovery Team



Utility Disconnection Process

- Disconnections are suspended during extreme weather conditions
 - High temperatures predicted to reach 100 degrees Fahrenheit two consecutive days or the National Weather Service issues heat advisory during disconnection period
 - Cold temperatures are predicted to remain 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below for the next 24 hours during disconnection period
- Disconnections are not made on Fridays and weekends

Utility Disconnections



Average monthly accounts billed		<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024*</u>
Residential bill count		30,068	30,708
Commercial bill count		5,200	5,292
Total		35,268	36,000

Residential bill count	30,068	30,708
Total residential disconnects	3,558	2,945

Residential Account Breakdown	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024**</u>
Accounts disconnected 1 time	2,511	2,138
Accounts disconnected 2 times	684	530
Accounts disconnected 3 times	210	168
Accounts disconnected 4 times	97	78
Accounts disconnected 5 times	35	20
Accounts disconnected 6 or more times	21	11
Total	3,558	2,945

*As of July 2024

**As of August 2024

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Utility Assistance Disconnections



Residential bill count	30,068	30,708
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Accounts Receiving Utility Assistance	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024*</u>
Total accounts	569	580
Total disconnects	129	107

Accounts with Payment Extensions	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024*</u>
Total payment extensions	6,517	7,118
Individual account payment extensions	1,915	1,948
Individual account disconnects	715	586

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*As of August 2024

Utility Assistance in San Marcos



Emergency assistance, including utility assistance, is provided by the City through several agencies funded by the Human Services Advisory Board (HSAB) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The San Marcos Utilities’ program is administered by Community Action, Inc.

Funding Source or Program	Agency	Funding
HSAB*	Bobcat Pride Scholarship Fund	\$5,000
HSAB*	Society of St. Vincent de Paul	\$20,000
HSAB *	Southside Community Center	\$50,000
CDBG	Salvation Army	\$12,000
CDBG	Southside Community Center	\$12,000
CDBG	Society of St. Vincent de Paul	\$12,000
SMTX Utilities	Community Action, Inc.	\$120,000
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATED BY CITY		\$231,000

*Funding amounts for the 2024 calendar year. The 2025 process for HSAB funding is underway.

Utility Assistance Awards in FY 2024



Utility Assistance Program	Administrator/ Funding Source	Dollar Amount	Number of Accounts
Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)	Community Action/ Federal Program	\$237,318.24	375
Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)	Community Action/ Federal program	58,451.15	138
City Program	Community Action/ SMTX Utilities	14,021.55	99
Other Agencies*	Various Sources**	125,224.94	580
TOTAL		\$435,015.88	612

*Other agencies include: BR3T, Salvation Army, Hope for Veterans, St. Vincent de Paul, Southside Community Center, and other agencies that provide utility assistance. **Some agencies' funding may include Human Services Advisory Board (HSAB) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.



Utility Assistance Program

- In FY 2019 the City's program budgeted amount grew from \$60,000 to \$120,000
- In FY 2021, Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) dollars were allocated towards Utility Assistance
 - \$1,000,000 administered by the City
 - \$174,399 for rent and utility assistance administered by Community Action and BR3T

City-funded Utility Assistance	
Fiscal Year	Amount
2024*	\$14,022
2023	\$19,820
2022	\$36,554
2021	\$45,790
2020	\$39,183
2019	\$39,217

*As of Friday, August 23, 2024
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Recommendations

- Short-Term (FY 2025) – Proceed with a request for proposals to allocate City portion of utility assistance funding to 2-3 agencies
 - RFP to be issued in the next 3 months
- Long-Term – Develop process to select 2-3 agencies to administer program

Recommendations



- Process Improvements
 - Refine eligibility criteria of agencies administering program (agency responsiveness, accessible via various forms of communication, documentation requirements)
 - Streamline process
 - Enhance promotion of utility assistance options
 - Check in regularly with the selected agencies to identify/address problems or systemic issues



Council Direction

- Proceed with proposed recommendations?



Questions and Discussion