

# **Preventative Measures to Eliminate Water Disconnections**

*City Council – Item 12*

*May 8, 2025*



# COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST

Submitted Aug. 7, 2024, by Council Districts 2 and 7

2024 - 0022



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

## BACKGROUND

- Highlights water disconnection in apartment complexes in default of payment to San Antonio Water System (SAWS)
  - Affects tenants in good standing
- Requests staff from City of San Antonio and SAWS to:
  - Establish methods to prevent similar situations

**TO:** Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk

**FROM:** Councilmember Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, District 2  
Councilmember Marina Alderete Gavito, District 7

**COPIES:** Erik Walsh, City Manager; Andy Segovia, City Attorney; Joe Frank Picazo, Interim Assistant to the City Manager; Emily McGinn, Assistant to the City Council

**SUBJECT:** Preventive Measures to Eliminate Water Disconnections for Apartment Residents In Good Standing

**DATE:** Wednesday, August 7, 2024

### Issue for Proposed Consideration

After coordinating this Council Consideration Request (CCR) with the City Manager, I respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the Governance Committee, and subsequently on the agenda of the earliest available A-Session:

Requesting consideration of: Preventive Measures to Eliminate Water Disconnections for Apartment Residents In Good Standing

### Brief Background

Recently, San Antonio residents – including our constituents – residing in several apartment complexes have experienced water service disconnections or the threat of such disconnections, through no fault of their own. These disconnections occurred because their landlord or property management company failed to make timely payments to the San Antonio Water System (SAWS). While many residents living at or below poverty level must weigh the consequences of paying one bill before another, they ultimately decide to prioritize their all-inclusive rent because they recognize the risk of losing their housing and water service. However, landlords have placed these same residents in harm's way by not paying the bill and thus stopping their access to water service, showing they did not value the safety and wellbeing of their residents. When landlords neglect their duty of care, the consequences of that decision should fall upon them, not their tenants.

# FOCUS AREAS

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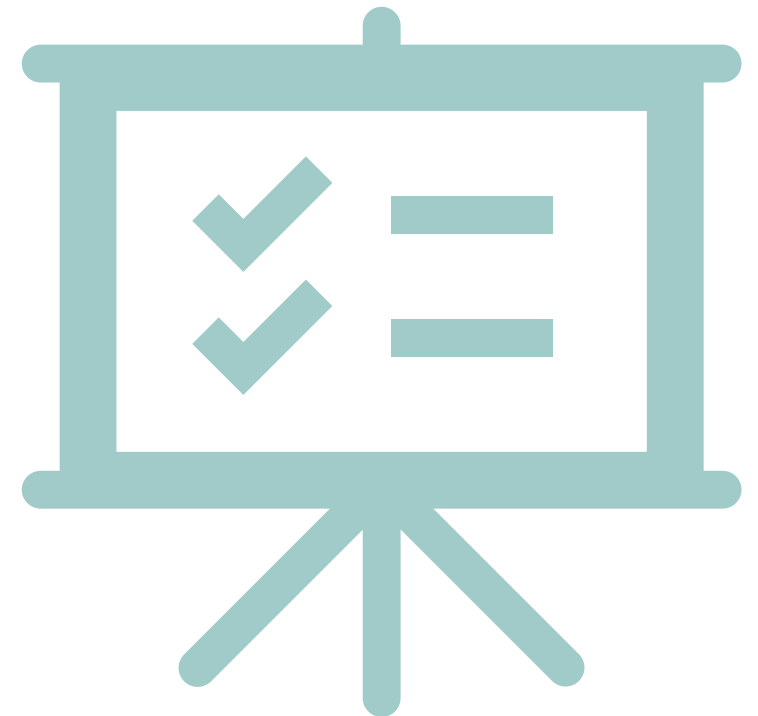
- Modify Proactive Apartment Inspections Program (PAIP) ordinance to:
  - Include apartments **consistently** late in paying SAWS before water disconnects (final notice, notice of disconnect, door hangers, other)
  - Require landlords or property managers to notify renters when entering SAWS payment program
  - Require delinquent complexes to be managed by reputable management company not currently on the PAIP
  - Publicly display apartments delinquent on SAWS payments via COSA website
- SAWS to share data with COSA for apartments subject to disconnections allowing for proper response and coordination
- COSA and SAWS to update policies and procedures to ensure proper notice and documentation before any disconnections



# MUNICIPAL UTILITY COMMITTEE BRIEF

## ON FEB. 25 MEETING

- SAWS discussed changes implemented in last 6 months
  - Additional communication to:
    - Property owners
    - Residents
    - COSA departments
  - Increases collaboration and time for preparedness
- DSD presented information and results on Proactive Apartment Inspections Program (PAIP)
  - DSD asked to work on formal recommendation
    - Could include liens and
    - Possible use of the PAIP



# APARTMENT OUTREACH & COLLECTION EFFORTS



## IMPROVEMENTS IN INFORMATION GATHERING & SHARING

- Increased coordination and communication with Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD)
  - Add QR code for Renters' Resources website to door hangers
- Partnership established with San Antonio Apartment Association helped identify additional points of contact and assisted with collection efforts
- Enhanced internal efforts to reach these customers:
  - Providing certified letters to BCAD owners in addition to SAWS contact
  - Expanding notification process from 4 to 5 weeks
  - Educating property managers regarding disconnection timeline
  - Making multiple site visits prior to placing door hangers
  - Providing 3 tenant door hangers prior to disconnection (2 weeks, 1 week, 1 day)
  - Expanding payment arrangement options





# PROCESS UPDATES



## Week 1

- Continued outreach
- Provide list of apartments to agency partners and timeline **at least 30 days in advance** (City NHSD, DSD, County, CPS)
- **Provide certified letter to owner identified in BCAD**

## Week 2

- Continued outreach
- Place door hangers on property office doors
- **Make site visits, provide disconnection timeline to property manager, identify # of occupied properties, if possible**

## Week 3

- Continued outreach
- Notify agency partners of tenant door tagging dates/times
- **Place door hangers on each tenant's door with the potential service disruption date and time noted, two weeks in advance**

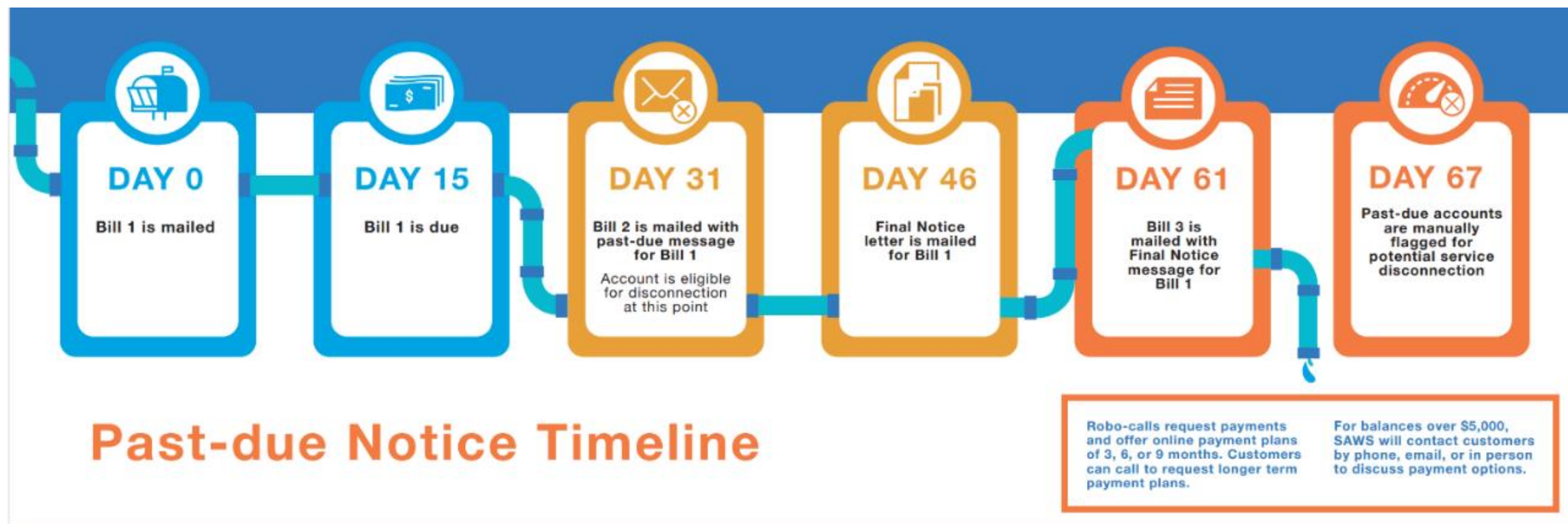
## Week 4

- **Continued outreach**
- **Place door hangers on each tenant's door with the potential service disruption date and time noted, one week in advance**

## Week 5

- Continued outreach
- **Place door hangers with the potential service disruption date and time noted, one day in advance**
- Service disconnections, if necessary
- **Stay on-site to offer support for tenants**

# PAST DUE BILL PROGRESSION



# APARTMENT DISCONNECTION OUTREACH PROCESS

For complexes that have not paid or created a payment arrangement





# COSA PAIP ORDINANCE OVERVIEW

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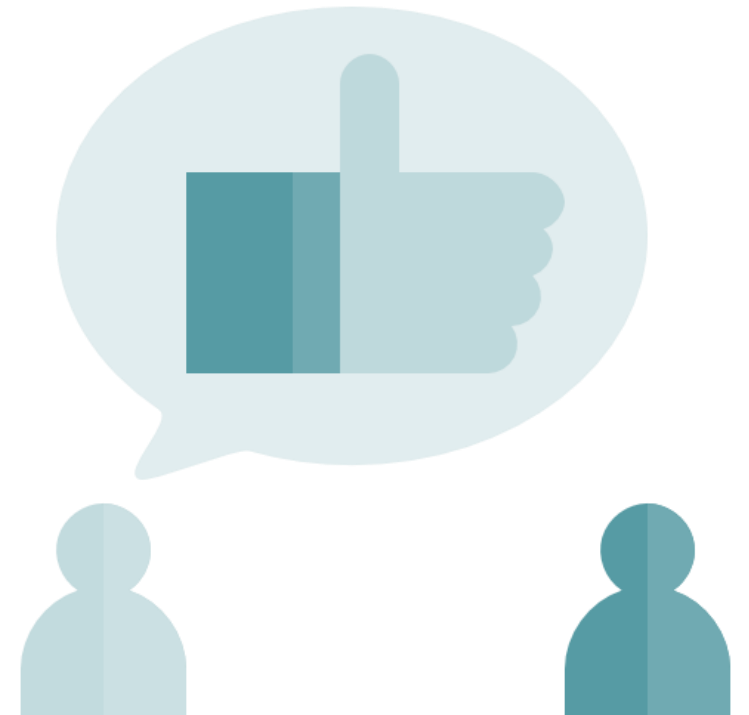


- Goal of program is to:
  - Incentivize good management
  - Ensure health, safety, and welfare of residents
  - Increase accountability of property owners and managers
  - Time to comply
- Applies to complexes with 5+ units within San Antonio city limits
- Registration required when:
  - **Receive 3 designated citations within a rolling 6-month period OR**
  - Ordered by Building Standards Board
- Registered properties undergo monthly inspections and remain in program for at least 6 months

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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1. SAWS continues to utilize enhanced outreach and communication procedures
  - Additional time and notification for owners and renters
  - Enhanced coordination with NHSD, DSD and council offices
2. Change City Code Ch. 34 to allow use of liens for delinquent accounts
  - Additional tool for SAWS to collect monies owed
  - Start with larger delinquent accounts
3. Change City Code Ch. 6 (Proactive Apartment Inspections Program) to add automatic program point if water is shut off for non-payment
  - Expedited entry process into PAIP for this scenario
  - All other portions of the PAIP remain the same





# **THANK YOU!**

**Michael Shannon, PE, CBO**

**Director**

