



# Borough of Chambersburg

*A full service municipality in Franklin County celebrating over 65 years of consumer owned natural gas service over 120 years of community electric and a regional wastewater, water, storm sewer and municipal solid waste utility*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CHAMBERSBURG COUNCIL APPROVES LIMITED DISCONNECTION OF UTILITY ACCOUNTS DUE TO UNPAID BALANCES TO BEGIN IN JULY 2020

(COVID-19)

**Chambersburg, Pennsylvania** – On April 1, 2020, the Borough of Chambersburg stopped the practice of disconnecting utility services as a result of unpaid balances. In a typical year, there is a winter moratorium on residential disconnection from December 1 to April 1 for electric and natural gas service. Typically, there is no moratorium on the possible disconnection of water service or for commercial customers. However, on April 1, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 health crisis, the Borough directed that all terminations stop immediately regardless of unpaid balances.

The Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC) issued a similar directive to all utilities under their oversight. Chambersburg utilities are not subject to PUC regulations (other than a few dozen water customers outside the Borough). Town Council approved a policy on April 27 for Borough utility customers. On Monday, May 18, Council approved a change to the Borough policy to permit limited resumption of disconnection for delinquent utility customers, but not before July 13, 2020.

According to Borough Manager Jeffrey Stonehill, “Chambersburg Council wanted to find a way to provide additional time for utility customers who are struggling with the economic downturn caused by the current health crisis. It was their goal to balance customers’ challenges, with household and business finances, without causing a fiscal strain to the overall Borough. In my opinion, Council did a yeoman’s job of balancing the needs of the community with the fiscal reality of the current crisis.”

Chambersburg is the only municipality in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to operate both a non-profit electric public power system and a non-profit natural gas utility for the benefit of the homes and businesses in the Borough.

**Those Borough utility customers who had delinquent account balances on April 1, before the onset of the COVID-19 health crisis, are subject to potential disconnection for non-payment beginning on July 13, 2020.**

**Those customers who did not have a delinquent account on April 1, but have subsequently become delinquent, after the onset of the COVID-19 health crisis, will have additional time, until September 1, 2020, to pay off their balances due to the Borough.**

This policy, according to Stonehill, “splits customers into two groups: those who were struggling before the impact on the economy, and those who have become delinquent since the crisis occurred. Had this been a normal year, some customers would likely not be delinquent, and therefore the extraordinary events of the crisis having rendered them in danger of disconnection, they will be given extra time to come up with the resources to fully pay down their accounts by September 1, 2020.”

In addition, each account will receive one re-connection, per account, for their first reconnection in 2020 at no charge; just in case they are struggling to make their final payment.

“The Borough wants to get the word out,” added Council President Alice Elia. “We want to inform customers of these deadlines so we are sending out notices to customers with unpaid balances, in addition to handing out notices at our drive-thru teller window.” President Elia added, “Customers should contact Customer Service at once if they are unsure about the status of their account, to confirm their disconnection date, or to discuss their eligibility for payment assistance, which may be available through State and Local programs.”

Chambersburg participates in the LIHEAP program recently reopened by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. LIHEAP provides assistance for home energy bills, helping ensure continuity of utility and other energy services for low-income Pennsylvanians. Assistance is available for both renters and homeowners.

Additional information about the LIHEAP program can be obtained by going to <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/LIHEAP-Recovery-Crisis-Program.aspx> or by calling the Franklin County LIHEAP assistance number at 717-262-6579.

Chambersburg is a unique community. Chambersburg supplies more services than any other municipality in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In addition to typical town functions, Chambersburg is Pennsylvania’s only municipality supplying electric and gas. Chambersburg is 1 of 35 Boroughs to operate a municipal non-profit electric utility. Chambersburg is the largest municipal electric utility in the State, twice as large as the second largest, Ephrata, Lancaster County; and, the only one to operate generation stations. Chambersburg is 1 of 2 municipalities in PA to operate a natural gas utility. The other is Philadelphia, which does not operate an electric utility. Nationally, Chambersburg is 1 of 2,000 communities to have its own electric system and 1 of 800 communities to have a natural gas system but 1 of only about 50 to operate both. Chambersburg manages a regional water system, a regional sanitary sewer system (not through an independent Authority), and a new storm sewer utility; one of the first storm sewer utilities to form under the new Federal mandate to regulate stormwater. Chambersburg currently has 20,508 residents (2013).