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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

AS A RESULT OF COVID-19, CHAMBERSBURG VOLUNTARILY SUSPENDS UTILITY DISCONNECTIONS

Chambersburg, Pennsylvania – Effective immediately, the Borough of Chambersburg will voluntarily suspend utility disconnections. The Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC) adopted similar measures recently, but most of Chambersburg’s utilities do not fall under PUC regulations. The Borough Manager, Jeffrey Stonehill, who is also the Director of Utilities, discussed the move with a number of different parties including Mayor Walter Bietsch, Council President Alice Elia, Vice-President Mike Herbert, and the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Municipal Electric Association (PMEA) where Stonehill serves as volunteer President.

Chambersburg is unique in that it is the only municipality in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to operate most public utilities including electricity, water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, natural gas, and sanitation. “No other Borough is as heavily involved in the delivery of utilities as the Borough of Chambersburg,” explained Stonehill. “During this crisis, it was imperative that the Borough make plans to address the needs and challenges of the community.”

On March 6, 2020, pursuant to Section 7301(c) of the Emergency Management Services Code, 35 Pa. C.S. § 7101, et seq., Governor Tom Wolf issued a Proclamation of Disaster Emergency, proclaiming the existence of a disaster emergency across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a result of the spread of coronavirus or COVID-19.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

According to a proclamation issued by Mayor Walter Bietsch on March 18, 2020, “the COVID-19 virus has the potential to endanger the health, safety, and welfare of a substantial number of persons residing in the Borough of Chambersburg, and threatens to create problems greater in scope than the Borough of Chambersburg may be able to resolve through traditional measures.”

Stonehill explained that the Borough will continue to send out late notices, late fees, and disconnection notices. “These automated systems follow local and state laws associated with the timely requirement of payment and the legal requirement of notification. We are not ending the issuance of notices as we are unsure when the temporary prohibition on utility terminations will end,” explained Stonehill. “However, if this prohibition turns out to be longer than a month, or a billing period, we might ask Chambersburg Town Council, to amend the rules and regulations to change the schedules or termination notification requirements.”

In Chambersburg, the Chambersburg Town Council establishes all rates, policies, rules, and fees. According to Council President Alice Elia: “We are concerned for the safety and well-being of all. We are working diligently to keep all borough services running smoothly and without interruption.”

Chambersburg is the largest public power system in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and they operate two “generation stations” which provide electricity to the regional grid. In addition, Chambersburg is the only municipality in Pennsylvania to operate both an electric system and a natural gas utility.

“Chambersburg is proud to protect the health and safety of our residents and businesses,” added Borough Manager Jeffrey Stonehill. “When Town Council next gathers they will discuss our temporary actions to address this crisis and whether more actions are available for their adoption. We stand by to support our businesses and residents during this difficult time.”

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 one 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 one of only two municipalities in PA to operate a natural gas utility. The other is Philadelphia, which does not operate an electric utility. Nationally, Chambersburg is one 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 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).