

Council Study Session

September 17, 2018

Agenda Item	City Utility Assistance Programs Presentation/Discussion	
From	Mark Welch	Administrative Services Director
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Item Type	Requested by Council <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Update <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Direction <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

SUMMARY

Provide the City Council a presentation on the current assistance programs and seek guidance on any future changes to these programs.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

- 5. Seek opportunities to enable all citizens to meet basic needs.
- 5.2 Support and promote, through policy, programs that make the City affordable to live in.
- 6. Develop supports to enable citizens to age in Ashland.
- 6.1 Support and augment existing programs.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The City of Ashland provides three programs that assist low income residents with their utility bills. The Ashland Low Income Energy Assistance Program (ALIEAP), the Senior and Disabled Utility Discount Program, and the Emergency Heat Program are all administered through the Customer Service, Utility Billing division of the Administrative Services Department.

The ALIEAP has been in place since at least 1982 and assists with the electric portion of utility bills during the winter months. To qualify for the ALIEAP discount, an Ashland resident's income must fall below 65% of Oregon's median income. Customers who qualify receive a maximum credit of \$300 toward the electric portion of their utility bill. Applications for this program are available each October through January, with the first credit applied to utility bills in December. Credits of 50 percent may be given for senior and disabled customers for up to six months and credits of 50 percent for others may be given for up to three months. In the last five fiscal years, an average of \$245 per year was provided to assist customers through this program with 1,900 customers receiving this benefit. This program is funded through the electric fund.

The Senior and Disabled Utility Discount Program has been in place since 1972 and assists with the water, electric, sewer, transportation fee, and storm water portion of an Ashland resident's utility bill year round. The discount is offered to Ashland residents who are at least 65 or 60 and disabled and has two levels of qualification on income; a 20% discount is offered to those whose income is 125% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines and 30% for those whose income is at the Federal Poverty Guideline. Applications for this program are available year round and those residents that receive this discount automatically qualify and are not required to apply for the ALIEAP discount. In the last five fiscal years, an average of \$279 per year was provided to assist customers through this program with 806 customers receiving this benefit. This program is funded through the electric fund.

The Emergency Heat Program was approved by Council in 1992 and assists customers with one-time emergency assistance toward their entire utility bill. The discount is offered to Ashland residents whose income is 150% of the Federal Poverty Guideline, have a maximum of \$100 past due on their utility account, and is intended to assist customers once per year to avoid disconnection. This program is funded through the Electric fund and through donations from the public. Each fiscal year \$5,500 is budgeted for this program, with an average of 38 customers each year receiving the benefit.

The Customer Service division administers and promotes these programs by using the City Source newsletter as well as the City website. Information regarding assistance for City programs as well as contact for other assistance agencies is provided on the door hanger that is delivered to residents whose utilities charges are delinquent. Customer Service staff assists those that have problems paying their bills to connect with these outside agencies. Over \$310,000 is budgeted each biennium for these programs.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Low Income Energy Assistance: \$96,000

Senior/Disabled Program: \$58,000

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Provide staff with direction on changes to existing programs.

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

If the City Council wishes to make changes to the program, then an updated resolution will be prepared for a future City Council Meeting.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

Utility Assistance Statistics

Utility Assistance Income Guidelines

City-funded Assistance Programs	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Target
Low Income Energy Assistance							
Applications	456	445	510	352	311	282	305
Distributed	\$ 99,902	\$ 98,568	\$ 82,967	\$ 88,012	\$ 87,083	\$ 86,614	\$ 96,000
Average relief/applicant-family	\$ 219	\$ 222	\$ 163	\$ 250	\$ 280	\$ 307	\$ 315
Senior/Disabled Program							
Applications	140	150	136	165	174	181	185
Distributed	\$ 36,385	\$ 38,967	\$ 39,434	\$ 45,523	\$ 50,285	\$ 55,487	\$ 58,000
Average relief/applicant-family	\$ 260	\$ 260	\$ 290	\$ 276	\$ 289	\$ 307	\$ 314

Donation-funded Assistance Program	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Target
Donations from the Public							
Heat	\$ 2,762	\$ 3,191	\$ 2,987	\$ 2,906	\$ 2,906	\$ 2,625	\$ 4,000
Roundup	3,599	3,555	3,311	2,990	2,715	2,562	3,000
Total Donated	\$ 6,361	\$ 6,746	\$ 6,298	\$ 5,896	\$ 5,621	\$ 5,187	\$ 7,000

Total Assistance Programs	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Target
Distributed Amount							
Low Income Energy Assistance	\$ 99,902	\$ 98,568	\$ 82,967	\$ 88,012	\$ 87,083	\$ 86,614	\$ 96,000
Senior/Disabled Program	36,385	38,967	39,434	45,523	50,285	55,487	58,000
Heat Program	4,200	5,304	4,100	4,800	2,800	4,400	5,500
	\$ 140,487	\$ 142,839	\$ 126,501	\$ 138,335	\$ 140,168	\$ 146,501	\$ 159,500
Budget	\$ 110,500	\$ 112,200	\$ 84,809	\$ 149,500	\$ 149,500	\$ 156,000	\$ 159,120
% of Distributed/Budget	127%	127%	149%	93%	94%	94%	100%



City of Ashland Utility Assistance Programs

To qualify for utility discounts, income cannot exceed the levels shown below which are based on the number in the household.

Ashland Low Income Energy Assistance Program

Applications are available October 2, 2017 through January 31, 2018

	Yearly	Per month
1 Person Family	\$25,019	\$2,084.95
2 Person Family	\$32,718	\$2,726.48
3 Person Family	\$40,416	\$3,368.00
4 Person Family	\$48,114	\$4,009.53
5 Person Family	\$55,813	\$4,651.05
6 Person Family	\$63,511	\$5,292.57

Senior and Disabled Year-Round Discount

To qualify for the senior discount, a person must be 65 years of age or disabled and 60 years of age and the total household income shall not exceed the amounts below. Applications are available year-round.

	Yearly 30% discount	Yearly 20% discount
1 Person Family	\$12,060	\$15,075
2 Person Family	\$16,240	\$20,300
3 Person Family	\$20,420	\$25,525
4 Person Family	\$24,600	\$30,750
5 Person Family	\$28,780	\$35,975
6 Person Family	\$32,960	\$41,200

Emergency Utility Assistance

To qualify for the one time Utility Assistance, the account must be no more than \$100 past due and not have received this funding within the last 12 months. Applications are available year-round.

	Yearly	per month
1 Person Family	\$18,090	\$1,508
2 Person Family	\$24,360	\$2,030
3 Person Family	\$30,630	\$2,553
4 Person Family	\$36,900	\$3,075
5 Person Family	\$43,170	\$3,598
6 Person Family	\$49,440	\$4,120

Applications are available at the City of Ashland, Utility Billing counter.