



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Mike Land, City Manager

From: Hannah Cook, Chief Communications Strategist

Date: November 9, 2021

Reference: Communication Strategy to inform public of Utility Billing module conversion

2040: Apply "Smart City" Approach to Resource Management; Sustainable Government

Introduction:

In 2016, the City began exploring integrated, enterprise-wide technology solutions to allow the City to operate and serve residents more efficiently. In 2017, Tyler Technologies was selected as the software vendor to provide the necessary solutions to support the Partnered Integration of Enterprise Resources (PIER) Project.

The PIER project is a multi-year, multi-phase undertaking. The City has completed the first two phases of the project and is working to launch a new Utility Billing system and online payment portal. The new system and Citizen Self Service Portal are expected to go live in February 2022.

Background:

The City currently uses Logos Utility Billing and the online customer payment portal eSuite. This system will be replaced with Munis Utility Billing, which is more sophisticated and configurable, reliable and automated, and will streamline some aspects of the payment process. As part of the conversion, eSuite will be replaced with a new online payment portal, the Citizen Self Service (CSS) portal. The CSS portal is expected to go live in February 2022, and all customers who wish to pay utility bills online must register for an account on the new platform.

Because residential and commercial account holders must take action and register for the new portal in order to pay online, the City will work to inform customers of the change and encourage timely registration. The Community Information Office has devised an integrated communications and marketing plan in order to accomplish this goal.

In order to encourage timely registration on the new CSS portal, the Utility Billing division will offer incentives to customers. Customers who register for the portal will receive a \$5 discount on their next utility bill. Furthermore, customers may receive an additional \$5 discount if they register for automated bank drafts. In total, residents can receive up to a \$10 discount on their utility bills. This incentive will be available for 60 days, which equates to two billing cycles.



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In addition to the incentives, staff has identified other key messages. The communications and marketing campaign will focus on educating the public about which customers are affected, available ways to pay utility bills, the timeline of the change and benefits of the new system, including data security, customer empowerment and new capabilities.

Staff has identified a variety of communications tools that will be used to inform the public of this change. In addition to paid print and digital advertising, the City will utilize multiple direct mail pieces, social media and video, as well as other city-owned platforms.

Legal:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

The City plans to offer customers up to a \$10 discount on their utility bills, but the City is unsure how many customers will take advantage of the incentives offered. Depending on the number of customers who take advantage of the incentive, the City could realize up to a \$135,000 loss.

Further, Utility Billing will suspend late payment penalties for 60 days after the new system launches. The total financial impact of this action is expected to be from \$30,000 - \$40,000.

Finally, a communications and marketing budget has been allocated for this project. Staff plans to place multiple print and digital ads, as well as produce direct mail pieces. In total, approximately \$13,000 in paid advertising has been allocated for this project.

Recommendation:

N/A