

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of

OLYMPIC WATER AND SEWER, INC.

Petitioner,

Seeking Exemption from the Provisions of
WAC 480-110-375(1)(f) Relating to
delivery of bills via email

DOCKET UW-250038

ORDER 01

GRANTING EXEMPTION
FROM RULE

BACKGROUND

- 1 On January 14, 2025, Olympic Water and Sewer, Inc. (Company), filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) a petition for a partial exemption of WAC 480-110-375, requesting approval to provide paperless bills electronically to customers who have opted into that option while continuing to mail paper bills to those customers who have not.
- 2 Olympic Water and Sewer, Inc. is the water and wastewater provider for residential and commercial properties in the Port Ludlow Master Planned Resort community. The Company delivers water to over 1,790 customers.
- 3 The Company explained that the water system serves many residences that are the customers' second homes or vacation rentals. Many such customers have requested paperless (e-mail only) billing, while others continue to receive paper bills via the United States Postal Service. Of the Company's 1,790 customers, 476 have "opted in" to paperless billing only. Paperless billing reduces paper waste and aligns with the Commission's environmental sustainability goals.
- 4 WAC 480-110-375 does not include an electronic billing option and only speaks to the timeline in which bills must be mailed from within the state of Washington and outside of the state of Washington. Staff have historically advised companies that until a rulemaking occurs to include electronically billing into WAC 480-110-375, they must continue to mail customers paper bills, even if the Company elects to provide electronic bills.
- 5 The Company states all electronic paperless billing will meet the requirements of WAC 480-110-375 for format, due dates, calculation of due dates, and minimum time frames. Requests for electronic billing will be obtained from the customer of record, and the

Company will maintain a record of the customer's request to receive electronic, paperless billing as evidence of the customer's consent. The Company will continue to mail a paper copy of customer bills in accordance with WAC 480-110-375 to those customers who do not request electronic paperless bills.

- 6 Commission Staff (Staff) has reviewed the petition for partial exemption of WAC 480-110-375 and determined the Company has sufficiently demonstrated the benefits of its exemption request. Staff recommend the Commission grant the Company's petition for partial exemption of WAC 480-110-375, allowing the Company to provide electronic paperless billing to those customers who request this billing option.

DISCUSSION

- 7 We agree with Staff's recommendation and grant a partial exemption of WAC 480-110-375. Based on Staff's review, the partial exemption applies only to those customers who no longer wish to receive a paper bill and request the Company to provide them a paperless bill electronically.

- 8 Additionally, we agree with Staff that all electronic billing must meet the requirements of WAC 480-110-375 for format, due dates, calculation of due dates, minimum time frames. Customer consent must be obtained directly from the customer of record and Olympic Water and Sewer, Inc., must maintain a record of the customer's request to receive paperless bills through email.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9 (1) The Commission is an agency of the State of Washington vested by statute with the authority to regulate the rates, rules, regulations, practices, accounts, securities, transfers of property and affiliated interests of public service companies, including water companies.
- 10 (2) Olympic Water and Sewer, Inc. is an investor-owned water company providing water services within the state of Washington subject to Commission jurisdiction.
- 11 (3) The Company is subject to WAC 480-110-375 which does not address electronic billing, instead addressing timelines for paper bills to be mailed. Staff have historically advised companies that paper bills must continue to be mailed to customers, even if they choose to provide electronic bills, until a rulemaking occurs to include electronic billing.
- 12 (4) Under WAC 480-110-215, the Commission may grant an exemption from the provisions of any rule in WAC 480-110, if consistent with the public interest, the purposes underlying regulation and applicable statutes. See also WAC 480-07-110.

- 13 (5) This matter was brought before the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 28, 2025.
- 14 (6) After reviewing Olympic Water and Sewer, Inc.'s petition for partial exemption of WAC 480-110-375 filed in Docket UW-250038 on January 14, 2025, and giving due consideration, the Commission finds that the exemption request is reasonable with, and demonstrates no harm to, the public interest and should be approved.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 15 (1) The Commission grants a partial exemption from WAC 480-110-375, allowing Olympic Water and Sewer Inc. the ability to provide paperless bills via email to customers who request this billing option as an alternative to receiving paper bills.
- 16 (2) The Commission retains jurisdiction over the subject matter and Olympic Water and Sewer Inc., to effectuate the provisions of this Order.

The Commissioners, having determined this Order to be consistent with the public interest, direct the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective February 28, 2025.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

JEFF KILLIP
Executive Director and Secretary