

Dear Neighbor.

A message from Utility Billing
March 2024

I hope this finds you well as we move into longer days and the final weeks of the winter season! I wanted to give you an update on what we have been working on in our Utility Billing Department. As you may know, we lost most our staff summer of 2023, which has caused delays and understandably, frustrations with customer service. In order to manage essential billing services for our 22,000 residents, we have constantly had to prioritize core responsibilities and critical duties due to these difficulties.

Today, I am happy to report that we are now nearly fully staffed and have put methods in place to mitigate these past challenges from returning. I must, however, ask for your continued patience while our employees get the appropriate training. One of the wonderful things about living in Ashland is our clean water, clean electricity and consistent internet through Ashland Fiber Network. As such, it takes six-plus months to fully train our billing staff on all our utilities: Electric, Water, Sewer and Internet. Multiple utilities is not typical for most cities, but it is something we can be proud of in Ashland.

We are also ready to open our phone lines for limited hours! In addition to the **in-person service we provide on Fridays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The Grove, 1195 East Main St**, we will also be able to receive **phone calls on our main line Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., starting March 12, at 541.488.6004**. You may still experience wait times with phone and/or email customer service. Please be patient and respectful with us. Unfortunately, our staff has not always been treated with the same respect they have been working so hard to give our community. Please know that we are doing our very best for you, professionally and sincerely to assist in your billing needs.

Finally, if your account is more than three (3) months past due, and you are afraid of being shut off, we can work with you on a payment plan! Please apply for a payment plan by completing the form at **ashland.or.us/Utilities**, or email **utilitybilling@ashland.or.us** today to request a payment plan. We anticipate that service disconnects due to large, unpaid balances and lack of a payment plan will begin mid to late spring. Outside of a payment plan with us, if you need financial assistance with your bill, **ACCESS** may be able to help you — Please visit **accesshelps.org** or call **541.779.9020**.

On behalf of our City Staff, I want to reiterate the genuine care we have for our city and the level of service we provide. We understand how difficult it is when you may feel that you aren't getting answers to your questions. Please use the information below to help navigate your billing questions. Many issues can be done proactively on our website (which will get a fresh update soon!), or resolved via email with a little patience (48 hour response time). I hope by our expanded service hours and with your continued patience we will come through this together, better and stronger. **"We are better together!"**

Sincerely,
Mariane Berry, City of Ashland Finance Director

BEHIND ON PAYMENTS?

Apply for a PAYMENT PLAN at **ashland.or.us/Utilities**, or at **utilitybilling@ashland.or.us**

Payment Plan Durations are available for past due balances, detailed below:

\$500-\$1000 — 6 months	\$2000-\$4000 — 18 months
\$1000-\$2000 — 12 months	\$4000 & up — 24 months

WAYS TO INTERACT WITH UTILITY BILLING

Need help?

Email **utilitybilling@ashland.or.us**

Call 541.488.6004 on Tue/Thu, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (beginning Mar 12)

In-person at The Grove, 1195 E Main St, Fri, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Need Disconnect or Connect Services?

Go to **ashland.or.us/Utilities**



Better Together