



Board of Commissioners:

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Kenneth Collins, District 2
Dan Toepper, District 3

Kevin Streett, General Manager

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUD REFUNDS DEPOSITS TO HELP WITH COVID CRISIS

Jefferson County PUD's Board of Commissioners approved a resolution at their May 5th 2020 regular meeting that provides a one-time refund of all PUD residential customer deposits.

According to PUD General Manager Kevin Streett, the PUD collects deposits from new electric customers who have medium to poor credit, no credit, or who do not want a credit check performed. Depending on the customer's credit score, a deposit of either \$100-\$200 is collected at the time the account is created. Deposits are generally refunded a year later if the customer shows prompt payment of all bills during that period.

"Technically it's the customer's money," explained Streett. "The PUD is just holding it. Crediting the deposits during these hard times helps those who are behind get caught up, or it allows customers who've kept up with their bills to put their money towards other needs."

"It's an innovative option to give some customers their money back when they could really use it," said District 3 Commissioner Dan Toepper. Deposit credits will appear on customer bills in June, said Streett. The commissioners are also discussing a temporary suspension of the collection of new deposits for a two-month period.

In March, the PUD declared an emergency in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The commissioners suspended late fees and halted all service disconnects due to non-payment. Customer Service Manager Jean Hall said her team has been working with customers to establish payment plans for those who are not able to pay their bills in full.

Hall shared that participation in the PUD's low-income program was at an all-time high with 719 qualifying customers currently receiving a monthly low-income credit of \$39.50 toward their electric bill, and \$10 toward water or wastewater. Hall also said that customer support of the PUD's Rainy Day fund had increased by over 250% in April. Customers support the Rainy Day fund through donations included with their bills. The money is then distributed to OlyCAP and

St. Vincent DePaul to help some of Jefferson County's most at risk citizens maintain essential utility services.

Rainy Day donations to date total over \$17,000, said Hall. In 2020, the PUD had budgeted \$450,000 to assist low-income customers. Due to the economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis, Hall expects the program will exceed its budget, and may need to be amended by the commission in the fall.