




Mingus Mapps, Commissioner  
Gabriel Solmer, Director

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DATE: January 27, 2022

TO: Mary Hull Caballero, City Auditor

FROM: Gabriel Solmer, Director of Portland Water Bureau 

CC: Mingus Mapps, Commissioner  
Michael Jordan, Director of Bureau of Environmental Services

SUBJECT: Response to Collections Audit

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your audit of the collections processes in parts of the City.

The Portland Water Bureau (PWB) acknowledges opportunities for collaboration with others to achieve greater standardization within the City and recognizes the billing and collecting of utility charges and fees can be different from other city processes.

PWB agrees that Citywide standards or guidelines can be developed around assignment of amounts to an external collection agency and would like to participate in their development. We suggest including guidelines for content of letters, availability of payment plans and waivers, and timeframes for account assignment.

Utility charges and fees differ from other City taxes, licenses and fees in that there is no statute that limits the timeframes for collecting on past debt. For PWB, assignment of balances to an external collection agency includes those from inactive or closed accounts. Collection on active accounts follows a separate process for debt recovery that is handled by PWB for sewer/stormwater/water accounts and has requirements unique to the operation of a utility. Those activities are embedded in the critical work of our meter-to-cash operations and should not be parceled out separately. Because of this distinction, PWB does not support the concept of consolidating City collections overall.

PWB thanks the audit team for its inclusion of plain language review. Reviewing and writing documents in plain English, as well as providing translation and easy accessibility, is important to PWB. As the audit found, PWB is well on its way in achieving that goal in our communications and is committed to continuing that work.