



## **POLICY ON WATER/SEWER ABATEMENT REQUESTS AND THE CUSTOMER'S RESPONSIBILITY OF PAYMENT**

The Castine Water Department and the Castine Sewer Department are Town owned utility systems. Their customers are billed either quarterly or seasonally and the bill amounts are calculated by applying water and sewer meter rates to the total water consumption for the billing cycle as determined by the Town owned water (primary) meter at each service location. Customers have the option of purchasing and installing a sewer (secondary) meter to quantify water usage that does not enter the sewer collection system. Customers are responsible in exercising due care in the maintenance and use of their water and sewer systems to prevent water loss.

Any request for abatement shall be submitted to the Utility Board before the bill's due date. Abatements may be granted by the Selectboard following a recommendation by the Utility Board. The Utility Board exists to advise the Selectboard on matters related to the Water and Sewer infrastructure and its policies, which are made to assure equitable treatment to all customers.

A Water/Sewer Department customer may request an abatement if he/she believes their billed volume is in excess of quantity used; the customer shall also request a meter test before the bill's due date by completing a Water Meter Test Request form which is available at the municipal office and on the Town website ([www.castine.me.us](http://www.castine.me.us)). The meter shall be tested as required by the Maine Public Utilities Commission's *Service Standards for Water Utilities* (CMR 65-407, Chapter 62, as amended). The following standards shall apply:

- If the water (primary) meter and/or the sewer (secondary) meter are tested and proven to read accurately the Customer is responsible for the full water and sewer bills.
- If the water (primary) meter is tested and proven to read inaccurately and the error is determined to be from 2% to 10% over-reported, the water and sewer bills will be reduced proportionally for the quarter in question. If the water (primary) meter is tested and proven to read inaccurately and the error is determined to be greater than 10% over-reported, the water and sewer bills will be reduced based on the Customer's historical use for the same quarter in question from an average of the prior 3 years. If the error is determined to be under-reported, the additional water use may be billed.
- Any Customer owned sewer (secondary) meter that does not meet the required accuracy standards must be replaced or taken out of service.
- If it is determined that the meter(s) is (are) properly functioning, the Finance Officer and the Customer can work out a payment plan, including interest, to satisfy the Customer's financial obligation.
- During the meter removal the representative of the Castine Water Department shall note whether a backflow preventer valve is installed in accordance with Castine's Cross Connection Control Program. If there is no backflow preventer device, the customer shall have one installed.

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A Water/Sewer Department customer may also request a sewer abatement before the bill's due date if he/she believes all or a part of their metered water volume did not enter the sewer collection system. The Utility Board's responsibility in this type of case is to make a recommendation that is fair to all of the system's customers. The Board must use due care to ensure its decision is based on verifiable facts and to avoid arbitrary decisions based on what might have happened. The following conditions shall be met:

1. The customer provides detailed reasons for the abatement request.
2. The wastewater in question must be less than the water-use recorded by the meter and more than 100 cubic feet for the quarter.
- 3A. There is verifiable proof that the wastewater in question did not enter the sewer collection system, as observed by a representative of the Castine Water/Sewer Department, **OR**, absent verifiable proof,
- 3B. The quantity of water can be accurately determined as it has flowed into a "container" space that can be measured, the water depth recorded and the resulting volume calculated by a representative of the Castine Water/Sewer Department.

Matters of financial hardship or the need for financial assistance should be brought before the Overseers of the Poor, not left to the many separate committees and boards that function within the town.

**ADOPTION**

Upon recommendation of the Castine Utility Board, this policy is adopted by the Castine Selectboard on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of April 2008 and revised on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of September 2018. This policy shall remain in effect until repealed by the Selectboard.

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Constantino G. Basle

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Peter F. Vogell

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Colin P. Powell

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ September 17, 2018.  
Susan M. Macomber, Castine Town Clerk

SEAL