

1 Introduced by Council Member Dennis:
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3

4 **ORDINANCE 2020-329**

5 AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING \$500,000.00
6 (\$250,000.00 FROM GENERAL FUND/GSD FUND
7 BALANCE AND \$250,000.00 FROM SOCIAL SERVICES
8 GENERAL ASSISTANCE) TO REIMBURSE JEA FOR A
9 ONE-TIME \$50 PAYMENT FOR EACH DELINQUENT PRE-
10 PAID CUSTOMER TO AVOID SHUTOFF OF SERVICES
11 WHEN THE DELINQUENT PRE-PAID CUSTOMERS
12 ESTABLISH A PAYMENT PLAN PRIOR TO JEA
13 DISCONNECTING THE DELINQUENT ACCOUNT ON OR
14 AFTER JULY 7, 2020; PROVIDING FOR A REVERTER
15 OF UNSPENT FUNDS; PROVIDING FOR WEEKLY REPORTS
16 TO CITY COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL AUDITOR'S OFFICE
17 AND THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT; REQUESTING
18 EMERGENCY PASSAGE UPON INTRODUCTION; PROVIDING
19 AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
20

21 **WHEREAS**, JEA announced in March 2020 that it would offer a
22 grace period for delinquent accounts due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
23 and

24 **WHEREAS**, in early June JEA announced that the grace period to
25 pay overdue JEA bills will end on July 7, 2020 and after that time
26 it will begin disconnecting delinquent accounts if the customers
27 have not contacted JEA and set up an installment or payment plan;
28 and

29 **WHEREAS**, currently JEA has approximately 21,744 delinquent
30 accounts and 9,871 of those delinquent accounts are customers on a
31 pre-paid plan whereby their service is provided on a pay-as-you-go

1 concept and many of those pre-paid customers also have past due
2 balances owed to JEA that have been deferred under a payment plan;
3 and

4 **WHEREAS**, in order for those pre-paid accounts to avoid
5 disconnection, a minimum of a \$50.00 payment would need to be made
6 by the delinquent pre-paid customers on or before the disconnection
7 date to continue services and allow them time to re-establish a
8 viable payment plan; and

9 **WHEREAS**, the Council believes it is in the public interest to
10 assist those having economic hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic
11 and that the public interest is served in paying the one-time
12 \$50.00 payment required by JEA to incentivize delinquent pre-paid
13 customers to contact JEA and set up a payment plan for their
14 delinquent accounts prior to disconnection so that these customers
15 can continue to receive essential services of electricity and
16 water; now therefore

17 **BE IT ORDAINED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

18 **Section 1. Appropriation.** For the 2019-2020 fiscal year,
19 within the City's budget, there are hereby appropriated the
20 indicated sum(s) from the account(s) listed in subsection (a) to
21 the account(s) listed in subsection (b):

22 (Account information is attached hereto as **Exhibit 1** and
23 incorporated herein by this reference)

24 (a) Appropriated from:

25 See attached **Exhibit 1** \$500,000.00

26 (b) Appropriated to:

27 See attached **Exhibit 1** \$500,000.00

28 (c) **Explanation of Appropriation:**

29 The funding above is \$250,000.00 from the General
30 Fund/GSD Fund Balance and the \$250,000.00 from the Social
31 Services General Assistance. The funds will be used to

1 reimburse JEA \$50.00 per customer which is the minimum
2 amount needed to allow the utilities to not be cut-off.
3 Customers who are eligible for the \$50.00 credit that
4 would be paid by the City would include those who are
5 already participating in the JEA's pre-paid program, have
6 failed to continue those payments, and have contacted JEA
7 to reestablish payments going forward.

8 **Section 2. Purpose.** The purpose of the appropriation in
9 Section 1 is to provide funding to 9,871 pre-paid customer accounts
10 of JEA that are delinquent in status and which JEA has scheduled
11 for electric and/or water disconnection beginning July 7, 2020.
12 The City will issue JEA a \$50.00 reimbursement for each delinquent
13 pre-paid account customer (estimated to be 9,871 as of today's
14 date) when the customer notifies JEA that they would like to
15 establish a payment plan prior to the disconnection of their
16 services on or after July 8,2020.

17 **Section 3. Reverter.** Any funds that are not spent for the
18 purpose set forth in this ordinance shall revert back to the account
19 of origin.

20 **Section 4. Weekly Report.** JEA is required to make a
21 report weekly to the City Council, the Council Auditor's Office and
22 the City's Finance Department concerning the number of delinquent
23 pre-paid customers who have reached out to JEA to set up a payment
24 plan. Upon the receipt of each weekly report, the City will
25 reimburse JEA \$50.00 for each delinquent pre-paid account that JEA
26 will issue as a credit to the delinquent pre-paid customer's
27 account.

28 **Section 5. Requesting Emergency Passage Upon**
29 **Introduction.** Emergency passage upon introduction of this
30 legislation is requested. The nature of the emergency is that JEA
31 has notified the public that disconnection of essential services

1 will begin for delinquent accounts on July 7, 2020. With over
2 21,000 delinquent accounts and almost 10,000 of those accounts
3 represent pre-paid accounts in some of the poorest areas of the
4 city, the Council needs to act expeditiously to ensure a plan for
5 preventing those essential services from being disconnected and
6 immediate attention to this matter is warranted. JEA has indicated
7 that beginning July 7, 2020 shutoffs will commence. Affected
8 accounts will need to be made aware of this program. Passage of
9 this legislation will provide less than 30 days' notice, depending
10 on the date that the Mayor signs the legislation.

11 **Section 6. Effective Date.** This ordinance shall become
12 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
13 without the Mayor's signature.

14
15 Form Approved:

16
17 /s/ Paige H. Johnston

18 Office of General Counsel

19 Legislation prepared by: Paige H. Johnston

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