

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §8-13-13

§8-13-13. Special charges for municipal services.

(a) Notwithstanding any charter provisions to the contrary, a municipality which furnishes any essential or special municipal service, including, but not limited to, police and fire protection, parking facilities on the streets or otherwise, parks and recreational facilities, street cleaning, street lighting, street maintenance and improvement, sewerage and sewage disposal, and the collection and disposal of garbage, refuse, waste, ashes, trash, and any other similar matter, has plenary power and authority, subject to the limitations set forth in subsection (b) of this section, to provide by ordinance for the installation, continuance, maintenance, or improvement of the service, to make reasonable regulations of the service, and to impose by ordinance upon the users of the service reasonable rates, fees, and charges to be collected in the manner specified in the ordinance.

(b)(1) No new fire protection fee or charge, effective on or after June 30, 2024, may be imposed pursuant to this section on a person or business situated outside of the municipality's boundaries in a county that has imposed a county fire service fee pursuant to §7-17-12 of this code unless the municipality has entered into an intergovernmental agreement, which complies with the limitations set forth in subdivision (2) of this subsection, with the county commission having jurisdiction over any such person or business.

(2) The intergovernmental agreement referenced in subdivision (1) of this subsection must include, but is not limited to, the following terms:

(A) The municipality's fire protection fees and charges shall be limited to those persons and businesses located within first due areas covered by fire protection services sourced out of the municipality; and

(B) The municipality's fire protection fees and charges shall be the same for all persons and businesses located within and outside of the municipality's boundaries; and

(C) Under no circumstances may any person or business be required to pay both a municipal fire protection fee or charge pursuant to this section and a county fire service fee pursuant to §7-17-12 of this code, except for the pro-rata reconciliation during the first year after passage as set forth in paragraph (D) of this subdivision; and

(D) If any persons and businesses located within first due areas have paid their county fire service fee during the first year after the effective date of the amendments to this section enacted during the 2025 Regular Legislative Session, then (i) any municipality's fire protection fees and charges imposed by the municipality shall be limited to the difference, if any, between the county's fire service fee and the municipality's fire protection fees and charges within its municipal boundaries; and (ii) the county shall transfer its fire service fee revenues received from all persons and businesses located within first due areas that are

covered by the intergovernmental agreement to the municipality; and

(E) After the first year following the effective date of the amendments to this section enacted during the 2025 Regular Legislative Session, persons and businesses located within first due areas covered by the intergovernmental agreement between the county commission and the municipality shall be subject only to the same municipal fire protection fees and charges which the municipality charges all other residents and businesses within its municipal boundaries.

(F) The intergovernmental agreement shall expire five years after the agreement becomes effective. The agreement may be renewed for successive additional terms of no more than five years each.

(3) Notwithstanding subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection, any municipality may increase or decrease, in accordance with this section, a fire protection fee or charge that was in effect prior to June 30, 2024, so long as such increase or decrease is uniform for all persons and businesses that are subject to the municipality's fire protection fees and charges, whether by residency within municipal boundaries or by being subject controlling intergovernmental agreement.

(c) Any sewerage and sewage disposal service and any service incident to the collection and disposal of garbage, refuse, waste, ashes, trash, and any other similar matter is subject to the provisions of Chapter 24 of this code.

(d) A municipality may not have a lien on any property as security for payments due under subsection (a) of this section except as provided in subsection (e) of this section.

(e) A municipality may enact an ordinance, pursuant to this section, permitting it to file a lien on real property located within the municipal corporate limits for unpaid and delinquent fire, police, or street fees. The ordinance shall provide an administrative procedure for the municipality's assessment and collection of the fees. The administrative procedure shall require that, before any lien is filed, the municipality will give notice to the property owner, by certified mail, return receipt requested, that the municipality will file the lien unless the delinquency is paid by a date stated in the notice, which shall be no less than 90 days from the date the notice is mailed. The administrative procedure shall include the right to appeal to the circuit court of the county in which the real property is located. The circuit court shall consider the appeal under its general authority, including but not limited to §51-2-2(f) of this code.

(f) Notwithstanding the provisions of §8-11-4 of this code, any ordinance enacted or substantially amended under the provisions of this section shall be published as a Class II legal advertisement in compliance with the provisions of §59-3-1 *et seq.* of this code. The publication area for the publication is the municipality.

(g) If 30 percent of the qualified voters of the municipality, by petition duly signed by them

in their own handwriting and filed with the recorder of the municipality within 45 days after the expiration of the publication, protest against the ordinance as enacted or amended, the ordinance may not become effective until it is ratified by a majority of the legal votes cast by the qualified voters of the municipality at a regular municipal election or special municipal election, as the governing body directs. Voting may not take place until after notice of the submission is given by publication as provided in subsection (f) of this section.

(h) The powers and authority granted to municipalities and to the governing bodies of municipalities in this section are in addition and supplemental to the powers and authority named in any charters of the municipalities.

(i) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, if rates, fees, and charges provided in this section are imposed by the governing body of a municipality for the purpose of replacing, and in amounts approximately sufficient to replace in its general fund amounts appropriated to be paid from ad valorem taxes upon property within the municipality, pursuant to an election duly called and held under the Constitution and laws of the state to authorize the issuance and sale of the municipality's general obligation bonds for public improvement purposes, the call for the election shall state that the governing body of the municipality proposes to impose rates, fees, and charges in specified amounts under this section for the use of one or more of the services specified in subsection (a) of this section, which shall be related to the public improvement proposed to be made with the proceeds of the bonds, no notice, publication of notice, or referendum, or election or other condition or prerequisite to the imposition of the rates, fees, and charges shall be required or necessary other than the legal requirements for issuance and sale of the general obligation bonds.

(j) Payments for rates, fees, and charges due under this section that are postmarked after the due date by which they are owed shall be considered late and may be subject to late fees or penalties: *Provided*, That payments that are received by the municipality after the due date, but that were postmarked on or before the due date shall be considered to be on time and shall not be assessed any late fees or penalties.