WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §8-18-23

§8-18-23. Authority to require discontinuance of water service by provider utility for nonpayment of sewer service rates and charges; lien for delinquent service rates and charges; failure to cure delinquency; civil actions; deferral of filing fees and costs in magistrate court action; limitations with respect to foreclosure.

(a) When any municipality owns, maintains, operates or provides sewer facilities to its residents and customers and does not own, maintain, operate or provide water facilities to them when the same is provided by any other publicly or privately owned utility, municipality or public service district, the municipality providing sewer facilities may require the provider of water facilities to discontinue water service to any of its users who are delinquent in the payment of sewer service rates and charges to the municipality. The provider of water facilities is empowered and authorized hereby to discontinue water service upon demand of the municipality for this purpose; however, prior to discontinuance of any water service, the municipality shall contract with the provider of water facilities which contract shall provide that the municipality shall reimburse the provider of water facilities for all costs and expenses incurred in both the termination of water service to the delinquent user of sewer facilities and the subsequent resumption of water service to such user. The contract shall provide for reasonable methods and assurances so that the provider of water facilities will be protected and held harmless from claims and damages when water service is discontinued in error or in violation of the rights of the user through the fault of the municipality providing sewer facilities and making the demand for discontinuance of water service to the user of such sewer facilities. Any contract made for this purpose shall have the approval of the Public Service Commission prior to its execution and performance. Any disconnection of water service must comply with all rules, regulations and orders of the Public Service Commission.

(b) Whenever any rates and charges for services or facilities furnished remain unpaid for a period of thirty days after the same become due and payable, the user of the services and facilities provided shall be delinquent and the user shall be held liable at law until such time as all such rates and charges are fully paid.

(c) All rates and charges whenever delinquent, as provided by ordinance of the municipality, shall, when notice thereof is duly recorded in the office of the clerk of the county commission wherein the subject real property is situate, be liens of equal dignity, rank and priority with the lien on such premises of state, county, school and municipal taxes for the amount thereof upon the real property served, and the municipality shall have plenary power and authority from time to time to enforce such lien in a civil action to recover the money due for such services rendered plus court fees and costs and a reasonable attorney's fee: Provided, That an owner of real property may not be held liable for the delinquent rates or charges for services or facilities of a tenant, nor shall any lien attach to real property for the reason of delinquent rates or charges for services or facilities of a tenant of such real property, unless

WV Legislature

the owner has contracted directly with the municipality to purchase such services or facilities.

(d) Municipalities are hereby granted a deferral of filing fees or other fees and costs incidental to the bringing and maintenance of an action in magistrate court for the collection of the delinquent rates and charges. If the municipality collects the delinquent account, plus fees and costs, from its customer or other responsible party, the municipality shall pay to the magistrate court the filing fees or other fees and costs which were previously deferred.

(e) No municipality may foreclose upon the premises served by it for delinquent rates and charges for which a lien is authorized by this section except through the bringing and maintenance of a civil action for such purpose brought in the circuit court of the county wherein the municipality lies. In every such action, the court shall be required to make a finding based upon the evidence and facts presented that the municipality had exhausted all other remedies for the collection of debts with respect to such delinquencies prior to the bringing of such action. In no event shall foreclosure procedures be instituted by any municipality or on its behalf unless such delinquency has been in existence or continued for a period of two years from the date of the first such delinquency for which foreclosure is being instituted.

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