



News and Views

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City of Jamestown Board of Public Utilities

May, 2020

Jamestown: *Up Close and Wonderful*

Now and After the Coronavirus Pandemic, BPU Employees Are Here for You

As our May customer newsletter goes to print, our Jamestown BPU customers and employees are still adjusting to life during the COVID-19 health crisis and the need to stay at home to avoid catching the virus.

Although we all may be isolating ourselves right now, BPU employees want you to know that, during and after the Coronavirus pandemic, we are here for you.

Distancing requirements meant that we had to close our Customer Service Lobby temporarily, suspend Yard Waste Bag Collection and delay the opening of our Yard Waste Site. Aside from these specific situations, our employees stand ready to assist you in our Customer Service Office by phone at 661-1660, in the collection of garbage and recyclables and in the event of emergencies in electric, water, wastewater and district heat services.

Employees continue regular maintenance work with separated crews in electric, water, wastewater and district heating services. Administrators, engineers and office employees

continue to complete their duties during the pandemic and want to assure our customers that we are here to help.

BPU water main flushing continued and will be completed or nearly completed by the time you receive this newsletter.

Our convenient online payment opportunities are easy and reliable, as described in the article below this one. Our drop boxes accept checks and money orders. The BPU suspended service disconnections during the Coronavirus health crisis, although regular billing continues.

Our "Cents for St. Susan's" campaign to raise funds for St. Susan Center's work to feed local residents has been delayed due to the fact that canisters cannot yet be placed in area restaurants and stores during the pandemic.

Please watch our website at www.jamestownbpu.com; FACEBOOK and Twitter pages; and local media outlets for updates on when the BPU may re-open Customer Service, the Yard Waste Site and Yard Waste



Bag Collection at the curb.

An announcement of restored disconnection policies will be made once decisions are finalized. We do not expect to abruptly reverse disconnection policies immediately upon re-opening of our Customer Service Lobby.

The BPU thanks you for your understanding during this unusual time in the world's history.

Easy, Convenient Online Payment Options for BPU Bills

The BPU provides easy and convenient ways for customers to pay online and by the phone.

Get acquainted with how to use these methods now and you may discover that you prefer them to paying in our Customer Service Lobby. There is no waiting with online and phone payments! In addition, you may use debit or credit cards and e-checks, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The newest method of payment is **Pay by Text**. Access our website: www.jamestownbpu.com and click on the green My Account tile on the homepage. You'll land on your profile account page and see a Pay by Text column with the icon Manage. Click on Manage and follow the directions from there, including registering your payment method.

After that, you'll receive a text each billing period, stating the cost of your bill and asking you to text "okay" back to authorize payment.

AutoPay is another good way to pay online. Again, after clicking on the green My Account tile on the homepage, you'll be asked



to register, including your payment method.

From that point, your BPU bill will be paid automatically from your checking account or other payment method. AutoPay will send an email to you each billing period, notifying you that your bill was paid and in what amount.

Paperless Billing is another option that requires you to register with a payment method. Instead of automatically removing your BPU payment from your account, you'll receive an email letting you know the amount owed with a request for authorization of the bill payment through email.

If you don't like the idea of authorizing payment with an email or text, you are welcome to pay a **one-time bill** online. Again,

go to the green "My Account" tile on our home page at www.jamestownbpu.com. You'll see a button on the next page giving you the opportunity to make a one-time payment.

Budget Billing requires a phone call or visit to our Customer Service Office as certain qualifications apply. Budget Billing takes a look-back at your previous year's bills and charges you an equal amount each month based upon that record of payments. Information is available now by calling BPU Customer Service at 661-1660.

Phone Payments

A very easy way to pay, 24 hours a day, seven days a week is to **pay by phone**.

In addition, you can pay by credit or debit card or by e-check on the phone.

Simply dial 661-1660 and click on extension/option 3 and follow the prompts. Spanish as well as English options are available by phone.

The BPU has worked to provide easy online and call-in payment systems to make bill management easier for you. Be sure to check them out!



It's May again and that means that the BPU annual Water Quality Report for 2019 is available online at <https://www.jamestownbpu.com/Archive.aspx?ADID=159>.

The annual report is created each year with results for water testing in the previous year.

New York State and Chautauqua County require water systems to issue water testing results and to make them available to customers. BPU water is considered to be safe, plentiful and of high quality.

If you prefer to read a hard copy or larger print copy of the report, call 661-1680 or 661-1688 to request that a copy be mailed to you.

Johnson/BPU Good Neighbor Fund

The John Alfred & Oscar Johnson Memorial Trust/BPU Good Neighbor Fund helps customers in hardship situations that prevent them from paying BPU bills.

Customers who pay BPU bills regularly, who receive no government assistance for utility bills and who experience a sudden hardship may be eligible for assistance through the fund. Social Security and HEAP recipients may apply.

Customers who believe that they may qualify should contact the Salvation Army to make an appointment at 664-4108. The Salvation Army will verify the hardship quickly and then contact the BPU to validate the payment history. The process is brief and easy.

Funds for the Good Neighbor Fund are raised by the BPU through "Good Neighbor of the Month" contributors and by an endowment from the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation's John Alfred & Oscar Johnson Memorial Trust/BPU Good Neighbor Fund.

Money in the Fund is limited at any given time and is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.



Sign up for "Notify Me" at www.jamestownbpu.com & click on the Notify Me button in the top right corner of our homepage to choose your alerts. Receive texts or emails about outages, recycling, water events, posted bids & more!

Solid Waste Division Offers Service to Collect Large & Electronic Items for a Fee & Appointment

Spring is here, with summer on the way! It's time to get rid of those larger and electronic items that have been cluttering your home over the winter.

Take advantage of the BPU's large and electronic item pick-up service by calling the Garbage Hotline at 661-1651. Ask for an appointment to collect your special items on a specific day (normally on your regular collection day).

A fee for pick-up at your curb will be charged to pay for fees at and transportation of your items to the landfill or transfer station. Large or bulky items require a fee of \$20 per item, discounted to \$10 for scheduling in advance. TVs and monitors cost \$50 an item, discounted to \$25 per item for scheduling in advance.

To make your appointment, please call one or two days before your regular garbage day.

Examples of what we collect: couches, TVs, small lawn mowers, toilets, bath tubs, microwaves and dry mattresses. More information is available at www.jamestownbpu.com by clicking on the blue Garbage and Recycling tile on our homepage. The Garbage Hotline also welcomes questions.



ENERGY STAR Rebate Program for 2020



The 2020 ENERGY STAR Rebate Credit Program is open to all BPU electric customers. Rebate credits on electric bills are available for the purchase and installation of certain new ENERGY STAR-certified products listed below:

Residential Window, \$35	Heat Pump Water Heater, \$500
Residential Skylight, \$25	HVAC Heat Pump, \$500/T*
Residential Entry Door, \$50	Central AC Unit, \$100/T*
Geothermal Heat Pump, \$1,000 per Ton*	

*One ton of heating or cooling capacity equals approximately 12,000 BTU.

All products must be new and ENERGY STAR-certified to qualify for rebates. [Energystar.gov/products](http://energystar.gov/products) outlines minimum standards required for products. Additional information on the program may be found on our website at www.jamestownbpu.com; click on the yellow "Energy Efficiency" tile on the homepage. You may email BPU Energy Efficiency Coordinator Dan Reynolds at dreynolds@jamestownbpu.com for more information.

To obtain your rebates, mail receipts to our Customer Service Office from the purchase of a new product; the completed rebate form; and the energy guide that is provided to you by the retailer where you bought the product. For windows, skylights and doors, you must also provide the original NFRC labels. Once our Customer Service lobby re-opens, these materials also may be taken directly to the Customer Service Office.

Avoid Sewer Back-ups, Never Put FOG, Other Items Down Your Drains

Anyone who has seen a sewer back-up can tell you it is not a pleasant experience. Sewage can back up in your home or office and create quite a mess and smell.

Avoid sewer back-ups by never putting fats, oils or grease (FOG) down the drains in your home or office.

Although some people believe that running hot water down the drain after grease will prevent the problem, eventually the FOG will harden and plug the line.

The New York Water Environmental Association reports that, during COVID-19, utilities have seen an increase in the public using toilets as garbage cans. People are throwing cleaning wipes and paper towels down toilets as they work to keep things clean during the pandemic. According to the Association, this practice has caused more plugged sewer lines.

In the meantime, if you are a BPU wastewater (sewer) customer and you experience such a back-up, call the BPU at 661-1660, daytime, or 661-1640 after hours. Our crews will come to your street and flush the BPU line and let you know if you need a plumber.

Get Rid of Junk! BPU Collects Four Extra Items Each Week at the Curb as Part of Your Solid Waste Service



Wondering what to do with that junk in your closet or basement?

If you are a BPU Solid Waste (garbage & recycling) customer, now is the time to throw out some of those items.

Each week, you can place up to four items at the curb on your regular garbage/recycling collection day and our employees will cart that junk away.

Items may weigh up to 40 pounds and should be easily carried by one person.

If you're able to place them in a garbage bag, that would help the employee collecting the items.

Examples of items that may be left for no extra fee at the curb: straight chairs; child's toys; lamps; small tables; athletic equipment such as bats, golf bags or badminton nets; sets of window blinds; and picture frames.

If you have a question about whether or not an item requires a fee, please call the Garbage Hotline at 661-1651, weekdays, or click on the blue "Garbage/Recycling" tile on our homepage: www.jamestownbpu.com.

It is not recommended to pick up furniture discarded at the curb. Upholstered items such as couches and mattresses especially could contain bed bugs that could "move in" and infest your home. Bed bugs can cause painful, itchy bites on your skin. The bugs are difficult to get rid of once they have established themselves in your home.

