THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: January 11, 2022

Subject: Participation in the N.C. Dept. of Health & Human Services (NCDHHS) Low Income Household Water Assistance Program

Staff Resource(s): David Melton - Water Resources Director;

Action Requested: Approval to participate in NCDHHS Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

Background:

- The Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) was created in December 2021 after the State of North Carolina was awarded more than $38 million in federal funds to establish a new water assistance program for households affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- LIHWAP is a temporary emergency program that helps eligible households and families afford water and wastewater services.
- The program provides a one-time payment for eligible low-income households directly to the utility company. LIHWAP runs through September 2023 or until the funds run out.
- The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services announced the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program will expand to include all low-income households needing assistance in paying their water bill.
- Buncombe County will be caring for applications for assistance through our community partner Eblen Charities.
- Eblen Charities will qualify applicants and provide approved payments to the City of Asheville Utility Billing Accounts Payable Department.
- The City of Asheville Water Resources Department has registered with NCDHHS to enable customers in need of assistance to be eligible to apply through the program.

Council Goal(s):

- An Equitable & Diverse Community

Committee(s):

- None

Pro(s):

- This program assists customers in need of assistance for uninterrupted water service.

Con(s):

- None

Fiscal Impact:

- None expected although a small increase in water revenue is possible.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to support the City's participation in North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) Low Income Household Water Assistance Program.