



336 Pacific Avenue, Shafter, CA 93263
Meeting Held In-Person and Via Zoom and Livestream on YouTube.

**AGENDA
SPECIAL MEETING
SHAFTER CITY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2025**

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC:

Any documents produced by the City and distributed to a majority of the City Council regarding any item on this agenda will be made available in the City Clerk's Office during normal business hours at City Hall located at 336 Pacific Avenue, Shafter CA. In addition, such documents will be posted on the City's website at www.shafter.com.

CALL TO ORDER: 5:00 PM

ROLL CALL:
Mayor Givens
Mayor Pro Tem Olvera
Council Member Alvarado
Council Member Espinoza
Council Member Prout

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Those persons wishing to speak on any item included on the agenda, or on any matter within the subject matter jurisdiction of the City Council, are invited to speak from the podium and address the City Council. Speakers are limited to five minutes unless additional time is needed for translation. Please state your name and address for the record before making your presentation.

MANAGEMENT REPORT:

- 1. UTILITY BILLING SENIOR DISCOUNT PROGRAM - WORKSHOP AND DIRECTION:** Council find the action is for informational purposes only and does not trigger CEQA; discuss the concept of a senior discount program for utility billing and provide direction to Staff on whether to pursue further evaluation and development.

ROLL CALL

ADJOURNMENT:

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in a City Council Meeting, please contact the City Clerk at (661) 746-5000 at least three (3) days prior to the meeting or time the special services are needed to allow

City staff in making reasonable arrangements to provide you with access to the meeting. Any public record, relating to an open session agenda item, that is distributed within 72 hours prior to the meeting is available for public inspection in the City Clerk's Office at Shafter City Hall, 336 Pacific Ave., Shafter, CA 93263. This is to certify that this Agenda notice was posted at City Hall and Police Dept. by 5:00 p.m., September 11, 2025. Yazmina Pallares, S/S, City Clerk

REMOTE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IS ALLOWED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS, SEE BELOW FOR INSTRUCTIONS.

1. You are strongly encouraged to observe the City Council meetings live via YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/CityofShafter/>
2. If you wish to make a comment on a specific agenda item or public comment, please submit your comment via email by **5:00 PM on September 16, 2025** to the City Clerk at CityClerk@shafter.com
3. If you wish to make a written comment to the City Clerk, 336 Pacific Avenue, Shafter, CA 93263.
4. If you wish to make a comment during the live meeting, callers must first register with the City Clerk at 661-746-5012 before the meeting begins to receive instructions and the call- in number and code. Please call by 5:00pm on the Monday prior to the City Council meeting to allow ample time for sign up. You will need to provide your name, phone number and the item number you wish to address.
5. All public comments are provided to the City Council and applicable Staff, for review and consideration by the Board prior to taking action on any matters listed on the agenda and are incorporated into the official record of the City Council meeting.



CITY OF SHAFTER CITY COUNCIL REPORT

MEETING DATE: September 16, 2025

DEPARTMENT: Rogelio Sanchez, Finance Director, Isarel Perez-Hernandez, CMT, Deputy Finance Director

SUBJECT: UTILITY BILLING SENIOR DISCOUNT PROGRAM - WORKSHOP AND DIRECTION

RECOMMENDATION

Council find the action is for informational purposes only and does not trigger CEQA; discuss the concept of a senior discount program for utility billing and provide direction to Staff on whether to pursue further evaluation and development.

BACKGROUND

The concept of a Utility Billing Senior Discount Program was first introduced to the City Council on July 15, 2025, where staff presented preliminary options and comparisons to similar programs in nearby jurisdictions. On August 5, 2025, staff returned with additional analysis, including fiscal impact estimates, program scope, and administrative needs. Council directed staff to return with a dedicated workshop to further review program design, potential eligibility expansions, and fiscal considerations before moving forward.

Program Scope (Proposal)

- **Discount Level:** Up to **30% on water service charges.**
- **Eligibility:**
 - Age 60 or older
 - Primary residence within City limits
 - Must be the property owner and utility account holder
 - Proof of ownership required
 - Participation in PG&E CARE/FERA program (or similar income-based criteria)

- Annual re-certification required

Estimated Participation & Cost

- Estimated 550 participants (about 2.5% of utility accounts)
- Estimated annual program cost: \$100,000 at the 30% discount level
- Recommended funding source: General Fund subsidy, which avoids Proposition 218 requirements and preserves ratepayer equity

Key Policy Considerations

The City Council raised questions regarding the feasibility of extending the program to other groups, including ADA- eligible individuals, senior tenants and fixed-income populations.

Launching a senior utility discount program with a focus scope allows the City of Shafter to build a foundation based on real-world testing, rather than assumptions. Limiting the initial phase to senior property owners gives staff the ability to evaluate the program's true participation rate, administrative workloads, legal concerns, fraud vulnerabilities, and financial impacts. This ensures the City can make informed, responsible decisions before expanding eligibility to broader fixed income populations. Dr. William D. Leach of the USC MPA program emphasizes that effective public policies and programs benefit from logic models that clearly map out program inputs, outputs, and intended outcomes. Logic models help policymakers test initiatives within a controlled environment and avoid scaling prematurely. This framework aligns with the evaluation guidance from Dr. Arlene Fink (UCLA), who stresses that sound public programs must demonstrate **effectiveness, value, and quality** before broader implementation. In this case, expanding the discount to include senior tenants, disabled residents, or other fixed-income groups may prematurely jeopardize the programs' sustainability or reduce equity impact.

FISCAL IMPACT

The program is estimated to cost up to \$100,000 annually, assuming 550 seniors qualify for a 30% discount on water charges. Funding would be provided through the General Fund. This represents a modest but meaningful investment in supporting Shafter's senior population on fixed incomes.

CEQA ANALYSIS

This action is not a "project" under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3), as it involves policy direction and funding allocation without physical changes to the environment.

APPROVED BY THE CITY ATTORNEY

No

ATTACHMENTS

1. Senior Discount Presentation - FINAL

CITY OF SHAFTER

Senior Discount Program

BACKGROUND

- 07/15/2025 – CONCEPT WAS FIRST INTRODUCED.
- 08/05/2025 – CONTINUATION OF CONCEPT.
- 09/16/2025 – WORKSHOP AND DIRECTION.

PURPOSE

- PRESENT UPDATED OPTIONS FOR UB DISCOUNT PROGRAM
- SUPPORT AFFORDABILITY FOR QUALIFYING SENIORS
- ALIGN PRACTICES WITH NEIGHBORING CITIES

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

- 30% DISCOUNT ON WATER ONLY
- TARGET POPULATION: SENIORS 60+ (INITIAL SCOPE)
- ESTIMATED PARTICIPANTS: 550 (2.5% OF ACCOUNTS)
- ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST: \$100,000
- FUNDING STREAM: GENERAL FUND

EXPANDING ACCESS: SENIOR TENANTS

➤ PROS

- PROMOTES EQUITY DURING RATE INCREASE
- EXPANDS PROGRAM TO MORE VULNERABLE RESIDENTS
- BUILDS GOODWILL

CHALLENGES - SENIOR TENANTS

- VERIFYING TENANTS IS MORE COMPLEX THAN OWNER OCCUPIED
- NON-SENIOR TENANTS MAY MANIPULATE DOCUMENTATION
- TENANTS MAY MOVE FREQUENTLY, COMPLICATING PROGRAM
- SENIOR LANDLORD LEASES PROPERTIES TO NON-SENIORS

CHALLENGES - SENIOR TENANTS (CONT.)

- REQUIRING LEASE AGREEMENTS & IN-PERSON APPLICATION
 - LEASES CREATED INFORMALLY (DOWNLOADED ONLINE)
 - SENIORS AGREE TO HELP FAMILY OR FRIENDS
- LANDLORD ATTESTATION – LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY
 - SOME LANDLORDS MAY REFUSE TO SIGN FORM

EXPANDING ACCESS: DISABLED RESIDENTS

- SUPPORTS EQUITY BY RECOGNIZING THAT DISABILITY NOT JUST AGE CAN LIMIT INCOME
- EXPANDS PROGRAM TO RESIDENTS WHO MAY RELY ON FIXED INCOME

CHALLENGES – DISABLED RESIDENTS

- DEFINING “PERMANENTLY DISABLED” IS COMPLEX
 - ❖ CRITERIAS VARY ACROSS (VA, SS, PRIVATE DISABILITY)
- LEGAL CHALLENGES IF IT DENIES APPLICANTS WITH LESS CLEAR DOCUMENTATION OR TEMPORARY DISABILITY
- RE-CERTIFICATION TIMELINES MAY DIFFER
 - ❖ STAFF TRACK ELIGIBILITY ACROSS MULTIPLE DISABILITY TYPES

TENANTS & DISABLED RECOMMENDATION

- STAFF RECOMMENDS EVALUATING CORE PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ESTABLISHING PROPER VERIFICATION SYSTEMS FOR SENIOR TENANTS, AND A VETTED ELIGIBILITY FRAMEWORK FOR ADA-ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.

FIXED INCOME GROUPS FACT FINDINGS

GROUPS

- VETERANS
- ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES
- WIDOWS/WIDOWERS
- LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED
- SINGLE PARENTS
- RECENTLY RETIRED
- IMMIGRANTS

INCOME SOURCE

- PENSION / VA DISABILITY
- SSI / SSDI
- SURVIVOR BENEFITS
- ASSISTANCE OR NONE
- CHILD SUPPORT OR NONE
- PRE-SS FIXED INCOME
- OFTEN SEASONAL WORK

QUALIFICATIONS

- AGE OF 60+
- ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN PG&E CARES/FERA
- RESIDE IN PRIMARY HOME
- UTILITY ACCOUNT HOLDER
- PROOF OF OWNERSHIP
- RE-CERTIFY ANUALLY

WHY FOCUS ON WATER SUBSIDY?

1. WATER USAGE CHANGES MONTH TO MONTH
2. WATER DISCOUNT OFFERS MOST FINANCIAL RELIEF
3. WATER BILLED MONTHLY BY CITY AND EASIER TO TRACK
4. SEWER IS A FIXED COST
5. SEWER DISCOUNT OFFERS LOWER FINANCIAL RELIEF
6. SEWER IS BILLED THROUGH PROPERTY TAXES

FAIR SUBSIDY FOR ALL OF SHAFTER

1. GOSSAMER GROVE IS SERVED BY OILDALE MUTUAL
2. PROPOSED SOLUTION: PARTNER WITH OILDALE WATER MUTUAL
 - A. City approved seniors in Gossamer get same water discount
 - B. Oildale Mutual applies the discount and invoices the City
3. RESULT WILL BE EQUAL SUPPORT FOR ALL OF SHAFTER

COMPARISONS

CITY	DISCOUNT	UTILITY	AGE
DELANO	15%	W,WW,RF	60+
WASCO	30%	W	60+
FRESNO	10% and 14%	WW, RF	62+
VISALIA	\$13.25 and \$12.75	WW, RF	60+

IMPACT

		EXAMPLE SENIOR		
		COUNT - 1		
	Monthly RATE	20%	25%	30%
WATER	\$48.70	9.74	12.18	14.61
TOTALS		\$ 9.74	\$ 12.18	\$ 14.61

			EXAMPLE SENIOR		
			COUNT - 550		
	RATE	ANNUAL	20%	25%	30%
WATER	\$48.70	\$ 584	64,284	80,355	96,426
TOTALS		\$ 584	\$ 64,284	\$ 80,355	\$ 96,426

OPTIONS (ESTIMATES)

OPTIONS	WATER	ANNUAL SUPPORT
A	20%	\$ 64,284
B	25%	\$ 80,355
C	30%	\$ 96,426

WHY START SMALL & SCALE WITH DATA

- SENIOR DISCOUNT PROGRAM REFLECTS A COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND AFFORDABILITY
- COUNCIL HAS RAISED QUESTIONS REGARDING FEASIBILITY OF EXTENDING THE PROGRAM TO OTHER GROUPS (senior tenants, ADA-eligible individuals)
- EFFECTIVE POLICY STARTS WITH TARGETED PILOTS
- LAUNCHING WITH A FOCUSED APPROACH ALLOWS FOR DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS BEFORE SCALING UP
- SOUND POLICY IS BUILT ON REAL-WORLD TESTING
 - START FOCUSED, LEARN, THEN GROW
- EXPANDING TOO SOON WITHOUT DATA COULD UNDERMINE PROGRAM CREDABILITY AND STRAIN LIMITED RESOURCES

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY IN PRACTICE

- GOOD POLICY PROGRAMS BEGIN WITH CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENTS
- Dr. WILLIAM D. LEACH (USC) STRESSES THAT LOGIC MODELS HELP POLICY MAKERS TEST INITIATIVES WITHIN A CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT AND AVOID SCALLING PREMATURELY
- DR. ARLENE FINK (UCLA) EMPHASIZES EVALUATING REAL WORLD IMPLEMENTATION USING SMALL SAMPLES BEFORE BROADER ROLLOUT.
- CASE STUDY: COVID-19 LOW VACCINATION RATES

RECOMMENDATION

STAFF RECOMMENDS OPTION C

- 30% DISCOUNT ON WATER ONLY
- AGE OF 60+
- ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN PG&E CARES/FERA
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SAMPLE - PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

PHASE	GROUP INCLUDED	TIMING	NOTES
PHASE 1	SENIOR OWNER OCCUPIED	YEAR 1	CONTROLLED ROLLOUT
PHASE 2 (OPTIONAL)	SENIOR TENANTS	YEAR 2	AFTER PROGRAM AUDIT
PHASE 3 (OPTIONAL)	PERMANENTLY DISABLED	YEAR 3 OR POST PHASE 2	VETTED VERIFICATION & LEGAL FRAMEWORK
PHASE 4 (OPTIONAL)	OTHER FIXED INCOME PUPULATIONS: -VETERANS, -WIDOWS -SINGLE PARENTS -IMMIGRANTS	TBD	STAFF REVIEW REAL DATA, COSTS, STAFFING IMPACTS,& FRAUD CONTROLS

QUESTIONS ?

