

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of myself and our family, in formal opposition to application proposed for increased rates (both temporary and permanent) filed by the Abenaki Water Company. My family and I reside at 5 Old Coach Rd in the Village Shore Estates in Bow, NH. We purchased our home in 2019 and have had nothing but issues with the Abenaki Water Company.

Initially, we dismissed some of the stories we heard from the neighbors regarding the neighborhood utility and opted to remain optimistic in our new home purchase. This was however, until we began to experience issues of our own first hand including but not limited to: water shut offs, system leakages, water bans, dirty water and air in the pipes which ultimately resulted in water hammering and caused a leak in the incoming pipe to our home below the shut off valve. This flooded our finished basement and resulted in a homeowner's claim. During this incident, representatives from Abenaki came to the home, inspected the damage and offered to work with us to assist in the repair. We received no assistance and had to burden the entire emergency services cost as well as the mitigation and replacement costs alone.

Throughout COVID and the hottest summer months, when traveling was off the table, we were unable to water our lawns, gardens or allow our children and pets to play in the water or else risk being cut off from the utility as outlined in our tariff. Some of the shut downs were only posted on their website with no other communication to the neighborhood. As a mother of four young children and working full time, I, as with many other neighbors, did not have the time nor the inclination to check on the Abenaki website everyday in the summer.

Through research I learned that the Abenaki Water Company purchased the rights to this neighborhood in 2014. In 2015 (approved in 2016) immediately filed to raise the rates 32% + 6 additional % over the next 5 years assumingly to be able to maintain the aging system. I would argue that this has not been the case as the system over and over again continued to leak and fail, resulting in water being trucked in all summer. Only in the fall to receive a letter, months after the fact, that once again that our water supply does not meet the standard for ARSENIC. Imagine finding out that the coffee you made and the water you put in your baby's bottle for the last couple of months had arsenic in it above the regulated guidelines. This is typically removed in a water treatment process through various types of resin or media and is entirely preventable. Upon further research, this has happened before which again illustrates the lack of preventative maintenance / resin swap out or regular backwashing which can prolong the life of the resin/media. As a mother of four elementary children, including 3 immunocompromised triplets, having non-drinkable water and paying the proposed 90% rate hike, essential double for it, is unacceptable.

Furthermore, our neighborhood has banded together on our time and dollar to research apply and be granted for a grant from the State of NH to aid in offsetting the costs to the Abenaki Water Company for maintaining the aging system. Yet, they still feel the need to raise the rates almost double and push the burden onto the families of Village Shore Estates. The average age of residents in this area is 61 years old with many on fixed incomes. This increase will create extreme hardships on the vast majority of residents. If they now have this grant money, why do they need the rate hike? And what are they doing

with the money if clearly not investing in the infrastructure? What is being done on the arsenic issue? How long do we have to pay for water we cannot drink? If they aren't going to utilize the grant that our association worked pro-bono to attain for them, they should return it to the state.

The Abenaki Water company claims "AWC and NESC are dedicated to providing a safe and reliable water service to all of their customers. The two entities regularly discuss and collaborate on operating procedures and capital improvements for the various systems in an effort to strive for continuous improvement. Through its relationship with NESC, AWC has been able to attract cost effective capital to make necessary system upgrades and improvements." I would argue that the water provided is not safe as it does not meet the standard for ARSENIC levels and is far from reliable. I would argue that there has been no continuous improvement, but firefighting and quick, cheap fixes and I would argue that they have not been able to attract effective capital, as it was our association which researched, applied and got them the grant. Any company worth its weight, understands that in order to address systemic problems, you must address the root cause. In this case, the root cause is the failure of Abenaki to properly and preventatively maintain the water system. Because of this, we are firefighting problem after problem along the lines chasing leaks and then passing that cost on to the families they are supposed to be providing for. There is an old saying, SERVICE PRICE QUALITY – choose two... we are currently getting none.