



The Senate of the State of New Hampshire

107 North Main Street, Concord, N.H. 03301-4951

February 17, 2022

Mr. Daniel C. Goldner, Chairman
Public Utilities Commission
21 South Fruit Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Chairman Goldner:

I am writing to you with regard to Docket Number DW 20-117, which concerns rate-related matters for the Hampstead Area Water Company Inc., or HAWC. My Senate District includes the town of Hampstead, which is one of multiple communities served by HAWC. I have received inquiries from Hampstead constituents relative to recent and anticipated increases in their water bills.

Specifically, I am concerned as to the seemingly excessive period of time between the date of a settlement agreement, which was reached by staff of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), the state's Office of the Consumer Advocate (OCA), and HAWC officials, and the date the PUC acted—through the issuance of Order Number 26,566—in granting its related approval. An increase in temporary rates was the subject of the settlement agreement and the referenced PUC order. The temporary-rates settlement agreement was executed by the three participating parties—PUC staff, OCA and HAWC—on Wednesday, May 19, 2021, yet eight months elapsed before the commission, on Monday, January 17, 2022, formally assented.

The now-approved agreement permits HAWC to charge its customers—commencing this month—the higher temporary rates retroactive to June 30, 2021. This increase, especially given its retroactivity, represents a hardship for many of my constituents considering increases in the costs of gas, heat and groceries. These difficulties could have been averted if the commission had acted promptly in granting its approval.

I do understand that HAWC will be phasing in the recently approved temporary increase on an incremental basis, rather than immediately charging its customers the full rate. Nonetheless, I would appreciate any information you can share, which would assist me in responding to my constituents, in terms of an explanation as to the commission's delay in formally granting its approval.

Thank you for your attention this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Regina Birdsell".

Senator Regina Birdsell
NH State Senate – Senate District 19
107 North Main Street – SH Room 302
Concord, NH 03301

cc: Hon. Christopher T. Sununu, Governor, State of New Hampshire
Hon. Chuck Morse, President of the New Hampshire Senate
Hon. Janet L. Stevens, New Hampshire Executive Councilor
Hampstead Board of Selectmen