

January 29, 2021

Dear Madam Chairperson and Commissioners:

As customers of Abenaki Water Company (AWC) and 6 year residents of the Village Shore Estates in Bow, NH, we are directly affected by the proposed rate increase and we respectfully request to intervene in the matter and that the rate increase request be denied.

We are currently paying rates that are already among the highest in the state, as such the Commission must consider if the rate increase is fair and warranted. AWC stated that a rate increase was necessary to compensate for the revenue losses the company experience as a result of water outages in 2018 and 2019, outages that were a result of system malfunctions that the company should have foreseen given the age of the system and the adequacy of the system for the size of the neighborhood itself.

AWC has also recently received a government grant to support the necessary system upgrades and repairs, yet the company has not indicated how this grant approval (which was secured *after* the company announced its intentions to raise rates from a range of 90.62 to 124.76% above our current rates) would factor into any necessary rate increases.

It is my understanding that AWC, White Rock Water Company (the AWC predecessor), struggled to keep the system functioning. Despite rate increases, the White Rock Water Company could no longer afford to maintain and operate the water system and consequently sold it to AWC. When AWC purchased the system, they were aware of the declining condition and had the means at that time to determine strategies for offsetting the cost of anticipated repairs, maintenance and production costs. Instead, the company relied upon smaller ongoing repairs over the past several years (which consistently left the neighborhood without access to clean water) and never resolved the actual root cause of the system issues. We should not be held responsible, or be expected to bail out, a mismanaged company for not only their lack of preparation but also their faulty application of resources.

This neighborhood is one of transition. A significant percentage of our neighbors are retirees living on a fixed income, having entered this neighborhood upon its founding and lived here for more than 3 decades. The other percentage of our neighborhood are young families, such as ours—who are already struggling in this pandemic to care for children who are out of school, pay unforeseen daycare costs, and look for work. This is not a neighborhood that can withstand such an obscene increase in water rates. This is not a matter of property value—although that would be hurt by this rate increase, as well—this is a matter of access to a resource that is vital for all of us to live.

Accordingly, we request the Commission to deny the rate increase request of AWC. They have received significant grant funds, which will support the need for systems upgrades. AWC requests these rate increases to compensate itself for poor systems management. Customers should not be expected to provide a bailout in this circumstance.

Thank you for your consideration.

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