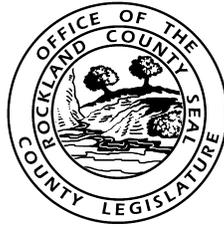


Press



Release

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For Immediate Release

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Cornell Urges Public Comment On Suez Water Rate Hike

Increase Sought While Meaningful Efforts To Replace
Leaky Pipes & Boost Conservation Are Lacking

Public Service Commission To Accept Comment
6 P.M. Thursday, Sept. 29

New City, NY (Sept. 23, 2016) – Rockland County Legislator Harriet Cornell is urging residents and business owners to comment on the rate hike that is proposed by Suez Water New York Inc.

The proposal would increase water bills by nearly 6 percent in just the first year, but fails to go deep enough when it comes to reducing the amount of water lost to leaks or to implementing conservation measures, said Cornell, who chairs the Rockland County Task Force on Water Resources Management.

Built into the requested hike is the recovery of about \$54 million spent by the company as it pursued its doomed desalination and treatment plant in Haverstraw.

“It was very disappointing to see the final Joint Proposal and find it lacking many of the features that would elevate the plan and ensure its successful administration,” Cornell said. “Many of the Task Force suggestions were ignored and the proposed plan was not of the caliber that we had expected...I strongly urge the PSC to carefully review and consider our recommendations presented in good faith in order to realize the benefits of a superior plan of conservation. It is well known that conservation is the most cost-effective way to provide drinking water.”

Among the improvements that are needed, Cornell said, are the replacement of water mains at an accelerated rate, and independent water loss audits that are available for review by the PSC. As much as 4 million gallons of water a day may currently be lost system wide.

Additionally, Cornell said, far-reaching conservation efforts should be implemented as part of the plan. Suez's plan sets an incredibly low conservation rate of just 1 million gallons of water a day, without any data to back up the company's assertion that that's the best it can do. Consultants for the Task Force and the County of Rockland have indicated that conservation can deliver a great deal more, Cornell said.

The New York state Public Service Commission, which oversees utilities in the state, is seeking public comments on Suez's proposed hike. An Administrative Law Judge will oversee the gathering of the public comment and all evidence relating to a Joint Proposal submitted by the company and the staff of the state Department of Public Service.

All information will be presented to the Public Service Commission for consideration. The board can adopt or reject the Joint Proposal in whole or part.

Under the Joint Proposal, water rates would increase by 5.9 percent in the first year, 5.6 percent in the second year, and 5.3 percent in the third year. Recovery of costs associated with the failed treatment plant account for about 65 percent of the requested increase, according to the published reports.

The public statement hearing starts at 6 p.m. Thursday in the Chambers of the Rockland County Legislature, 11 New Hempstead Road, in New City. Participants may comment publicly or submit written testimony at the hearing.

Those who cannot attend the session have other options for submitting comments. All comments should reference Case 16-W-0130-SuezWaterNY-Water Rates.

By web: Go to the website (www.dps.ny.gov), click on "Search," enter the case number (16-W-0130), then click "Post Comments" at the top of the page.

By mail: Email comments to the Secretary to the Commission at secretary@dps.ny.gov or mail to Hon. Kathleen H. Burgess, Secretary, Public Service Commission, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223-1350.

All written comments will become part of the record and will be reported to the Public Service Commission for its consideration. All written comments may be accessed on the PSC's website. Many libraries offer free internet access.

Toll-free Opinion Line: Call the Commission's Opinion Line at 1-800-335-2120. This number is set up to take comments about pending cases from in-state callers, 24-hours-a-day. The comments are not transcribed verbatim, but a summary is provided to the Commission.

All Comments submitted via these alternate means are requested by Dec. 9.

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