

Margo Woodacre's PUC Testimony

This past May-2024 Aqua Pennsylvania filed for a substantial rate increase for both its water and sewer businesses. This must be approved by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC). A routine part of the approval process is to conduct public hearings. At these hearings any citizen can express any desired opinion.

What follows is the public testimony of Margo Woodacre one of the co-founders of Keep Water Affordable. This testimony was given August 8, 2024 at the New Garden Township hearing conducted by the PUC

Introduction

My name is Margo Ewing Woodacre and I live in Harrogate North, New Garden Township, Chester County. I am here today, (speaking for many of our residents), to make a plea to the PUC to take action regarding our unfair and unjust Aqua sewer rates...

The Public Utility Commission's mission is to balance the needs of the consumers and utilities; ensure safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates; and protect the public interest. The PUC is required by law to give companies a fair and balanced return on investment. My question is: Where is the fairness and balance for the consumer?

My Experience

Most of us feel that during the sale and subsequent changes by Aqua regarding our wastewater utility pricing, that the PUC did little to consider the consumer and we have felt deceived with the significant price increases put upon us.

44 cents of each of our dollars goes toward Aqua's profit. Is that fair and balanced for the consumer? Up to this point, I don't think so.

With the new proposal, here in New Garden, Aqua is offering a drop in the high rates they have imposed upon us for the mid to larger usage of water, what about those of us on the lower usage? Our rates are going up! Why are we being penalized for lower consumption? Isn't that a step against water conservation?

>> Personally, I use 2-3,000 gallons/qtr.-- In 2020, I paid \$112.91 w/o Aqua's increase. After Aqua's increase, for 3,000 gallons, I now pay \$206.95<<

That is an 82% rate hike with ZERO benefits:

I've seen no improvement to our sewer

As far as customer service: In 2022, when our rates soared, many of our neighbors complained about poor customer service when they called Aqua to question the steep increase! Aqua had either no answers or wrong answers for the increase.

So, with the increase that Aqua has charged us, what are we getting in return? Here in New Garden, nothing! This increase has only gone toward Aqua's profits.

Thank You - Water Is A Right

We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to share our concerns and are asking you to rectify this issue so we can move forward knowing that you are ensuring fairness, balance, accuracy, and accountability for everyone involved.

Water is a human right. Elizabeth Marx, of the PA Law Project wisely reminds us: Water is not something that you can price someone out of the market for!