

## Steven Liang

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**From:** K DS <kdspruill@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 14, 2021 3:35 PM  
**To:** WaterRateBoard  
**Cc:** Keisha Spruill  
**Subject:** Dispute Philadelphia Water Department Rate Increase

**Categories:** Blue Category

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To Whom It May Concern,

This email communication is to formally inform you that I respectfully disagree with the proposed 16.9% increase to the residential rate over any period of time.

The Water Department cited that the reason for the "steep increase" is due to reduction in revenue received as a result of the pandemic. In addition, because they placed a moratorium on terminations, the City's recourse is to increase rates to alleviate financial harm to "offset lower collections and consumption", "replenish **limited financial reserves**", "maintain existing services", and "improve infrastructure." The Water Department's increase, if approved, would generate \$49 million in the first year, and an additional \$32 million in the second year.

This certainly raises the question about the mindset of the individuals who agreed that this would be the best approach. Where can an individual tax-paying citizen in the City of Philadelphia go to apply for a 16.9% increase in residual income to offset their bills, maintain a household, replenish the income that was depleted, and improve their quality of life? Is there a grant one can apply for in such circumstances? We ALL were (or currently are) affected and/or infected by the pandemic in some way, shape, or form. With that being said, it will take a long time for any one person, business, or agency to recoup and rebound from the effects of such a traumatic event - which, by the way, is still ongoing.

People have lost their loved ones, jobs and/or businesses, had their total household income reduced by 50% - 75% or more, in danger of losing their homes, barely have enough to eat, and the **only recourse** or **plan of action** the City can come up with is to increase rates - by **16.9%**! The annual % of a cost of living raise is nowhere near that, but we are expected to pay 16.9% more - over a two-year period?! If hundreds of thousands of customers are still behind on their bills today, it is highly probable that they will be behind after the increase and/or have their water shut-off. The increase will only add to the debt and not satisfy it. Moreover, how can the City's economy rebound and thrive if more household income is allocated towards the increase of a bill? Times are hard for everyone, and the average individual tax-paying citizen SHOULD NOT have to keep paying out-of-pocket so that this city, state, and country can stay afloat or "replenish its financial reserves"!

Ironically, the City of Philadelphia is the largest landlord providing housing assistance for more than 80K people residing in some form of public housing under the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) with a \$454 million budget allocated in FY20. For FY21, the annual budget was \$371 million most of which came from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Moreover, PHA received \$126.9 million in stimulus funds and \$1.5 million from state and federal grants. I mention all of this because as a business, the city receives funding. Thus, additional funding was provided as a result of the pandemic. And while I am acutely aware of how budgets and dissemination of funds work, I know that funds can be reallocated appropriately when needed and with just cause. That said, regardless of the department, the city as a whole received funding. Annual funding in the millions comes from state and federal governments, and funding in the millions was allotted as a result of the pandemic.

For these reasons, there needs to be a deeper dive into this issue to find a better solution/remedy to offset collection and improving infrastructure. Perhaps, maybe a more in-depth analysis is needed to 1.) determine if funds are being managed across all departments appropriately and 2.) identify funding that can be reallocated from other departments with minimum impact. Failing to find another solution other than increasing the rates will surely add to your customer's burden and possibly result in a loss of customers due to relocation and/or termination.

In short, I do not believe that it is just, appropriate, or considerate to increase rates given the current climate we're in. Moreover, I do not believe that individual tax-paying citizens should be held liable to pay for the aftermath of this pandemic. It is my hope that this email is taken into consideration and renders a decision that is in favor of the consumer.

Thanking you in advance for your time and attention to this matter.

Respectfully,  
K. D. Spruill