

Steven Liang

From: Paul Russell <cqapaul@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 6, 2023 7:03 PM
To: WaterRateBoard
Cc: Darrell Clarke; Jamie Gauthier
Subject: Re: Proposed Water, Sewer and Stormwater Rate Increases comment by April 25

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To the Water Rate Board:

Good afternoon. My name is Paul Russell, my wife and I are home owners in the Brewerytown/Strawberry Mansion area. I understand that we have until April 25 to submit our voice to be heard in writing, with regards to the proposed water/sewer/stormwater rate increase proposal.

In this email, I have CC'd the respective honorable members of city council who represent the areas of the specific examples I refer to in a moment (however, I'm sure they were already aware of these two incidents and might have more information to provide than what I know).

While I usually understand and agree with rate hikes due to rising costs and the costs of living, I vehemently oppose this particular department's request for a rate hike.

If the city's water department (of any city) is doing all they can and managing smartly, but still falling short of the required revenue, then that water department might have good sound reasons to request a rate hike. That is not the case with Philadelphia's Water Department.

For the past several years, at least since 2019, this department now before us requesting a rate hike has grossly mistreated and misused their one main resource...water. When a department grossly mishandles the one thing they are supposed to be an expert at, they should NEVER be awarded more money. That encourages the department to simply continue to mishandle their own resources. You do not have to dig far at all to see the gross negligence of Philadelphia's water department's treatment of their own resources.

Example 1: On our West Thompson Street street in Brewerytown, in 2019, a nearby fire hydrant started to leak in the spring. By leak, I mean it was actively gurgling at a good pace, all flowing down Thompson street like a shallow creek. It was over three months before the water department stopped the leak. Three months. Not three days of continuous water flowing but over THREE MONTHS. My neighbor across the street had his basement flooded because of this fire hydrant leak and told me he called the water department repeatedly to fix the leak. He said he called every day for a while, then every week. This water department WASTED so much water they could easily earn the title of "Least Green Organization" in the whole Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Stopping a leak is something that easily could have been achieved in less than a week. Heck, they could have deputized the neighborhood and we would have stopped the leak. But instead they simply allowed water to run down our streets for over three months.

Example 2: I don't know if anyone on the board has ever driven on 76 Southbound under the William H Gray, III's 30th Street Station, but for almost an entire year there was water gushing

out from there. Every time I drove it would heavily splatter my windshield in the warmer months, and just be frozen and trickling onto my car in the colder months. The amount of water being WASTED was so ridiculous it would have been comical had it not been such a tragic waste of our fair city's natural resource.

I am only one person, and I have only lived in the city since 2018. So if I can see the gross negligence of the water department every day for months, I'm curious as to the likelihood of more examples I never personally witnessed; and it was obvious to me the department was going to eventually ask for more money. More money to continue their total lack of respect for the environment and their lack of respect for the resource of water they provide to the residents of this city. I could not conceive any department in the country wasting as much of their own resources as I have personally seen in a few short years and not eventually ask for more revenue.

If this rate hike request is granted, this water department will be laughing all the way to the bank. I should write a children's book informing the readers to not worry about wasting water if their grown-up job is to be in charge of it in Philadelphia, for they will always be able to simply ask for a rate-hike and get more money that continually encourages a repeated misuse and negligence of our natural resources.

After these brief "cowboy years" of water wasted I have personally witnessed, the only time a rate hike should be granted is AFTER significant and sustained good faith efforts to reduce waste are shown and reported and (most importantly) sustained! By the way, installing new meters does not count toward this good faith effort. First, the project has been in the works for a long time; second, the entire project went far longer than projected; third, they let water just gush out of 30th street station and out of a fire hydrant leak for MONTHS!

I'm almost 50 years old. I have lived in Washington DC, and in Baltimore, Tampa, Orlando, and a few small towns in my lifetime. I have literally seen the occasional fire hydrant getting pulled open due to teenagers. I have seen water leaks and main line gushes. I have seen water for several days in the streets waiting for the respective departments to secure everything as quick as they can. One thing is certain, though. In my experiences in everywhere I have lived, I have NEVER ever seen the gross negligence and misuse of water even close to what the Philadelphia Water Department has shown since arriving here in 2018.

Because of the above, I feel this proposed rate hike should be denied until such time that the whole department can get their "act together", and show sustained good faith efforts in place that are respecting our resources and have shown substantial reductions of both waste and negligence. Thank you very much for your time to read this long letter. My vote is a resounding "no" to their rate modification request.

Sincerely,

Paul Russell, CQA

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