



Onondaga County Legislature

DEBORAH L. MATURO
Clerk

WILLIAM H. MEYER, JR.
Chairman

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Deputy Clerk

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PUBLIC HEARING – December 2, 2008

TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE METROPOLITAN WATER BOARD TO AMEND THE CURRENTLY EFFECTIVE SCHEDULE OF RATES TO BE CHARGED FOR WATER AND WATER SERVICE PROVIDED BY ONONDAGA COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

Chairman Meyer called the hearing to order at 2:25 p.m.

The Clerk called the roll and the following legislators were present: Mr. Lesniak, Mr. Kraft, Mr. Stott, Mrs. Rapp, Mr. Rhinehart, Mr. Buckel, Mr. Corbett, Mr. Stanczyk, Mr. Holmquist, Mr. Kilmartin, Mr. DeMore, Mr. Warner, Mr. Jordan, Mr. Kinne, Mr. Laguzza, Mr. Masterpole, Ms. Williams, Mrs. Winslow, Chairman Meyer.

The Clerk read the notice of public hearing.

Chairman Meyer asked for speakers:

David Fitch, Administrative Director, MWB, provided the following statement:

My name is David Fitch and I currently serve Onondaga County as Administrative Director of the Metropolitan Water Board.

Today's public hearing is being conducted for the purpose of receiving comment on the Metropolitan Water Board's amendment of its wholesale water rates, so my statements will be brief. The hearing is required by §266 of Article 5a of County Law.

As most of you know, pure, safe drinking water is something we have in abundance here in Central New York and it is inexpensive. It is something we tend to take for granted. When packaged like this....consumers pay between \$6.40 and \$8.00 per gallon for water. The rates we propose to become effective January 1st will average \$1.00 per thousand gallons to our Schedule 1 customers (like the Onondaga County Water Authority) and \$1.03 per thousand gallons to the City of Syracuse. On an annual basis, the typical residential user will pay less than \$2.50 to support this increase.

Drinking water is a bargain in this community and we can thank our predecessors John Mulroy, William Walsh, Alexander "Casey" Jones, John Farrell, Ephraim Shapero, Thomas Dyer and Earl O'Brien for having addressed this need in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The result of their vision and effort is what we enjoy today; a connection to a virtually unlimited source of supply and a system of treatment and delivery valued at over \$300 million that is ours. The bonds issued to construct the system have all been satisfied.

It is one of Onondaga County's true success stories and an asset that we promote for economic development.

The majority of system infrastructure is now 40 years old. While that is young by national standards, we have reached a point in time where components of system infrastructure and capital equipment need replacement or upgrading if it is to continue reliable service and remain a beacon for economic growth. County leadership has communicated a preference to fund preventive maintenance and system upgrades through user fees rather than property assessments, so we propose this modest rate increase to the commodity to achieve that objective.

In recent months, I have identified many of these needs to the members of our legislative program committee and during our 2009 budget presentation to the Ways & Means committee. The legislature has supported our plan by adopting a budget, which includes an increased Provision for Capital Projects and the revenue from water sales to fund it. We ask now that you consummate that plan by confirming the water rates needed to generate that revenue.

Additional factors contributing to the need for the increase include diminishing demand for water, increased power costs associated with pumping and rising rates for water treatment chemicals.

That concludes my statement. I yield the lectern to any other person who would like to speak. I ask that they begin by identifying themselves for the record.

Chairman Meyer asked if anyone further was wishing to be heard. Hearing none, he closed the hearing at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Deborah L. Maturo, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature