

September 17, 2015

#PUC 21SEP15 11:10

The State of New Hampshire
Public Utilities Commission
21 South Fruit Street – Suite 10
Concord, NH 03301-2429

Re: **PUC Order No. 25,804 – Abenaki Water Company**
Request for Permanent and Temporary Rate Proceeding

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to provide testimony in connection with the above-entitled matter. My husband and I reside in Briarcrest Estates, a manufactured home community in Laconia/Belmont, NH consisting of 300 +/- homes. My husband and I are retired. He is 69 and I am 65 years old. Approximately 58 of these homes are in Belmont and are serviced by Abenaki Water Company, ours being one of them. The remainder of the community receives water/sewer services from the City of Laconia. This is a Cooperative community owned by the residents. When my husband and I first moved here some 8+ years ago, the subject water/sewer system servicing the Belmont portion of the community was owned and operated by the former owners of the Briarcrest community and we did not anticipate that the water/sewer system would be sold to a private entity. However, the former owners did sell the system to Lakeland Management who subsequently sold it to Abenaki. The residents were given no other options.

First, we only just became aware of the above-entitled proceeding on or about September 10, 2015 upon receipt of a copy of the above-entitled PUC Order which was attached to our monthly water/sewer bill. Although Abenaki Water Company filed this action on June 1, 2015, they did not notify their customers until more than 3 months later. Since a hearing on this matter is scheduled for September 23rd, there has not been enough time to either investigate this matter, consort with others involved, obtain legal representation and/or to organize some other type of protest.

My husband and I feel the current proposal by Abenaki Water Company is unfair, unreasonable and creates an unsustainable trend for the future. It was just a few years ago that our rates were raised nearly 50% and now there is another request for exorbitant increases. Can we expect this kind of increase again and again in years to come? There simply are not enough people in this community or on this system that can sustain this company going forward into the future. Some people here live alone and/or are very elderly and on extremely limited fixed incomes. The proposed rate increases and other costs would be devastating for them.

The currently proposed increases in the base water/sewer rates along with the proposed \$1.75 surcharge would mean that my husband and I would be billed approximately \$117.52 per month **BEFORE** we even use any water! If you add actual water/sewer usage onto that, we will be paying upwards of \$150.00 per month which is certainly not in line with the majority of the people in this community who reside in Laconia! Further, my husband and I reside in Florida for 5 months out of the

year. To be charged this amount for water/sewer when we are not even here is exorbitant and unreasonable.

In addition, Abenaki is asking for a "pass through" mechanism allowing for automatic increases whenever Laconia increases its sewer treatment rates. We are opposed to ANY "automatic" increases that do not provide customers with any voice in the matter.

As If the above-stated increases are not bad enough, Abenaki is also looking to recoup \$102,233 of "organization" costs related to New England Service Co., Inc.'s purchase of the Bow and Belmont systems. Why should the customers be responsible for these so-called "organization" costs and what specifically are these so-called "organization" costs?

Further, Abenaki Water Company is also proposing to consolidate the separate water rates for the Bow and Belmont systems. We feel this could potentially and unfairly cause customers in both communities to be responsible for costs not associated with their respective communities such as the costs associated with infrastructure failures, etc. We feel this is completely unfair to the customers in both communities.

The increases imposed on the small group of people in this community only a few years ago by Abenaki Water Co. were tough to take but, the current proposals will now make the water/sewer services here a hardship. Further, if this is allowed to go forward, our property values will suffer since the cost of water/sewer service will become a deterrent to prospective buyers.

In closing, my husband and I feel that the requests for exorbitant rate increases and other costs by Abenaki Water Company are unfair and unreasonable to us and to others in the Belmont/Briarcrest community. Although we recognize their position in wanting to make a profit, etc., Abenaki wants 158 people in the Belmont system, and 95 in the Bow system to pay for their water/sewer usage, all their expenses, and provide them with a profit. This is not sustainable into the future by this small group of people and therefore not in the public good.

In light of the above, we respectfully request that the PUC deny the request for permanent and temporary rate increases proposed by Abenaki Water Company in connection with the above-referenced matter.

Due to the short notice and other commitments, it is unclear whether or not we can attend the hearing. Therefore, please consider the foregoing as our testimony in connection with this matter.

Respectfully,



Thomas & Kathryn MacKissock

536 Darby Drive

Laconia, NH 03246

cc: Senator Andrew Hosmer

The Office of Consumer Advocate