



Agenda Date: 4/27/16

Agenda Item: 5D

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**Board of Public Utilities**  
44 South Clinton Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Suite 314  
Post Office Box 350  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350  
[www.nj.gov/bpu/](http://www.nj.gov/bpu/)

WATER

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF AQUA NEW	)	ORDER ADOPTING
JERSEY, INC. FOR APPROVAL OF A MUNICIPAL	)	STIPULATION OF SETTLEMENT
CONSENT TO PROVIDE WATER SERVICE TO A	)	
PORTION OF BYRAM TOWNSHIP AND OTHER	)	
RELATED APPROVALS	)	DOCKET NO. WE15080957

**Parties of Record:**

**Colleen A. Foley, Esq., Saul Ewing LLP**, on behalf of Aqua New Jersey, Inc.  
**Stefanie A. Brand, Esq., Director**, New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel

BY THE BOARD:

**BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

Aqua New Jersey, Inc. ("Aqua-NJ," "Petitioner," or "Company") is a corporation duly organized under the laws of the State of New Jersey and is a public utility engaged in the distribution of water subject to the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("Board"). Aqua-NJ's principal place of business is located at 10 Black Forest Road, Hamilton, New Jersey. Aqua-NJ provides water distribution and related services to approximately 57,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers located in Mercer, Burlington, Camden, Hunterdon, Gloucester, Sussex, Monmouth and Ocean Counties.

On August 12, 2015, the Company filed a Petition with the Board, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-14 and, to the extent necessary, N.J.S.A. 48:2-24, for approval of Municipal Consent Ordinance No. 11-2015 ("Municipal Consent") granted to the Company on July 21, 2015, by Byram Township ("Township"), in the County of Sussex, to allow Aqua-NJ to construct, maintain and operate water facilities in the Township rights of way in Byram Homeowners Association Water Co., Inc. ("HOA" or "Seller") franchise area. The term granted to the Company by the Township for the franchise is in perpetuity and the use of right of way shall be fifty (50) years.

In sum, Petitioner requested that the Board approve or authorize: (i) the municipal consent to provide water service to a portion of Byram Township now served by the HOA; (ii) Aqua-NJ's use of its existing tariff rates for monthly charges for water service to customers now served by the HOA; (iii) implementation of a \$6.50 per customer monthly fee for private hydrant service; (iv) deferred accounting treatment related to the installation of uranium treatment facilities; (v)

authorize the HOA, to the extent deemed necessary by the Board, to abandon the provision of water service upon the closing of the asset purchase transaction. (Petition at 5.)

The Company agreed, pursuant to an Assets Purchase Agreement dated June 22, 2015, to acquire the water system owned by the HOA. This system provides water service within the communities known as Forest West and Forest South, consisting of 151 single-family homes and a public safety building located in a portion of the Township. Forest West and Forest South are fully developed and no growth is anticipated in the franchise area.

Section 5.6 of the Assets Purchase Agreement negotiated between the HOA and Aqua-NJ requires that certain governmental approvals be obtained. Included among those approvals is an Order of the Board authorizing, among other things, the Seller to abandon service in Byram Township. Aqua-NJ states in its Petition, "Upon completion of the assets purchase, Seller intends to abandon service to the Forest West and Forest South communities, and seeks Board approval pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-24, to the extent necessary, of this action." (Petition at 2.)

The HOA system consists of two wells. Both well #1 and well #2 have a capacity of approximately 144,000 gallons per day ("gpd"). The average gpd consumed by the proposed franchise area in the last five years is approximately 40,000. Aqua-NJ will not be treating wastewater. Wastewater service is provided via individual septic systems.

Presently, residents pay the HOA the equivalent of a fixed monthly charge of \$15.00, and an additional assessment of \$50.00 per month (\$600.00 annually) to cover improvements/repairs and loan costs. HOA customers also pay their actual water use through a volumetric charge of \$7.00 per thousand gallons. The HOA renders bills on a quarterly basis. In addition, the HOA provides fire protection service, the cost of which is included in its current water rates. There are 9 hydrants in the Forest West Community and 6 hydrants in the Forest South Community.

The expansion of the Company's service territory will not impose any negative impact on current customers and will not cause any adverse consequences on these customers or the Company's ability to provide safe, adequate and proper service.

On February 22, 2016, a duly noticed public hearing on the Company's Petition was held at the Board's Trenton office. Legal Specialist, Maureen Wagner, Esq., presided over the hearing at which representatives of the Company, the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel ("Rate Counsel") and Board Staff appeared. One representative from the Company testified during the public hearing. No members of the public appeared at the hearing.

On April 11, 2016, the Parties to this proceeding (namely, Aqua-NJ, Rate Counsel and Board Staff) executed a Stipulation of Settlement ("Stipulation") resolving all matters, and thereby recommended that the Board approve the municipal consent and initial tariff.

### **STIPULATION**

As more fully set forth in the attached Stipulation,<sup>1</sup> the Stipulation provides that:

1. The Parties agree that the Petitioner has provided information in its filing sufficient to make the statutory findings pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-51.1 and N.J.A.C. 14:1-5.14, and

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<sup>1</sup> Although described in the Order at some length, should there be any conflict between this summary and the Stipulation, the terms of the Stipulation control, subject to the findings and conclusions in this Order.

recommend that the Board approve the municipal consent and initial tariff. The Parties note the following:

- Rates charged for water service will decrease after the Asset Purchase Agreement is completed. The proposed rates will remain in effect for at least two years after the effective date of the Company's initial tariff, and will be considered in Aqua -NJ's next filed base rate proceeding.
  - There are currently no employees dedicated to operating the water system. Aqua-NJ will assign qualified individuals to inspect the water system on a regular basis to ensure that the system is operating properly.
  - The provision of safe, adequate and proper service will be enhanced as a result of the proposed transaction in that it will make available to franchised residents of Byram the environmental, technical, operational and capital resources of the Petitioner.
  - The transaction to be consummated pursuant to the Asset Purchase Agreement will have no immediate, direct or measurable impact on competition as Petitioner will serve the franchised residents of Byram under the same market conditions that currently exist, and Aqua-NJ will continue to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Board.
2. The Parties to this Stipulation further stipulate and agree that Ordinance No. 11-2015 granting the franchise to provide water service to a portion of Byram Township should be approved by the Board.
  3. The Parties recommend that the Board approve Petitioner's initial tariff for the customers now served by the HOA, which includes: a Distribution System Improvement Charge ("DSIC") of \$2.43;<sup>2</sup> a fixed monthly service charge of \$15.00; a monthly Fire Service Charge of \$5.34; and a volumetric charge of \$11.56 per thousand gallons for a 5/8" meter. The proposed rates will remain in effect for at least two years after the effective date of the Company's initial tariff, and will be considered in Aqua-NJ's next filed base rate proceeding.
  4. The Parties agree that, to the extent such approval is required the HOA should be permitted to abandon the provision of water and fire service upon the closing of the asset sale to Aqua-NJ.

## **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

N.J.S.A. 48:2-14 provides in part:

No privilege or franchise granted after May first, one thousand nine hundred and eleven, to any public utility by a political subdivision of this state shall be valid until approved by the board. Such approval shall be given when, after hearing, the board determines that the privilege or franchise is necessary and proper for the public convenience and properly conserves the public interests. In granting its approval the board may impose such conditions as to construction, equipment, maintenance, service or operation as the public convenience and interests may reasonably require.

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<sup>2</sup> The DSIC will change from time-to-time, and will be reset to zero at the conclusion of Aqua-NJ's currently pending base rate case in BPU Docket No. WR16010089.

Also, N.J.S.A. 48:2-24 provides in part: "No public utility shall discontinue, curtail or abandon any service without obtaining permission from the board after notice. The board may withhold permission until after hearing to determine if the discontinuance, curtailment or abandonment will adversely affect public convenience and necessity."

Thus, "[p]ublic utilities must obtain permission from the Board before discontinuing, curtailing or abandoning any service. N.J.S.A. 48:2-24." In re Petition of South Jersey Gas Co., 116 N.J. 251, 259 (1989). It is undisputed that the HOA is not a public utility under N.J.S.A. 48:2-13. Also, the HOA never requested that the Board exercise any jurisdiction or control over its rates, charges, or operations pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-13.2. Thus, the Board **HEREBY FINDS** that N.J.S.A. 48:2-24 does not apply to the HOA.

The Parties also believe that the record indicates sufficient information for approval under N.J.S.A. 48:2-51.1 and N.J.A.C. 14:1-5.14. But because the HOA is not a public utility under N.J.S.A. 48:2-13, the Board **HEREBY FINDS** that N.J.S.A. 48:2-51.1 and N.J.A.C. 14:1-5.14 do not apply here. But the Board agrees that the criteria in N.J.S.A. 48:2-51.1 and N.J.A.C. 14:1-5.14 would be met if they applied to the Petition.

Based on the foregoing and a thorough review of the record to this proceeding, the Board, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-14, **HEREBY APPROVES** the Municipal Consent, Ordinance No. 11-2015, granted to Aqua New-Jersey Inc., by Byram Township on July 21, 2015 and the request for monthly billing. The Board **FINDS** that the Municipal Consent is necessary and proper for the public convenience and properly conserves the public interest, and that the Company has the ability to provide safe, adequate and proper service in the Township. The Board **HEREBY FINDS** that the rates set forth above and included in the initial tariff to be just and reasonable and necessary to permit Aqua-NJ to provide safe, adequate and proper service. The Board **FURTHER APPROVES** the Petitioner's initial tariff rates for general metered water service and fire service and **HEREBY ORDERS** Aqua-NJ to file the appropriate tariff pages within fifteen (15) days of closing. And, the Board **HEREBY ADOPTS** the Stipulation attached hereto, as its own, incorporating by reference the terms and conditions as if fully set forth at length herein, subject to the findings in this Order.

The approvals granted, hereinabove, shall be subject to the following provisions:

1. This Order shall not be construed as directly or indirectly fixing for any purposes, whatsoever, the value of any tangible or intangible assets now owned or hereafter to be owned by the Company.
2. This Order shall not affect or in any way limit the exercise of the authority of this Board or of this State, in any future Petition or in any future proceeding, with respect to rates, franchise, services, financing, accounting, capitalization, depreciation, or in any other matters affecting the Company.
3. In an appropriate subsequent proceeding, the Company shall have the burden of demonstrating whether, and to what extent, any of the costs associated with this Petition shall be allocated to ratepayers. Approval of this municipal consent does not include authorization to include in rate base the specific assets that are or will be completed as a result of the new service territory.
4. Approval of this municipal consent does not constitute approval by the Board of

any costs or expenses associated with this Petition. Any determination as to the appropriateness or reasonableness of the costs and expenses related to the franchise, including, but not limited to, cost of construction, contributions in aid of construction, depreciation on contributed plant, the cost of connection or any related capital improvements, and the allocation of such costs and expenses, shall be made in an appropriate subsequent proceeding.

5. Approval of this municipal consent does not constitute approval of any specific main extension or plan for service. In extending service, Aqua-NJ must comply with all applicable regulations and laws.

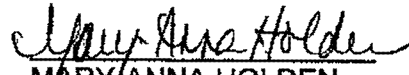
This Order shall be effective on May 7, 2016.


DATED: 4/27/16

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES  
BY:

  
RICHARD S. MROZ  
PRESIDENT

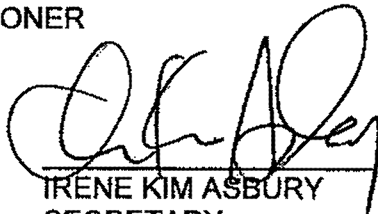
  
JOSEPH L. FIORDALISO  
COMMISSIONER

  
MARYANNA HOLDEN  
COMMISSIONER

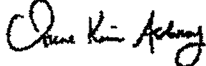
  
DIANNE SOLOMON  
COMMISSIONER

  
UPENDRA J. CHIVUKULA  
COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:

  
IRENE KIM ASBURY  
SECRETARY

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the within  
document is a true copy of the original  
in the files of the Board of Public Utilities



IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF AQUA NEW JERSEY, INC. FOR APPROVAL OF A  
MUNICIPAL CONSENT TO PROVIDE WATER SERVICE TO A PORTION OF BYRAM  
TOWNSHIP AND OTHER RELATED APPROVALS  
DOCKET NO. WE15080957

SERVICE LIST

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**STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

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IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF  
AQUA NEW JERSEY, INC. FOR APPROVAL  
OF A MUNICIPAL CONSENT TO PROVIDE  
WATER SERVICE TO A PORTION OF  
BYRAM TOWNSHIP AND OTHER  
REQUIRED APPROVALS

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STIPULATION OF SETTLEMENT  
BPU DOCKET NO. WE15080957

**APPEARANCES:**

Colleen A. Foley, Esq., Saul Ewing LLP, on behalf of Aqua New Jersey, Inc. Petitioner

Veronica Beke, Deputy Attorney General (Robert Lougy, Acting Attorney General of New Jersey), on behalf of the Staff of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

Debra F. Robinson, Esq., Deputy Rate Counsel, and Christine M. Juarez, Esq., Assistant Deputy Rate Counsel, on behalf of the Division of Rate Counsel

**TO THE HONORABLE BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES:**

This Stipulation of Settlement ("Stipulation") fully resolves all issues raised in this proceeding in which Aqua New Jersey, Inc. ("Aqua," the "Company" or "Petitioner") is seeking approval by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("Board") of a municipal consent to provide water service to a portion of Byram Township. Petitioner has also indicated that it will purchase the water system assets of the Byram Homeowners Association Water Company, Inc. (the "HOA") which are presently being used to provide service to customers located in Byram.

The parties<sup>1</sup> that have actively participated in this proceeding are as follows: the Company, the Staff of the Board ("Staff"), and the Division of Rate Counsel ("Rate Counsel"). As a result of an analysis of the Petitioner's filed Petition and exhibits, conferences, negotiations,

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<sup>1</sup> In addition, counsel for, and representatives of the HOA, participated in settlement negotiations and discussions; however, the HOA was not a party to this matter.

responses to data requests, and a duly noticed evidentiary hearing, the Petitioner, Rate Counsel and Staff (collectively, the "Signatory Parties") have come to an agreement on all of the issues in this matter.

The Signatory Parties agree the procedural history of this matter is as follows:

On August 12, 2015, Petitioner filed a petition consistent with N.J.S.A. 48:2-14 seeking the approval of the Board: 1.) Of a municipal consent to provide water service to a portion of Byram Township now served by the HOA; 2.) To use Aqua's currently approved tariff rates for monthly charges for water service to customers now served by the HOA; 3.) To implement a \$6.50 per customer monthly fee for fire service; 4.) To approve deferred accounting treatment related to the installation of uranium treatment facilities for the Byram system; and 5.) To the extent deemed necessary by the Board, to authorize the HOA to abandon the provision of water service upon the closing of the purchase of the HOA water system assets by Aqua.

By way of background, the HOA water system is located in Byram Township, Sussex County, New Jersey. The HOA water system serves two residential housing developments, Forest West and Forest South, consisting of approximately 151 homes and a public safety building. Water service is currently provided by a water system owned and operated by the HOA. Presently, residents pay the HOA a fixed monthly charge of \$15.00, and an additional assessment of \$50.00 per month (\$600.00 annually). HOA customers also pay for their actual water use through a volumetric charge of \$7.00 per thousand gallons. In addition, the HOA provides fire protection service, the cost of which is included in current water rates. The HOA renders bills on a quarterly basis. For a customer using approximately 49,000 gallons per year, the HOA's present rates would result in a total charge of approximately \$1,123.00 per customer per year for water and fire service. The residential developments served by the HOA are fully developed and no growth is anticipated in the franchise area.

Pursuant to an Asset Purchase Agreement ("Agreement") dated June 22, 2015, Petitioner shall acquire the water system assets now owned by the HOA. The purchase price of the assets is \$325,000.

On July 21, 2015, Byram Township adopted an ordinance authorizing an agreement approving a franchise and municipal consent to provide water service in the franchise area of the HOA.

The Petition was retained by the Board for consideration, and the parties engaged in detailed discovery.

On January 28, 2016, a public notice was published stating that Petitioner had filed a petition seeking Board approval of a municipal consent to provide water service to a portion of Byram. The notice further stated that the Company had agreed to purchase the water system now owned by the HOA. Notice was given that the Company also seeks authority to implement monthly billing for utility service, and, to the extent necessary, to allow the HOA to discontinue utility service upon the closing of the proposed asset sale to the Company. A municipal consent hearing was held on February 22, 2016 at the Board's office in Trenton, New Jersey, where Maureen Wagner, Legal Specialist for the Board, presided. No members of the public appeared at this hearing and no written comments were received.

Settlement discussions were held by the Signatory Parties and those efforts resulted in the following stipulations:

1. The Signatory Parties acknowledge that the HOA is a water cooperative pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-13.2, and that the Board's jurisdiction over the HOA is limited. The Signatory Parties further acknowledge that Petitioner has nonetheless included information in its filing sufficient to meet the statutory findings required by N.J.S.A. 48:2-51.1 and N.J.A.C. 14:1-5.14, which findings are set forth in

Paragraph 2 below. Based on this information, the Signatory Parties agree to recommend to the Board that the acquisition be approved.

2. Petitioner has included information in its filing warranting administrative review. When considering a transaction pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-51.1 and N.J.A.C. 14:1-5.14, the Board is required to evaluate the impact of the change in control on competition, on the rates of ratepayers affected by the change in control, on the employees of the affected public utility, and on the provision of safe, adequate and proper utility service at just and reasonable rates, and to state the positive benefits that will be realized as the result of the change in control. These findings are set out below:

- (a.) Rates charged for water service will decrease after the asset purchase is completed. Petitioner proposes to implement an initial tariff applicable only to customers in Byram, which tariff will include charges for water service and a separate charge for fire service. Attachment One hereto sets out the proposed rates and provides a comparison to the HOA's current rates. This proposed rate will remain in effect for at least two years after the effective date of the Company's initial tariff, and will be considered in Aqua's next filed base rate proceeding (after the completion of the case now pending in BPU Docket No. WR16010089).
- (b.) Petitioner notes that there are no employees dedicated to operating the water system. Instead, the HOA operates the system using volunteers and an outside contractor. Aqua will assign qualified individuals to inspect the water system on a regular basis to ensure the system is operating properly.

- (c.) The provision of safe, adequate and proper service will be enhanced as a result of the proposed transaction in that it will make available to residents of Byram the environmental, technical, operational and capital resources of the Petitioner. In addition, Aqua has proposed to make several capital improvements including the installation of new meters, and to evaluate and install treatment alternatives to address combined uranium levels that exceed the maximum allowable contaminant level, including the installation of uranium treatment facilities.
  - (d.) The transaction to be consummated pursuant to the Agreement will have no immediate, direct or measurable impact on competition as Petitioner will serve the residents of Byram under the same market conditions that currently exist, and Aqua will continue to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Board.
  - (e.) The transaction will result in benefits to the customers of the HOA through decreased rates and improved service. The transaction will also benefit the State of New Jersey in that a small water system with water quality concerns will now be owned and operated by a regulated public utility with the resources to address the needs of the water system and customers located in Byram.
3. Approval of this petition does not constitute Board approval of any expenses or rate base associated with this transaction. The Signatory Parties further agree that Aqua is subject to the authority of the Board pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-13 et seq., and that the Byram system assets, infrastructure and customers will be included in Aqua's service territory after the closing of the transaction described herein.

4. The Signatory Parties recommend that any Board Order approving the Company's Petition contain language which recognizes that the Order issued in this matter shall not affect or in any way limit the exercise of the authority of the Board or the State in any future Petition or in any proceedings with respect to rates, franchises, service, financing, accounting, capitalization, depreciation, or in any other matter affecting the Petitioner.
5. The Signatory Parties agree that the Petitioner has withdrawn its request for deferred accounting treatment related to the installation of the uranium treatment facilities.
6. The Signatory Parties recommend that the Board approve Petitioner's initial tariff rates for general metered water service and fire service as set out in Attachment One, and that these initial tariff rates remain unchanged for at least two years after the effective date of the Company's initial tariff in this matter, and direct the Company to file tariff pages with the Board giving effect to these rates upon closing of the asset purchase.
7. Petitioner shall inform the Board of the date the asset acquisition is consummated.
8. The Signatory Parties agree that Aqua shall abide by the Board's regulations regarding service discontinuance set out in N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.1 et seq. Aqua will not discontinue the provision of fire service to customers in the Byram franchise area even where an individual customer fails to pay the fire service tariff. Aqua further agrees it will not discontinue the provision of fire service in the Byram franchise area without first obtaining the Board's approval.
9. The Signatory Parties to this Stipulation further stipulate and agree to recommend that Ordinance No. 11-2015, granting the franchise to Aqua to provide water

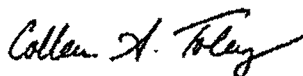
service to the portion of Byram Township now served by the HOA, should be approved by the Board.

10. The Signatory Parties agree that, to the extent approval is required, the HOA should be permitted to abandon the provision of water and fire service upon the closing of the asset sale to Aqua.
11. (a.) This Stipulation is the product of negotiations by the Signatory Parties, and it is an express condition of the settlement embodied by this Stipulation that it be presented to the Board in its entirety without modification or condition. It is also the intent of the Signatory Parties to this Stipulation that this settlement, once accepted and approved by the Board, shall govern all issues specified and agreed to herein. The Signatory Parties to this Stipulation specifically agree that if adopted in its entirety by the Board, no appeal shall be taken by them from the order adopting same as to those issues upon which the Signatory Parties have stipulated herein.
- (b.) The Signatory Parties agree that the within Stipulation reflects a mutual balancing of various issues and positions and is intended to be accepted and approved in its entirety. Each term is vital to this Stipulation as a whole, since the Signatory Parties hereto expressly and jointly state that they would not have signed this Stipulation had any terms been modified in any way. In the event any particular aspect of this Stipulation is not accepted and approved by the Board, then any Signatory Party materially affected thereby shall not be bound to proceed under this Stipulation.

- (c.) The Signatory Parties further agree that the purpose of this Stipulation is to avoid protracted and costly litigation, and that with respect to any policy or other issues which were compromised in the spirit of reaching an agreement, none of the Signatory Parties shall be prohibited from or prejudiced in arguing a different policy or position before the Board in any other proceeding, as such agreements pertain only to this matter and to no other matter.

AQUA NEW JERSEY, INC.

Date: April 1', 2016



By: SAUL FWING LLP  
Colleen A. Foley, Esq.  
Attorney for Petitioner

ROBERT LOUGY  
ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY  
Attorney for the Staff of the Board of  
Public Utilities

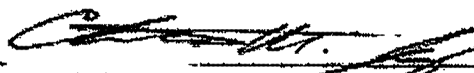
Date: April 11, 2016



By: Veronica Beke  
Deputy Attorney General

STEFANIE A. BRAND, DIRECTOR  
NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF RATE COUNSEL

Date: 4/11, 2016



By: Christine Juarez, Esq.  
Asst. Deputy Rate Counsel

## Attachment One

I/M/O the Petition of Aqua New Jersey, Inc. for  
Approval of a Municipal Consent to Provide Water Service to a  
Portion of Byram Township and Other Related Approvals

BPU Docket No. WE15080957

DEVELOPED FOR A CUSTOMER WITH 5/8-inch METER and annual use of 49,000 gallons	HOA Rates	Proposed Rates
DSIC Charge (\$/Month)	\$ -	\$ 2.43*
Fixed Service Charge (\$/Month)	\$ 15.00	\$ 15.00
Annual Assessment (\$/Month)	\$ 50.00	
Fire Service Charge to Residents (\$/Month)	\$ -	\$ 5.34
Volumetric Rate (\$/Th Gallons)	\$ 7.00	\$ 11.56
Monthly Bill (\$/Month)	\$ 93.58	\$ 69.97
Total Annual Billing per Customer (\$/Year)	\$ 1,123.00	\$ 839.64

\*The DSIC will change from time-to-time, and will be reset to \$0 at the conclusion of Aqua's currently pending base rate case in BPU Docket No. WR16010089.