

Aquarion rate increase strongly opposed

By Carol Britton Meyer
Thu Jul 17, 2008, 08:31 AM EDT

HINGHAM -

About 60 Hull, Cohasset, and Hingham residents turned out for the Department of Public Utilities hearing last night at Hull High School to vehemently oppose Aquarion Water Company's request for a \$3.1 million, or overall 24.8 percent, increase in water service revenues.

The majority of those speaking were from Hull, but Hingham Selectman Bruce Rabuffo also spoke strongly against the proposed increase. "Our rates are already 58 percent higher than those in the MWRA district. I spent 32 years in the utility business and I find this increase request overwhelming," he said. "Are the current rates even justifiable? It's in the evidentiary process that more details will be forthcoming."

Cohasset selectman Paul Carlson said that while only 20 percent of Cohasset residents are served by Aquarion, the town is "looking forward to working with Hingham and Hull in fighting this rate increase."

Most of the increase is attributed to investments totalling \$21.4 million that Aquarion has made for water utility infrastructure improvements since 2001 in such areas as increased water supply and replacement of aging and undersized pipes, as well as other needed water system advancements.

"We've tried to stay out of the rate increase arena for as long as possible," Aquarion Sr. Vice President of Operations Larry Bingaman said.

Hull town manager Philip E. Lemnios noted the irony of the targeted rate increase being set for April 1, 2009. "This is truly a joke," he said. "The boards of all three towns have hired expert consultants and we will go to battle to fight this proposed rate increase. It's absurd."

Customers may provide comments via email until 5 p.m. Fri., July 18, addressed to dpu.efiling@state.ma.us and also to the hearing officer, carol.pieper@state.ma.us.

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/hingham/news/x1346885752/Aquarion-rate-increase-strongly-opposed>