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September 2, 2020

PUC Case R-2020-3019612

To All Concerned Parties:

First of all, making it a requirement for all formal complainants to participate in the Sept. 11 phone conference AND provide a written complaint to all parties prior to Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> OR we will no longer be a part of the proceedings appears to be an attempt to discourage customers from having a voice in this process. After a phone call to the Consumer Advocate Office, we learned that it IS possible to remain a party to this process by calling Christine Hoover and getting further instructions. This information should have been provided in the original correspondence notifying us of the upcoming phone conference.

Secondly, the phone number provided on the Notice of Proposed Rate Changes given to Reynolds Utilities customers has the wrong phone number for contacting the PUC. This was brought to the attention of all parties two years ago when Reynolds Utilities proposed a 46.5% increase in our water rates. This error needs to be corrected. Brad Gosser stated that it is a form letter provided by the PUC so it is a PUC error. I'm sure customers across the state are frustrated by this error. Please correct this.

Thirdly, Brad Gosser stated at a township meeting, as well as in the newspaper, that the PUC permits Reynolds Utilities to pass on the cost of litigation to the customers. Therefore, if this case goes to litigation, the customers will have to pay the legal costs. This appears to be another attempt to silence the customers. Personally, I'd rather pay for litigation than give the utility company a 48 percent increase free and clear. At least I'm getting something for my money, and hopefully there will be little or no increase as the PUC and Consumer Advocate Office consider this case.

I was also told that the Volunteer Fire Department and volunteer firemen that live in this community are unable to be a part of the opposition to the rate increase. Why is this? Are they being given special rates in exchange for their silence?

Brad Gosser spoke at the Pymatuning Township meeting on July 9, 2020. I appreciate his willingness to explain the need for the increase. I do have some concerns following this meeting. As I told Brad, this is nothing personal. He has to do what he has to do and I have to do what I have to do.

When a customer asked where the 3,000 18" slip line was located, Brad said it was "somewhere between Edgewood Drive and Colt Road." He didn't know specifically because he was looking through a camera. This is a 1.3 mile distance. In my opinion, if a major repair is needed to the slip line and he has estimated the cost to be \$238,000, he should be able to specify the exact location and details of needed repair. The customer noted that repairs had been made to the slip line on her property several years ago. She also noted that she is a sewage only

customer and her bill has been increased over the last 10 years to \$149.00 per quarter.

Brad Gosser said the increase is being sought to make up an annual \$17,000 deficit to cover the debt load for the PennVest Surcharge. We the customers have been billed for this PennVest loan for since 2007 and now we are being told there is a \$17,000 deficit? Brad also said this loan will be paid off in 2027 so we will see some relief in our bills at that time. It is very frustrating to be paying on this loan for thirteen years only to find out the loan has a \$17,000 deficit. At what point does Reynolds Utilities take responsibility for managing the loan properly?

The automated meter system that is included as a \$68,000 need for this increase has already been installed and is presently being used to calculate our bills. Brad explained that this has been installed in order to move to monthly billing. I am very much in favor of this because it will be easier to budget. However, he also said the automated meter system is “not fully operational.” Our water bill is being calculated using this “not fully functional” system and our sewage bill is based on our water consumption. Please explain how this automated system is “not fully functional” yet it is presently being used to calculate our bills.

Also, the “\$12,000 for miscellaneous smaller projects” should be more specific. What exactly needs done?

Listed on the agenda for the July 9, 2020 Pymatuning Township meeting under new business this was listed: Ordinance #2020 sewage holding tanks. Is this in anyway related to the needed increase?

In closing, I asked Brad Gosser if he had pursued any grants to help fund the repairs needed. He stated that grants "take too much time." I was disappointed because I would think the company would exhaust all other resources before coming to the customers for a 48 percent increase. He said he made a few phone calls, but the people on the other end were working from home and didn't seem to be doing much because of the Covid-19 virus. Yet, this week I received State Rep. Mark Longietti's newsletter and one of the headlines read

"More than \$4 million to fund third phase of Shenango Township sewer project..." Shenango Township recently received a grant of nearly \$3.68 million and a low interest loan of \$481,500..."

If Shenango Township can secure a grant, why can't Reynolds Utilities do the same?

Looking forward to the phone conference on September 11, 2020. My three year old granddaughter will be at my home, but I WILL be on the call.

Sincerely,

Margaret Foust