

Megan and Kyle Ostermick-Durkee  
 3571 Rabbit Run Road  
 Langley, WA 98260  
 May 27, 2024

TO: Office of the Attorney General, ATTN: Public Counsel Unit

Subject: Urgent Protest Against Cascadia Water, LLC's Proposed Rate Increase

Dear Public Counsel Unit,

We, Megan and Kyle Ostermick-Durkee, residents of South Whidbey Island, and customers of Cascadia Water, LLC, are writing to express our strong opposition to Cascadia Water, LLC's proposed water rate increase, and request that you do not approve this increase. Cascadia Water stated in their letter to customers that they are intending to increase rates at a “incremental increase of 75%”, which is in addition to a significant rate increase of 53% that Cascadia Water already implemented in 2021. Furthermore, the proposed rate increase is actually significantly higher than the 75% Cascadia Water claims for the water system our family lives in. We live in the “Island/Main System (for Sea View/Lehman/Del Bay)”, in which Cascadia Water has submitted the below proposed rate increases:

**Island/Mainland System (for Sea View/Lehman/Del Bay)– Current Rates**

Meter Size	Base Rate (mo.)	1 <sup>st</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	1 <sup>st</sup> Block Rate	2 <sup>nd</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Block Rate	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Rate
5/8"	\$29.35	0-500	\$2.25	501-1,000	\$3.50	Over 1,000	\$4.50
1"	\$73.38	0-1,250	\$2.25	1,251-2,500	\$3.50	Over 2,500	\$4.50
2"	\$234.80	0-4,000	\$2.25	4,001-8,000	\$3.50	Over 8,000	\$4.50
<b>Unmetered</b>	\$47.04						
<b>Ready to Serve</b>	\$29.35						

**Island/Mainland System – Proposed Rates (effective June 1, 2024)**

Meter Size <sup>1</sup>	Base Rate (mo.)	1 <sup>st</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	1 <sup>st</sup> Block Rate <sup>2</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Block Rate	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Rate
5/8" or 3/4"	\$56.00	0-500	\$5.52	501-1,000	\$8.72	Over 1,000	\$11.04
1"	\$112.00	0-1,250	\$5.52	1,251-2,500	\$8.72	Over 2,500	\$11.04
2"	\$448.00	0-4,000	\$5.52	4,001-8,000	\$8.72	Over 8,000	\$11.04
<b>Unmetered<sup>3</sup></b>	\$89.60						
<b>Ready to Serve<sup>4</sup></b>	\$56.00						

As calculated from the above tables, the base monthly rate would increase approximately 91%, and the block rates, which are based on bimonthly usage, would increase between approximately 145%-149% depending on the block. To further examine this, I looked at our last water bill, which for two months

was \$77.51 for 836 cubic feet of water used; based on the proposed rate, our bill would increase to \$168.90, a 117% increase. Additionally, according to the EPA, a family of four averages approximately 20,000 gallons, or 2,673 cubic feet of water, use every two months; based on the rates provided, such a family would currently be paying \$133.38 bimonthly for their water bill, but with the proposed increase they would pay \$311.90, a 134% increase.

Cascadia Water has stated that the purpose of the proposed increases, which they say will create \$1,788,793 in additional revenue, are for infrastructure improvements. While we understand the importance of maintaining and improving infrastructure as needed, the proposed rate of increase is extremely high, especially when considering the 53% increase just a few years ago as well. We are concerned about the impact to our family as well as our community as a whole if these rate increases are approved. Living on south Whidbey Island already poses many financial barriers to the younger generation, like ourselves, living and working on Whidbey. As professionals both in our mid-30s, we have had many friends over the last 9 years that we have lived on South Whidbey move off-island due to the high cost of living combined with limited opportunities for reliable and financially-sufficient employment. We are also parents of a 3-year-old and have another child on the way, and are aware of the issues with the South Whidbey public schools, which are in part due to a limited number of children enrolled in the schools. We are concerned that a water rate increase like that proposed by Cascadia Water will further make Whidbey Island unaffordable to young professionals and young families, subsequently pushing them to move elsewhere. As a result, this would further hurt the school system as well as the local economy.

As the body that represents customers of investor-owned utility companies, we implore you to deny this proposed rate increase and help protect the already struggling financial viability of living on South Whidbey Island.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,  
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