

Shaker  
5919 Cedar St  
Reeland, WA 98249

SEATTLE WA 980  
3 MAY 2024 PM 3 L



RECEIVED

MAY 07 2024

WASH. UT. & TP. COMM

Washington UTc  
P.O. Box ~~98504~~ 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

98504-7250



MARK and CYNTHIA STOKER  
5919 CEDAR STREET  
FREELAND, WA 98249  
mfs@hpl-law.com

May 2, 2024

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
P.O. Box 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Docket UW 240151

Hearing Date 5-23-2024 9:30  
Cascadia Water

Dear Commissioners,

Our names are Mark and Cynthia Stoker. We have owned our home at 5919 Cedar Street, Freeland, WA for more than seven (7) years. We were part time residents until January 2024, when we became full time residents. When we first purchased our home, we knew that it was served by a private well that served approximately thirteen (13) of our neighbors and us. The annual cost for water from Westview Water was approximately \$180.00! The well association was called Westview Water, and was operated by our next-door neighbor, Ron Norman. Ron had maintained the well and water system for 25 years and did a remarkable job. However, we knew that Ron could not maintain the system in perpetuity, and we knew that none of us neighbors really had the know-how and means to take over operation of the well and water system. We also came to realize that when we suffered power outages (often) the well pump would shut off and water was not available to our home until power was restored.

Our community suffered a flood from a shoreline break in December 2022. The well was severely impacted and out of commission for a week. This was a severe hardship for full-time residents and further emphasized the need for a more reliable, stable water system. Ron approached us and our neighbors in the summer of 2023 with a plan to sell the Westview Water rights and distribution assets to Cascadia Water and have Cascadia become the water service provider to our community. The well itself would not be transferred. Rather, it would be decommissioned per Washington State requirements. At the time, we felt this was a good plan as it addressed two primary concerns; (1) a reliable, consistent supply of water that would not go out in the event of power outages, and (2) a resolution to the concern that if Ron was no longer available to operate and maintain the well and system, who would?

At the time of consideration, we were told that the cost of water service through Cascadia would be approximately \$45.00 per month; a significant increase over what we were currently paying to Westview Water. Nonetheless, we felt this was a cost we and our neighbors could bear for confidence in our water supply. The conversion to Cascadia Water was completed in November 2023.

You can imagine our surprise when we received a letter from Cascadia Water in February

Washington UTC  
May 2, 2024  
Page 2

2024, indicating it was applying to the WUTC for an increase in our water rate by 107%! The letter indicates that average rates would increase from \$49.81 per month to \$103.28 per month; more than DOUBLE our current payment! Mind blowing, to put it kindly! Frankly, we feel a bit duped by Cascadia Water. Surely, an ask of this size did not come together overnight. Cascadia must have been planning this request for some time before February 2024, and very likely before the takeover of Westview Water. Yet, we received no indication that our rates would double in less than six months from said takeover. Had we been so advised it may have caused us, and our neighbors, to more thoroughly investigate the maintenance of our own well system as opposed to selling to Cascadia. In this case, apparently, bigger is not always better.

We understand that Cascadia has made a number of system wide improvements to its well and water system(s) as listed in its February 2024, letter. However, it is difficult for us to assess which of those improvements affect our former Westview Water system and benefit us directly. Clearly, many of those improvements are off island and do not appear to provide any benefit to us. Yet, they are being put forth as consideration for the rate increases. The letter we received only addresses rate increases for the Island system. We do not know what rate increases are being proposed for other Cascadia customers.

We also understand that Cascadia Water has not requested a rate increase since 2021, and that some increase may well be justified. However, in all fairness, this request is simply too high. Perhaps incremental increases over time would help; especially to those on fixed incomes. We ask that Staff, and the Commission, carefully review this request and understand the significant impact a 107% increase on residential customers will have, and find a pathway forward that offers relief from such a colossal request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cynthia Stoker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "S".

MARK and CYNTHIA STOKER