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Res. No. 189

Resolution calling on the New York City Water Board to notify all council members and community boards at least 30 days before a public hearing concerning an annual water rate adjustment

By Council Members Gennaro and Louis

Whereas, The New York City Water Board ("Board") establishes water rates in New York City ("City"); and

Whereas, Property owners pay the Board at these rates to receive sewage and drinking water service from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP"); and

Whereas, Effective July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, the City drinking water rate was $4.30 per 100 cubic feet and the sewer water rate was 159 percent of the drinking water rate; and

Whereas, At these rates, the average charge for a single-family household was $1,041 worth of annual water and wastewater service, and the average metered charge for a dwelling unit in a multi-family building was $773 worth of annual water and wastewater service; and

Whereas, The Board adjusts the value and structure of the water rates annually to ensure the fiscal health of the City's water systems; and

Whereas, Pursuant to section 1045-j of the New York Public Authorities Law, the Board may not change the water rate unless it both holds a public hearing that is noticed at least 20 days in advance and holds a public hearing in each borough, each of which must be noticed at least seven days in advance; and

Whereas, In recent years, the Board has satisfied the water rate hearing notice requirement by posting the time, date, and location of hearings on its website; and

Whereas, The Board's current procedure to notice water rate hearings may not alert a sufficient number

of residents, as evidenced by the limited quantity of spoken testimony delivered at recent hearings; and

Whereas, In 2023, the Board proposed an increase of up to 4.42 percent in water rates, and additionally proposed to reauthorize three DEP customer payment assistance programs, maintain the minimum daily water service charge of $0.49 for meter-billed customers, and extend the Multi-family Conservation Program compliance deadline; and

Whereas, Despite these proposed changes, the Board heard only two spoken comments at the Bronx water rate adjustment hearing, two spoken comments at the Manhattan hearing, and no spoken comments at the Brooklyn hearing; and

Whereas, Additional notice may increase public participation at water rate hearings, and consequently, improve the transparency of and accountability over the Board; and

Whereas, Council members and community boards frequently engage with the public at community events, through social media, and via other forums; and

Whereas, If the Board provided advance notice of water rate hearings to council members and community boards, then these entities could publicize the hearings through their public outreach infrastructure; and

Whereas, Further advertisement of water rate hearings may give more residents the opportunity to voice concern over proposed increases to the cost of essential City services; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York City Water Board to notify all council members and community boards at least 30 days before a public hearing concerning an annual water rate adjustment.

AGB
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