



Control Number: 45942



Item Number: 30

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**P.U.C. DOCKET NO. 45942**

**APPLICATION OF SWEA GARDENS  
ESTATE UTILITY, INC. AND  
MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS, LLC FOR  
SALE, TRANSFER OR MERGER OF  
FACILITIES AND CERTIFICATE  
RIGHTS IN HARRIS COUNTY** §  
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OF TEXAS

**COMMISSION STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ON FINAL DISPOSITION**

**COMES NOW** the Commission Staff (Staff) of the Public Utility Commission of Texas (Commission), representing the public interest, and files this response to Order No. 9, Staff's Recommendation on Final Disposition. Staff recommends that the application be approved. In support thereof, Staff shows the following:

**I. BACKGROUND**

On May 9, 2016, Swea Gardens Estate Utility, Inc. (Swea Gardens) and Municipal Operations, LLC (Municipal Operations) (collectively, Applicants) filed an application with the Public Utility Commission of Texas (Commission) for sale, transfer, or merger (STM) of facilities and certificate rights in Harris County pursuant to Tex. Water Code §§ 13.246 and 13.301 (TWC) and 16 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 24.109 and 24.112 (TAC). In the application, Municipal Operations seeks to purchase and transfer the facilities and associated certificate rights to water Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) No. 11872 from Swea Gardens.

On March 29, 2017, the Commission administrative law judge (ALJ) issued Order No. 9 finding the Applicants' sale and transfer documentation sufficient. Order No. 9 also required Staff to file a recommendation on final disposition by May 9, 2017. Therefore, this pleading is timely filed.

**II. FINAL DISPOSITION RECOMMENDATION**

Staff has reviewed the completed Application and determined that it meets the requirements of TWC §§ 13.246 and 13.301 and 16 TAC §§ 24.109 and 24.112.<sup>1</sup> As previously established, the Applicants gave proper notice of the application,<sup>2</sup> all outstanding violations with

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<sup>1</sup> See Commission Staff's Recommendation on the Transaction (attached memorandum) (Jan. 26, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> See Order No. 7 (Dec. 12, 2016) (deeming notice sufficient and complete).

the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality have been or are being addressed, and the closing documents filed are sufficient.<sup>3</sup> The Applicants each filed their respective consents to the service area map, CCN, and tariff, which are attached as Attachments A, B, and C respectively. Accordingly, Staff respectfully recommends that the ALJ issue an order transferring the facilities and certificate rights of Swea Gardens under water CCN No. 11872 to Municipal Operations.

In accordance with the procedural schedule issued in Order No. 9, Staff will jointly file with the Applicants a proposed notice of approval on or before May 16, 2017.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

For the reasons stated above, Staff respectfully recommends that the application be approved and accordingly that the facilities and associated certificate rights of Swea Gardens to water CCN No. 11872 be transferred to Municipal Operations, LLC.

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<sup>3</sup> See Order No. 9 (Mar 29, 2017) (deeming closing documents sufficient).

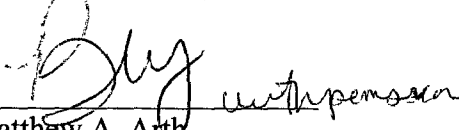
Dated: May 9, 2017

Respectfully Submitted,

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS  
LEGAL DIVISION**

Margaret Uhlig Pemberton  
Division Director

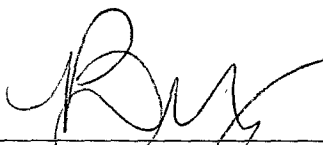
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Managing Attorney

  
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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, Matthew Arth, staff attorney for the Public Utility Commission of Texas, certify that a copy of this document was served on all parties of record on May 9, 2017, in accordance with the requirements of 16 Tex. Admin. Code § 22.74.

  
Matthew A. Arth

# **Attachment A**

## **Map**

Municipal Operations, LLC  
Water CCN No. 11872  
PUC Docket No. 45942  
Transferred Swea Gardens Estate Utility, Inc., CCN No. 11872 in Harris County



**Water CCN**



11872 - Municipal Operations LLC

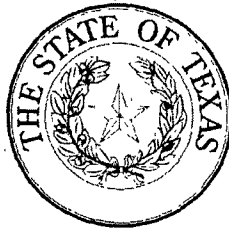
12288 - Seller Water Company

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# **Attachment B**

## **Certificate of Convenience & Necessity**



# Public Utility Commission of Texas

**By These Presents Be It Known To All That**

## **Municipal Operations, LLC**

having duly applied for certification to provide water utility service for the convenience and necessity of the public, and it having been determined by this Commission that the public convenience and necessity would in fact be advanced by the provision of such service, Municipal Operations, LLC is entitled to and is hereby granted this

### **Certificate of Convenience and Necessity No. 11872**

to provide continuous and adequate water utility service to that service area or those service areas in Harris County as by final Order or Orders duly entered by this Commission, which Order or Orders resulting from Docket No. 45942 are on file at the Commission offices in Austin, Texas; and are a matter of official record available for public inspection; and be it known further that these presents do evidence the authority and the duty of Municipal Operations, LLC to provide such utility service in accordance with the laws of this State and Rules of this Commission, subject only to any power and responsibility of this Commission to revoke or amend this Certificate in whole or in part upon a subsequent showing that the public convenience and necessity would be better served thereby.

Issued at Austin, Texas, the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2017.



# **Attachment C**

## **Tariff**



# WATER UTILITY TARIFF

**Docket Number: 45942**

Municipal Operations, LLC  
(Utility Name)

P.O. BOX 40526  
(Business Address)

Houston, Texas 77240-0526  
(City, State, Zip Code)

713-937-1959  
(Area Code/Telephone)

This tariff is effective for utility operations under the following Certificate of Convenience and Necessity:  
11872

This tariff is effective in the following counties:  
Harris

This tariff is effective in the following cities or unincorporated towns (if any):  
None

This tariff is effective in the following subdivisions or public water systems:

SWEA Gardens Estates, PWS 1010218

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The above utility lists the following sections of its tariff (if additional pages are needed for a section, all pages should be numbered consecutively):

SECTION 1.0 -RATE SCHEDULE.....	2
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SECTION 3.0 - EXTENSION POLICY .....	9

APPENDIX A – DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN

APPENDIX B – SERVICE AGREEMENT

## SECTION 1.0 -- RATE SCHEDULE

### Section 1.01 - Rates

<u>Meter Size</u>	<u>Monthly Minimum Charge</u>	<u>Gallonage Charge</u>
5/8" or 3/4"	<u>\$43.14</u> (Includes 0 gallons)	<u>\$2.06</u> per 1,000 gallons

\*Plus additional pass through fees listed below.

#### \*Pass Through Fee

**City of Houston Purchased Water Fee** ..... \$4.44 per 1,000 gallons  
Applies to **all** gallons used.

Gallonage charge is related to the implementation of purchasing water from the City of Houston (CoH) in the amount of \$4.35 per 1,000 gallons subject to a 2% adjustment for water loss.

FORM OF PAYMENT: The utility will accept the following forms of payment:

Cash ☒ Check ☒ Money Order ☒ Credit Card ☐ Other ☐ (specify)  
THE UTILITY MAY REQUIRE EXACT CHANGE FOR PAYMENTS AND MAY REFUSE TO ACCEPT PAYMENTS MADE USING MORE THAN \$1.00 IN SMALL COINS. A WRITTEN RECEIPT WILL BE GIVEN FOR CASH PAYMENTS.

REGULATORY ASSESSMENT ..... 1.0%  
PUC RULES REQUIRE THE UTILITY TO COLLECT A FEE OF ONE PERCENT OF THE RETAIL MONTHLY BILL AND REMIT THE FEE TO THE TCEQ.

### Section 1.02 - Miscellaneous Fee

TAP FEE ..... \$350.00  
TAP FEE COVERS THE UTILITY'S COSTS FOR MATERIALS AND LABOR TO INSTALL A STANDARD RESIDENTIAL 5/8" or 3/4" METER. AN ADDITIONAL FEE TO COVER UNIQUE COSTS IS PERMITTED IF LISTED ON THIS TARIFF.

TAP FEE (Unique Costs) ..... Actual Cost  
FOR EXAMPLE, A ROAD BORE FOR CUSTOMERS OUTSIDE OF SUBDIVISIONS OR RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

TAP FEE (Large Meter) ..... Actual Cost  
TAP FEE IS THE UTILITY'S ACTUAL COST FOR MATERIALS AND LABOR FOR METER SIZE INSTALLED.

METER RELOCATION FEE ..... Actual Relocation Cost, Not to Exceed Tap Fee  
THIS FEE MAY BE CHARGED IF A CUSTOMER REQUESTS THAT AN EXISTING METER BE RELOCATED.

5

SECTION 1.0 – RATE SCHEDULE (Continued)

METER TEST FEE.....\$25.00  
THIS FEE WHICH SHOULD REFLECT THE UTILITY’S COST MAY BE CHARGED IF A CUSTOMER REQUESTS A SECOND METER TEST WITHIN A TWO-YEAR PERIOD AND THE TEST INDICATES THAT THE METER IS RECORDING ACCURATELY. THE FEE MAY NOT EXCEED \$25.

RECONNECTION FEE  
THE RECONNECT FEE MUST BE PAID BEFORE SERVICE CAN BE RESTORED TO A CUSTOMER WHO HAS BEEN DISCONNECTED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS (OR OTHER REASONS LISTED UNDER SECTION 2.0 OF THIS TARIFF):  
a) Nonpayment of bill (Maximum \$25.00) .....\$25.00  
b) Customer’s request that service be disconnected .....\$25.00

TRANSER FEE.....\$10.00  
THE TRANSFER FEE WILL BE CHARGED FOR CHANGING AN ACCOUNT NAME AT THE SAME SERVICE LOCATION WHEN THE SERVICE IS NOT DISCONNECTED.

LATE CHARGE (EITHER \$5.00 OR 10% OF THE BILL) .....10%  
PUC RULES ALLOW A ONE-TIME PENALTY TO BE CHARGED ON DELINQUENT BILLS. A LATE CHARGE MAY NOT BE APPLIED TO ANY BALANCE TO WHICH THE PENALTY WAS APPLIED IN A PREVIOUS BILLING.

RETURNED CHECK CHARGE .....\$30.00  
RETURNED CHECK CHARGES MUST BE BASED ON THE UTILITY’S DOCUMENTABLE COST.

CUSTOMER DEPOSIT RESIDENTIAL (Maximum \$50).....\$50.00

COMMERCIAL & NON-RESIDENTIAL DEPOSIT.....1/6TH OF ESTIMATED ANNUAL BILL

LINE EXTENSION AND CONSTRUCTION CHARGES:  
REFER TO SECTION 3.0--EXTENSION POLICY FOR TERMS, CONDITIONS, AND CHARGES WHEN NEW CONSTRUCTION IS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE SERVICE.

SECTION 1.0 – RATE SCHEDULE (Continued)

**PURCHASED WATER AND/OR DISTRICT FEE PASS THROUGH CLAUSE**

Changes in fees imposed by any non-affiliated third party water supplier or underground water district having jurisdiction over the Utility shall be passed through as an adjustment to the water gallonage charge according to the following formula:

**Adjusted Gallonage Rate (AG) =  $G + [B/(1 - L)]$ , Where:**

AG = adjusted gallonage charge, rounded to nearest one cent;

G = approved gallonage charge, per 1,000 gallons;

B = change in fee (per 1,000 gallons);

L = water or sewer line loss for preceding 12 months, not to exceed 0.15 (15%)

## SECTION 2.0 -- SERVICE RULES AND POLICIES

### Section 2.01 – Public Utility Commission of Texas Rules

The utility will have the most current Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC or Commission) Rules, Chapter 24, available at its office for reference purposes. The Rules and this tariff shall be available for public inspection and reproduction at a reasonable cost. The latest Rules or commission approved changes to the Rules supersede any rules or requirements in this tariff.

### Section 2.02 - Application for and Provision of Water Service

All applications for service will be made on the utility's standard application or contract form (attached in the Appendix to this tariff), will be signed by the applicant before water service is provided by the utility. A separate application or contract will be made for each service location.

After the applicant has met all the requirements, conditions and regulations for service, the utility will install tap, meter and utility cut-off valve and/or take all necessary actions to initiate service. The utility will serve each qualified applicant for service within 5 working days unless line extensions or new facilities are required. If construction is required to fill the order and if it cannot be completed within 30 days, the utility will provide the applicant with a written explanation of the construction required and an expected date of service.

Where service has previously been provided, service will be reconnected within one working day after the applicant has met the requirements for reconnection.

The customer will be responsible for furnishing and laying the necessary customer service pipe from the meter location to the place of consumption. Customers may be required to install a customer owned cut-off valve on the customer's side of the meter or connection.

### Section 2.03 - Refusal of Service

The utility may decline to serve an applicant until the applicant has complied with the regulations of the regulatory agencies (state and municipal regulations) and for the reasons outlined in the PUC Rules. In the event that the utility refuses to serve an applicant, the utility will inform the applicant in writing of the basis of its refusal. The utility is also required to inform the applicant that a complaint may be filed with the Commission.

### Section 2.04 – Customer Deposits

If a residential applicant cannot establish credit to the satisfaction of the utility, the applicant may be required to pay a deposit as provided for in Section 1.02 - Miscellaneous Fees of this tariff. The utility will keep records of the deposit and credit interest in accordance with PUC Rules.

Residential applicants 65 years of age or older may not be required to pay deposits unless the applicant has an outstanding account balance with the utility or another water or sewer utility which accrued within the last two years.

**Docket No. 45942**

## SECTION 2.0 – SERVICE RULES AND POLICIES (Continued)

Nonresidential applicants who cannot establish credit to the satisfaction of the utility may be required to make a deposit that does not exceed an amount equivalent to one-sixth of the estimated annual billings.

Refund of deposit. - If service is not connected, or after disconnection of service, the utility will promptly refund the customer's deposit plus accrued interest or the balance, if any, in excess of the unpaid bills for service furnished. The utility may refund the deposit at any time prior to termination of utility service but must refund the deposit plus interest for any residential customer who has paid 18 consecutive billings without being delinquent.

### Section 2.05 - Meter Requirements, Readings, and Testing

All water sold by the utility will be billed based on meter measurements. The utility will provide, install, own and maintain meters to measure amounts of water consumed by its customers. One meter is required for each residential, commercial, or industrial connection.

Service meters will be read at monthly intervals and as nearly as possible on the corresponding day of each monthly meter reading period unless otherwise authorized by the Commission.

Meter tests. The utility will, upon the request of a customer, and, if the customer so desires, in his or her presence or in that of his or her authorized representative, make without charge a test of the accuracy of the customer's meter. If the customer asks to observe the test, the test will be made during the utility's normal working hours at a time convenient to the customer. Whenever possible, the test will be made on the customer's premises, but may, at the utility's discretion, be made at the utility's testing facility. If within a period of two years the customer requests a new test, the utility will make the test, but if the meter is found to be within the accuracy standards established by the American Water Works Association, the utility will charge the customer a fee which reflects the cost to test the meter up to a maximum \$25 for a residential customer. Following the completion of any requested test, the utility will promptly advise the customer of the date of removal of the meter, the date of the test, the result of the test, and who made the test.

### Section 2.06 - Billing

Bills from the utility will be mailed monthly unless otherwise authorized by the Commission. The due date of bills for utility service will be at least sixteen (16) days from the date of issuance. The postmark on the bill or, if there is no postmark on the bill, the recorded date of mailing by the utility will constitute proof of the date of issuance. Payment for utility service is delinquent if full payment, including late fees and the regulatory assessment, is not received at the utility or the utility's authorized payment agency by 5:00 p.m. on the due date. If the due date falls on a holiday or weekend, the due date for payment purposes will be the next workday after the due date.

A late penalty of either \$5.00 or 10.0% will be charged on bills received after the due date. The penalty on delinquent bills will not be applied to any balance to which the penalty was applied in a previous billing. The utility must maintain a record of the date of mailing to charge the late penalty.

## SECTION 2.0 – SERVICE RULES AND POLICIES (Continued)

Each bill will provide all information required by the PUC Rules. For each of the systems it operates, the utility will maintain and note on the monthly bill a local or toll-free telephone number (or numbers) to which customers can direct questions about their utility service.

In the event of a dispute between a customer and a utility regarding any bill for utility service, the utility will conduct an investigation and report the results to the customer. If the dispute is not resolved, the utility will inform the customer that a complaint may be filed with the commission.

### Section 2.07 - Service Disconnection

Utility service may be disconnected if the bill has not been paid in full by the date listed on the termination notice. The termination date must be at least 10 days after the notice is mailed or hand delivered.

The utility is encouraged to offer a deferred payment plan to a customer who cannot pay an outstanding bill in full and is willing to pay the balance in reasonable installments. However, a customer's utility service may be disconnected if a bill has not been paid or a deferred payment agreement entered into within 26 days from the date of issuance of a bill and if proper notice of termination has been given.

Notice of termination must be a separate mailing or hand delivery in accordance with the PUC Rules.

Utility service may also be disconnected without notice for reasons as described in the PUC Rules.

Utility personnel must be available to collect payments and to reconnect service on the day of and the day after any disconnection of service unless service was disconnected at the customer's request or due to a hazardous condition.

### Section 2.08 - Reconnection of Service

Service will be reconnected within 24 hours after the past due bill and any other outstanding charges are paid or correction of the conditions which caused service to be disconnected.

### Section 2.09 - Service Interruptions

The utility will make all reasonable efforts to prevent interruptions of service. If interruptions occur, the utility will re-establish service within the shortest possible time. Except for momentary interruptions due to automatic equipment operations, the utility will keep a complete record of all interruptions, both emergency and scheduled and will notify the commission in writing of any service interruptions affecting the entire system or any major division of the system lasting more than four hours. The notice will explain the cause of the interruptions.

**Prorated Bills** - If service is interrupted or seriously impaired for 24 consecutive hours or more, the utility will prorate the monthly base bill in proportion to the time service was not available to reflect this loss of service.



## SECTION 2.0 – SERVICE RULES AND POLICIES (Continued)

### Section 2.10 - Quality of Service

The utility will plan, furnish, and maintain production, treatment, storage, transmission, and distribution facilities of sufficient size and capacity to provide a continuous and adequate supply of water for all reasonable consumer uses. Unless otherwise authorized by the TCEQ, the utility will maintain facilities as described in the TCEQ Rules and Regulations for Public Water Systems.

### Section 2.11 - Customer Complaints and Disputes

If a customer or applicant for service lodges a complaint, the utility will promptly make a suitable investigation and advise the complainant of the results. Service will not be disconnected pending completion of the investigation. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the utility's response, the utility must advise the complainant that he has recourse through the PUC complaint process. Pending resolution of a complaint, the Commission may require continuation or restoration of service.

The utility will maintain a record of all complaints which shows the name and address of the complainant, the date and nature of the complaint and the adjustment or disposition thereof, for a period of two years after the final settlement of the complaint.

## SECTION 2.20 – SPECIFIC UTILITY SERVICE RULES AND POLICIES

This section contains specific utility service rules in addition to the rules previously listed under Section 2.0. It must be reviewed and approved by the Commission and in compliance with PUC rules to be effective.

## SECTION 3.0--EXTENSION POLICY

### Section 3.01 - Standard Extension Requirements

LINE EXTENSION AND CONSTRUCTION CHARGES: No contribution in aid of construction may be required of any customer except as provided for in this approved extension policy.

The customer will be given an itemized statement of the costs, options such as rebates to the customer, sharing of construction costs between the utility and the customer, or sharing of costs between the customer and other applicants prior to beginning construction.

The utility will bear the full cost of any over-sizing of water mains necessary to serve other customers in the immediate area. The individual residential customer shall not be charged for any additional production, storage, or treatment facilities. Contributions in aid of construction may not be required of individual residential customers for production, storage, treatment or transmission facilities unless otherwise approved by the Commission under this specific extension policy.

COSTS THE UTILITIES SHALL BEAR. Within its certified area, the utility will pay the cost of the first 200 feet of any water main or distribution line necessary to extend service to an individual residential customer within a platted subdivision. However, if the residential customer requesting service purchased the property after the developer was notified in writing of the need to provide facilities to the utility, the utility may charge for the first 200 feet. The utility must also be able to document that the developer of the subdivision refused to provide facilities compatible with the utility's facilities in accordance with the utility's approved extension policy after receiving a written request from the utility.

Developers may be required to provide contributions in aid of construction in amounts to furnish the system with all facilities necessary to comply with TCEQ's Rules and Regulations for Public Water Systems.

### SECTION 3.20—SPECIFIC UTILITY EXTENSION POLICY

This section contains the utility's specific extension policy which complies with the requirements already stated under Section 3.01. It must be reviewed and approved by the Commission and in compliance with PUC rules to be effective.

Residential customers not covered under Section 3.01 will be charged the equivalent of the costs of extending service to their property from the nearest transmission or distribution line even if that line does not have adequate capacity to serve the customer. However, if the customer places unique, non-standard service demands upon the system, the customer may be charged the additional cost of extending service to and throughout their property, including the cost of all necessary transmission and storage facilities necessary to meet the service demands anticipated to be created by that property.

Developers may be required to provide contributions in aid of construction in amounts sufficient to furnish the development with all facilities necessary to provide for reasonable local demand requirements and to comply with TCEQ minimum design criteria for facilities used in the production, transmission, pumping, or treatment of water or TCEQ minimum requirements. For purposes of this subsection, a developer is one who subdivides or requests more than two meters on a piece of property. Commercial, industrial, and wholesale customers will be treated as developers.

## APPENDIX A – DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN

“This page incorporates by reference the utility’s Drought Contingency Plan, as approved and periodically amended by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.”

APPENDIX B -- APPLICATION FOR SERVICE  
(Utility Must Attach Blank Copy)