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PUCT DOCKET NO. 50721

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From: Linda S. Johnson
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To the PUC Water Commission:

I inherited the house at 334 County Road 1624, Clifton, Texas, after my father's death in 2017. It is in the Lakeline area served by Crystal Clear Water.

I recently received the notice of the water rate hike proposed by the company. My rate, which is the minimum because we are in the process of redoing the house, is \$19.09 a month. By my figuring, my rate will jump over 300% to \$74.27 – for minimal usage.

First, an update from my letter in May: As I write this, my water pressure is so low that the commodes won't flush. For several months now, the water has been strangely "slick" – like an algae feel but without the green. I don't dare drink it or even wet my toothbrush with it. As we enter Labor Day weekend, I can't help but think of the handful of Airbnb homes in the neighborhood. I'm sure there are cancellations and disgruntlement over this, pushing down the value of not only those homes but all of them in our neighborhood.

In his original letter to his customers, Robert Payne, the owner of Crystal Clear, argues that "there is not anything today that costs the same as it did 29 years ago," when the 1991 rate hike took place. True, but if you look at the Consumer Price Index for that period, you will see that for Dallas, Texas, \$100 in 1991 is the equivalent of \$182.86 today. I suspect for Bosque County, the 2020 figure would not be quite \$182.86. (<https://www.in2013dollars.com/Dallas-Ft-Worth-Texas/price-inflation/1991?amount=100>)

Also, consider the makeup of the Lakeline neighborhood. Many are retirees on fixed incomes, some reside in trailer homes, and overall, you could describe the housing as "modest." Let's say you are a retiree with a Social Security check of \$1,000 a month: *Suddenly a good portion of your income is going to water if you use the minimum amount.* Add in the separate trash service, which I priced at \$55-\$60 a month a year ago, and that's about 15% of your income spent if you use the minimal. I also looked up average pay for McLennan County, the closest I could find to Bosque (www.payscale.com/research/US/Location=Waco-TX/Salary). It is \$31,990.40 a year gross and, of course, is less when subtracting the standard deductions.

Please keep in mind that this is just for water -- not sewer (all septic tanks here) and not trash pickup. Compare that to my water bill in Arlington, Texas, for which I pay about \$68 a month in non-summer months and which includes sewer and twice-a-week trash pickup.

Additionally, think about the effects on the neighborhood with such an increase. If a homebuyer is weighing one neighborhood against another and Lakeline has a reputation for expensive water, that will hurt Lakeline housing sales and result in falling home prices.

The neighborhood would like to know what plans for improvements are included. My Lakeline neighbors complain of rust in the lines and lack of pressure and worry about whether the water is safe to drink.

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Right now, I have seen nothing about upgrading the system. So it is as if you would pay much more for no service improvements in return.

In short, the proposed water rate increase is far more than the inflation rate supports, will strain many residents' budgets, and comes with no expressed plans for system improvements.

Therefore, I ask that the commission/commissioners reject this rate increase.

Sincerely,

Linda Stallard Johnson