



Public Service Commission <psc@utah.gov>

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1 message

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To: psc@utah.gov

To Department of Public Utilities and Public Service Commission –

My name is Noel Williams. I have previously offered both written and verbal comments in this matter. However, I wish to respond to some comments made with regard to standby fees.

The primary arguments that have been raised against the standby fees are from people who have their own wells. Their argument is that the only benefit they see from the water system is the possibility of the need for fire protection for which their own wells might be inadequate. This is certainly a possibility since we have been told by the fire department that they might easily need up to 2000 gallons per minute. However, that is not the only issue with the standby fees. Each lot owner is an equal owner in the water system and as such has an equal responsibility for its basic operation. If major repairs were necessary and water company funds were inadequate to pay for the repairs the costs would be assessed equally to each lot owner based only on the number of lots they own, not on the amount of water they use. If there were a fire, as there have been, each and every lot owner benefits by having the fire extinguished before it spreads to adjacent areas and eventually threatens their own property or forces them to evacuate their own homes. Thus, each lot owner is responsible for an equal share of the basic infrastructure and the costs of having the water available and ready for use and for fire protection anywhere in the area, not just at their own lot. Where everyone was individually responsible for fire protection and there was no community system for fire protection, major portions of cities or entire towns have burned to the ground, some not so far from our own community.

I would liken the issue to having a spare automobile that one seldom or never uses except in the case of an emergency. If that car is to be usable when needed, it must be maintained in an operable condition, the tires must be kept inflated, the registration must be kept current, taxes must be paid, and insurance must be maintained. If the owner were to lend the car to someone else they would still be responsible for its use. To say that the only cost to a standby user should be the water they actually use is like saying the only cost of the spare automobile is the gas needed when the car is actually used.

Standby users also benefit in other ways. The presence of a reliable water system increases property values, decreases insurance costs, and provides a safety net in case a well fails due to equipment failure or, perhaps more likely, because their well is no longer deep enough. The level of the aquifer has dropped, and the homeowner's pump has had to be lowered. As the amount of water used by Herriman increases, the aquifer is likely to continue to drop to ever lower levels. For this reason, among others, even the Hi-Country community water system has arranged for and planned for connections to backup sources. The standby fees help to pay for this infrastructure.

I paid standby fees on my own property for 10 years before I built a house and connected to the system. I had no reservations about it. Even when it turned out the meter box I thought represented my connection to the

system was nothing more than a meter box with a yoke and no connection to anything. The main was nearby and a connection was promptly made when I needed it.

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