



PublicService Commission <psc@utah.gov>

Randy and Jillyn Reber

1 message

Randy Reber <randyreber@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 2, 2026 at 8:50 AM

To: psc@utah.gov

Proposed water rate increase - we are on a fixed income and are very concerned about the water rate increase. We are opposed to any increase in the water rates in Pine Valley, Utah.
Sent from my iPhone



PublicService Commission <psc@utah.gov>

Docket Number 25-2179-01

1 message

Warren Church <warrenchurch73@hotmail.com>
To: "psc@utah.gov" <psc@utah.gov>

Fri, Oct 2, 2026 at 8:38 AM

Attached is my Letter of dispute regarding Docket # 25-2179-01

Warren Church
435-229-1484



Letter to State of Utah.pdf
153K

Warren Church
75 W. 1200 E.
Pine Valley, UT

October 1, 2026

Utah Public Service Commission
Utah Division of Public Utilities
Utah Office of Consumer Services

Re: Formal Objection to the Pine Valley Irrigation Company Rate Increase Petition

To the Commissioners and Staff:

I am a new resident of Pine Valley, Utah, and a customer of the Pine Valley Irrigation Company. I purchased my property in this valley less than 60 days ago and only recently learned of the company's petition for a rate increase. I am writing to formally object to the proposed increase and to respectfully request that the petition not be approved until the concerns outlined below have been independently reviewed.

The Impact

The proposed increase appears to exceed 100% across the board. My personal water bill for the first month was approximately \$180 during peak-season watering, which was expected and consistent with past water bills from the previous owner. My bill has now increased to approximately \$417.

Residents report that their monthly bills, previously around \$200, have increased to \$600 and \$800, and in some cases as much as \$1,300. A rate study reviewed by residents indicates that these proposed rates would be among the highest water service rates in Utah.

The Pine Valley private irrigation company currently serves only approximately 569 users, with 801 water permits, all of which have reportedly been sold. Approximately 80% of users are not full-time residents, and many of the full-time

residents are retired and living on fixed incomes. For these residents, such a substantial increase could be financially unsustainable and may force some people to leave their homes.

My Concerns

1. Lack of Notice and Public Process

Residents were never offered an official meeting to explain the proposed rates and the reasons behind the increase. The email that was sent was vague and raised more questions than it answered. Customers were not directed to the state's website or otherwise clearly informed about how to submit comments or objections.

A few residents discovered the petition on their own and have since organized to file this dispute. I was shocked to learn that this petition has apparently been ongoing since April 2026.

2. Potential Conflict of Interest

I believe the relationship between the ownership and the Board of Directors should be reviewed. My understanding is that the owners of the irrigation company also sit on its Board, which raises concerns about whether there is sufficient independent oversight when decisions are made regarding rates and expenditures.

I am asking the appropriate authorities to review this structure and determine whether adequate safeguards exist to prevent conflicts of interest.

3. Customers Funding Past Debt and Capital Purchases

The petition appears to ask customers to pay for new heavy equipment, a new office building, tools and supplies, and a deficit of approximately \$1.6 million.

That deficit is reportedly attributed in part to a recently drilled community well. The reported cost of the well appears significantly higher than what residents believe such a project would typically cost, and I respectfully request that the actual cost and expenditures associated with the well be independently verified.

A private company should be responsible for properly managing its own finances. Customers and residents should not automatically be expected to cover decades of accumulated debt from mismanagement of funds or bear the entire burden of newly requested heavy equipment, tools, supplies, and other capital expenditures without a detailed accounting and justification.

For a company of this size, I believe less expensive alternatives should be considered, including the purchase of used equipment where appropriate. I also question whether a new brick-and-mortar office building is necessary for such a small company and whether that expense is justified under the proposed rate structure. To add clarity, the customer base is capped and will never exceed 801 users.

These expenses ultimately place the financial burden on citizens who depend on this water for their homes and daily lives. From a customer's perspective, it feels like residents are being asked to pay for items that may be unnecessary or excessive for the operation of such a small business.

4. Cost of the Water Itself

I understand and believe that the company's source of water may not be metered or purchased in the same manner as water obtained from a conventional municipal water provider, and that the water is then sold to residents at rates that are difficult to justify.

I ask that the Commission and appropriate state agencies independently verify the company's actual water acquisition costs, operating costs, and the basis upon which the proposed rates have been calculated.

Water is essential to life and should not be treated as a luxury. Water should have a base cap expense for all humanity; it's a necessity for life.

5. Effect on Property Values

Extremely high utility costs can and will discourage future buyers from purchasing property in Pine Valley and could negatively affect property values for everyone in the valley.

When prospective homeowners consider purchasing property, the ongoing cost of essential utilities is an important part of the overall cost of homeownership. A dramatic increase in water costs could therefore have consequences beyond the monthly utility bill itself.

6. Unequal Impact

I understand that individuals requesting or supporting the increase may have access to "irrigation water" and therefore may not bear the financial burden in the same way as customers who would be paying the majority of the increased costs. It's often easy to ask for an increase if you are not obligated to the increase you are asking for.

I also understand that irrigation water has not been accessible to other residents in the same manner.

I believe this issue deserves review to determine whether customers/owners who benefit from private irrigation water are contributing appropriately toward the new expenses associated with the water system and whether the proposed rate structure distributes costs fairly among all users.

7. Bills That Cannot Be Independently Verified

The current utility bill is vague and does not clearly show meter readings or usage from one month to the next. Customers therefore cannot independently verify whether their bills are accurate and must simply trust that the charges are correct.

Without adequate billing transparency, there is room for concern about whether charges are accurate and applied consistently. This is especially troubling when customers are being asked to accept rates that would more than double their current bills.

Customers should be able to see their previous meter reading, current meter reading, total usage, applicable rate or tier, and exactly how the final amount was calculated.

What I Request

I respectfully request the following:

- That approval of the proposed rate increase be paused pending a complete review.
- An independent audit of the company's finances, including the actual cost of the new well and all proposed capital purchases.
- An audit of billing practices to confirm that all users, including the owners of the company, are being properly billed and that no users are excluded from paying their appropriate share.
- An audit of users benefiting from private irrigation water, which is separate from culinary water and is not accessible to the general public, to determine whether those users should contribute toward the expenses associated with the system.
- That customer bills be fully itemized, including previous and current meter readings, total usage, applicable rates or tiers, and an explanation of how the final charges were calculated.
- Clarification as to whether water is being charged according to a tiered rate structure, or whether usage is being lumped into one category or tier at the end of the month and billed accordingly.
- A review of the Board's structure and governance, including whether owners should be permitted to participate in rate decisions when they may have a direct financial interest in those decisions.
- Public hearings and educational meetings in Pine Valley, with adequate advance notice, before any rate increase is approved. The

public deserves the opportunity to understand the proposed changes, the financial justification for them, and the impact on customers.

- The private irrigation company should have an obligation to adequately educate and notify its customers regarding significant changes before imposing a substantial new financial obligation on its customers and residents.
- Ongoing state oversight and transparency for a private company that provides and sells a vital resource to residents.

What I Suggest

I understand that a rate increase may be necessary, and I am not opposed to a reasonable increase. However, I strongly recommend that if the State of Utah sadly approves the current petition, the proposed increase be phased in over a minimum of five years.

Rather than imposing a 100%+ increase immediately, I suggest starting with a 15–20% increase and gradually adjusting rates over time. This would give residents an opportunity to manage their water usage and adjust their household budgets without creating an immediate financial hardship.

A gradual approach would allow the Irrigation Company to address its financial needs while giving this small community a reasonable opportunity to adapt to the increased costs.

I respectfully request that this letter be added to the official record regarding the Pine Valley Irrigation Company rate increase petition.

I understand that the next hearing is scheduled for October 7 via Zoom.

I am available at 435-229-1484 and can be reached by email at WarrenChurch73@hotmail.com.

Thank you for taking the time to review these concerns. I respectfully request that the Commission and appropriate state agencies carefully examine the proposed rate

increase, the company's financial records, its billing practices, its governance structure, and the justification for the proposed expenditures before allowing such a significant increase to be imposed on Pine Valley residents.

Respectfully,

Warren Church

75 W. 1200 E.

Pine Valley, UT

435-229-1484

WarrenChurch73@hotmail.com