

Water Rate Hikes: Bad for Queens Businesses

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Testimony to City Council Committees on Environmental Protection and Finance

Thank you for this holding this oversight hearing and this opportunity to present the opposition of the Queens Chamber of Commerce to another outrageous water and sewer rate hike. Queens Chamber represents thousands of businesses and firms of all sizes that do business from and/ or in our vibrant borough. We look at the Water Board proposal from a business perspective and expose the rate hike's true colors. The proposed 14.5% hike stands out as 14.5% too much! We [testified](#) just that yesterday.

As we stated in our testimony to the NYC Water Board, “Water and Sewer hikes really function as tax hikes in all but name. The use of so many millions of dollars to cover costs outside the water system and the outrageous practice of the city charging itself rent to operate its water and sewer system make clear how the water board functions as a cash cow for City Hall.” We seek the Council's help to end these practices.

City ratepayers previously paid real estate taxes to fund part of this system. The initial shift to metering and the increases since resulted in no reduction in taxes. To review water rates without consideration of overall taxes imposed in New York City and the ongoing subsidy to the general fund provided by the systems paints an inaccurate accounting of overall burdens paid by taxpayers and ratepayers - one and the same.

Further hikes would also hurt the overall economy of the city at a most inopportune time. In New York's current economic state, further water rate gouges threaten most irreparable harm on a most fragile economy.

When the Water Board's capital program substantially results from federal and some state mandates, Queens Chamber questions the apparent lack of any plans to press for appropriate levels of aid from Albany and Washington to address what those governments require of New York City. We do welcome the *Bluebook* noting this need.

It remains important to consider the views of the business community and recognize the impacts of hiking water and sewer taxes – That's right taxes – before continuing down the same of path of spend and spend when there just might exist better means to achieve a safe delivery of clean water to New Yorkers. Perhaps the Council will exercise it budget power to send a message to City Hall to kill the gouge. Thank you.