

June 15, 2017

Talina Mathews, Executive Director
Kentucky Public Service Commission
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Frankfort, Ky. 40602-0615

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JUN 19 2017

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COMMISSION

Dear Ms. Mathews:

In regards to a number of complaints I have received lately from customers of the Martin County Water District regarding low water pressure at various times, I pose this question for the commission. I suspect these instances are due to the district attempting to pump water the U.S. Penitentiary -- Big Sandy when it is obvious it has the inability to do so without cutting water supply somewhere in its distribution system.

My explanation for this is pretty evident from watching PSC hearings and the testimony from water district representatives. As the commission is aware of, the reduction of disinfectant byproducts in our distribution system is a longstanding problem with the Division of Water. The water district attributes the formation of these contaminants to its inability to flush lines throughout the system due to its high water-rate loss. In their words, they simply cannot properly flush lines because they don't have enough water to do so.

I want to point out the incongruence in their position regarding supplying water to the prison and their inability to properly flush distribution lines. Given their past inability to supply water to the federal prison as reflected in a past document I submitted, showing periods where instead of selling water to the federal prison, the water district was forced to purchase water from Prestonsburg City Utilities to supply its (MCWD) customers, how is the district now -- all of sudden -- touting its position of expecting to receive about \$30,000 a month in revenue from selling water to the prison?

If the district is unable to flush lines due to its water rate loss, how does it intend to meet a demand of roughly 270,000 gallons per day (MCWD's share of the roughly 540,00 gallons per day needed for potable water/fire protection) and its sole customers served by the Honey Branch Tank?

The truth is, they cannot meet this demand -- that is, without taking other measures, which they done in the past -- valving off customers (as MCWD Operations Manager John Mills testified doing so in the February hearing) to meet demand elsewhere. That is what is happening now. When a customer's water pressure decreases, it's normally attributed to rupture somewhere in the distribution system and later, they learn that the system is repairing the leak with a boil water advisory issued.

That isn't the case now. Water is reduced to a pencil stream coming from the taps only to be restored at some point later with no reason given. One customer told me she posted a Facebook comment asking if anyone was having problems in the Blacklog

section. She then received a private message from the wife of Joe Hammond telling her Joe was going to a pump station and that her water pressure would be restored. A short while later, it was.

I believe this clearly shows there is no coherent plan by the MCWD board. Members are simply reacting to pressure now applied by the PSC to get its act in order and they do not know how to get their act together. Properly addressing this problem would have been prioritizing the flushing of lines first to comply with disinfectant byproducts violations before renegotiating an agreement with Prestonsburg City Utilities to obtain a higher rate for water sold to the prison. As I have seen in a letter from PCU in your comments section, this "double-edged sword" could cost MCWD more money due to its past history of not being capable of supplying water to the Honey Branch Tank.

I believe the district is desperate now in this realization that they cannot afford to pay PCU at this higher rate. The only remedy they can come up with is cutting back services to customers here by reducing pressure and supplying water to this tank.

Summing it up, if MCWD doesn't have the capacity to flush lines -- and that is its position -- how is it possible that it can come up with adding another roughly 300,000 per day to customer demand? It cannot unless it cuts back its pressure on regular customers.

Thank you for considering this matter.

Gary Ball



MCWD customer
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