

KEOUGH + SWEENEY, LTD.

ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW
41 MENDON AVENUE
PAWTUCKET, RHODE ISLAND 02861
TELEPHONE (401) 724-3600
FACSIMILE (401) 724-9909
www.keoughsweeney.com

RAYNHAM OFFICE:
90 NEW STATE HIGHWAY
RAYNHAM, MA 02109
TEL. (508) 822-2813
FAX (508) 822-2832

JOSEPH A. KEOUGH JR.*
JEROME V. SWEENEY III*

SEAN P. KEOUGH*

JEROME V. SWEENEY II
OF COUNSEL

*ADMITTED TO PRACTICE IN
RHODE ISLAND & MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON OFFICE:
171 MILK STREET
SUITE 30
BOSTON, MA 02109
TEL. (617) 574-0054
FAX (617) 451-1914

September 2, 2021

Ms. Luly Massaro, Clerk
Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities
and Carriers
89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, RI 02888

Re: *The Pawtucket Water Supply Board - Docket 5022*
In Re: Suspension Of Service Terminations And
Certain Collection Activities During The COVID-19 Emergency

Dear Ms. Massaro:

Enclosed herewith please find an original and nine copies of the Pawtucket Water Supply Board's Response to the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission's Fourth Set of Data Requests in the above captioned docket.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Keough, Jr.

Enclosures
cc: Service List via electronic mail

Comm. 1: Does the Pawtucket Water Supply Board believe that the inability to charge late/interest fees is a hinderance to collections of outstanding balances. Please explain in detail.

Response: The Pawtucket Water Supply Board (PWSB) believes the inability to charge late/interest fees does play a role in hindering the collection of outstanding balances. However, there are also other factors that have affected collections. One of the main factors is that with the DOH restrictions limiting public gatherings which included the periodic closing of City Hall, we canceled and suspended tax sales to collect delinquent accounts. Tax sales have been an effective collection tool for PWSB.

Prepared by: Robert Benson

Comm. 2: If the prohibition on charging late/interest fees is lifted, what measures and means of communications would the Pawtucket Water Supply Board utilize to inform customers that they will again be subject to these fees on overdue balances? What does Pawtucket Water Supply Board believe is a reasonable notice period prior to the lifting of the prohibition to properly educate customers?

Response: Once the prohibition is lifted, PWSB would insert a bill stuffer in its next monthly billing. This bill stuffer would read as follows: Beginning with the next billing period, the PWSB will resume charging interest on all delinquent account balances. For example, if the prohibition was lifted by the end of September, the bill stuffer would be inserted with our October 2021 bills and interest would be charged on delinquent balances on our November 2021 bills.

Prepared by: Robert Benson

Comm. 3: Has the Pawtucket Water Supply Board determined if the waiver of credit card/debit card/online check fees has resulted in better collections activities from any class of customers? If so, please explain/provide data. If not, please explain. If the utility already absorbs these fees, please advise.

Response: The PWSB has absorbed the "convenience fees" associated with payments by credit cards or debit cards since 2012. Order 20879, effective October 4, 2012 (Docket 3569) authorized the the PWSB to absorb the cost of "convenience fees." Also, beginning in October 2015, the PWSB has offered electronic billing and payment presentation (EBPP) services to its customers. Since these services were offered, there has been a steady growth of customers making payment by credit card, debit card, and electronic check.

Prepared by: Robert Benson

Comm. 4: If the Commission were to lift the prohibition on assessing credit card fees, what is Pawtucket Water Supply Board intent on whether to reinstitute the fee? If the utility already absorbs the fees, this can be N/A.

Response: NA. The PWSB was previously authorized to absorb the cost of the "convenience fees." See Order 20979 dated October 4, 2012 (Docket 3569).

Prepared by: Robert Benson