

Remarks of Mayor Noam Bramson
JP Press Conference
August 2, 2010

Ladies and Gentlemen: We are here together, on behalf of tens of thousands of New Yorkers from nine different communities, to say in a single, clear voice: no. No to a breath-taking 127% increase in water rates. No to windfall profits for a French company, earned on the backs of Westchester taxpayers. No to unconscionable rental fees for hydrants that raise the cost of fire protection at the expense of urgent public safety needs.

At a time when virtually every household is struggling to make ends meet and virtually every government is slashing programs and services, the scale and sheer greed of this unjustifiable proposal is an outrage.

We have already submitted to the State facts and figures that fully support our claim, we will make our case more fully in the public hearing today, and we will continue pressing our case on behalf of the people we serve.

We remind the Public Service Commission that this is not a time to blindly apply precedents or formulas that fail every test of common sense and decency. The PSC must exercise its lawful authority to weigh all of the facts and do the right thing for the ratepayers and taxpayers of Westchester.

Remarks of New Rochelle Mayor Noam Bramson
Public Hearing on United Water JP
August 2, 2010

Good afternoon. Thank you for your opportunity to address you today on a matter of critical importance to tens of thousands of New Yorkers. My name is Noam Bramson. I am the Mayor of New Rochelle, the largest municipality served by United Water.

You have already received from our municipal consortium a detailed analysis of the Joint Proposal. The facts and figures contained within make abundantly clear that the JP would provide windfall profits to a multinational corporation at the expense of working families here in New York. The JP would also significantly raise the cost of fire protection at a time when taxpayers can least afford such burdens.

In the strongest possible terms, we urge you to reject the JP. Specifically, we ask that you:

- (1) Exercise your lawful authority to establish a rate structure that meets the test of common sense, considers the full picture of United Water's corporate relationship with Suez, and recognizes the unique economic challenges of our time.
- (2) Roll back the proposed 50% increase in Public Fire Protection fees, an increase over a base amount that is already far larger than that charged in other service areas, and entirely out-of-scale with the cost of the service received in return; and
- (3) Beyond a mere roll-back, relieve property taxpayers entirely of the burden of Public Fire Protection fees, and instead embrace a far more rational and equitable policy of distributing such costs fairly throughout the system.

We need you to take these actions, because the cost of accepting the JP is simply too much to bear. Too much for families who are struggling to make ends meet. Too much for governments that are slashing programs and services. Make no mistake: the JP will make an already difficult situation much, much worse and will utterly fail the public interest.

Rather than restate the statistics that buttress our case, and that you will surely review carefully prior to making a decision, let me instead conclude with a broader point.

Those of us in public life recognize and respect that the PSC cannot reach arbitrary decisions based on the sympathies of its members. You are required to act within the law, and to set the law above your personal preferences.

But at the same time, the PSC need not – must not – blindly apply precedents or formulas that fail to respect the full circumstances of this case, or the general circumstances of our times. We are counting on you not to be rubber-stamps for a JP that was obviously devised by applying the usual standards in the usual ways, without a creative thought and without regard for its impact on real lives.

You have the legal authority, fully backed by hard quantitative analysis, to make a judgment that serves the public good. Use it. Thank you very much.