



For Immediate Release

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East Chicago Municipal Water rate case: Consumer comments invited, Public hearing Nov. 17

If you would like to comment on the City of East Chicago's proposed water rate increase, you have a couple of opportunities to do so.

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) is inviting written comments for the case record. In addition, the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) will hold a public field hearing on Thursday, November 17, 2016.

The IURC's November 17 hearing will start at 6:00 p.m., Central Time, in the Common Council Chambers at East Chicago City Hall (4525 Indianapolis Boulevard).

- Consumers will be able to speak directly to the Commission, under oath and on the record, regarding the case.
- Consumers will also be able to submit written comments for the case record.
- Comments will carry equal weight whether they are oral or written.
- Commissioners are not allowed to answer questions during the field hearing. However, OUCC staff will be available before, during and after the hearing to address questions about the process.

East Chicago's current water rates were approved in 2006. Under the city's request, monthly water charges for a residential customer using 5,000 gallons per month would increase from \$12.05 to \$18.66. The city is also seeking IURC approval to issue up to \$16.54 million in long-term debt.

According to its testimony and exhibits, the city is proposing the changes due to increases in operating and maintenance costs and to pay for proposed capital improvements over the next five years. Specific proposals cited in the city's testimony include new water storage tanks, new meters, fire hydrant repairs and replacements, and service line replacements.

As of January 1, 2016, the average monthly residential rate for water utilities under IURC jurisdiction was \$31.48 for 5,000 gallons.

Only East Chicago's water rates are at issue in this case. State law restricts the IURC's jurisdiction over municipal water utilities to their rates, charges, and finances.

Indiana law does not give the IURC jurisdiction over municipal sewer utilities, with municipal sewer rates and charges approved by locally elected city and town councils.

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The OUCC – the state agency representing consumer interests in cases before the IURC – is scheduled to complete its review of the utility’s request and file testimony on November 18, 2016. All filing dates in IURC cases are subject to change. A settlement agreement is possible in any legal proceeding.

Consumers who wish to submit written comments for the case record may do so via the OUCC’s Website at www.in.gov/oucc/2361.htm, or by mail, email or fax:

- Mail: Consumer Services Staff
Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor
115 W. Washington St., Suite 1500 South
Indianapolis, IN 46204
- email: uccinfo@oucc.IN.gov
- Fax: (317) 232-5923

The OUCC needs to receive all written consumer comments in advance of the field hearing so that it can: 1) Consider them in preparing its testimony and 2) File them with the Commission to be included in the case’s formal evidentiary record. Comments should include the consumer’s **name, mailing address**, and a reference to **“IURC Cause No. 44826.”** Consumers with questions about submitting written comments can contact the OUCC’s consumer services staff toll-free at 1-888-441-2494.

Case updates will be posted on the OUCC’s website at www.in.gov/oucc/2783.htm.

(IURC Cause No. 44826)

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal bodies that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC’s mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education, and creative problem solving.

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