

Letter from Mayor Kristen C. Umstatt

July-August 2009



Dear Neighbor:

On August 11th, the Leesburg Town Council will be voting on a new water-sewer rate structure that would **increase your water bill by 30%** over the next five years. This move, supported by some members of the Council, is being proposed so that **the out-of-town water rate “surcharge” or “differential,” now at 100%, can be reduced by 57%**. Wealthy out-of-town customers will see their water bills go down significantly, while Leesburg’s middle class families will see our bills go up **almost two times faster than the rate of inflation**. Those Council members who support increasing the in-town rates have said they have no choice, that they are under a court order to do this. However, the court never directed the Town to raise in-town rates. In fact, the judge directed the Town to use the private sector’s “Utility Method,” a method that supports **maintaining or raising the out-of-town differential, while reducing our in-town burden**.

Over the last three years, the Council has heard frequently from out-of-town water users. As you know, some out-of-town residents from the exclusive and gated River Creek community sued the Town to get lower rates for themselves. Some of those out-of-town water users have complained to the Town Council that they and their neighbors need cheaper water because they have larger, estate-size lawns and they want to keep them green. Council members have also been pressured by some State Legislators and County Supervisors to give these out-of-town customers a break – **at our expense**.

A couple members of Council have hinted that they’ll abstain or vote against the proposed rate structure, but they haven’t said what rates they’ll vote for. A vote against the proposed rate structure isn’t enough. We need the Council to vote for a rate structure that is fair to all of us who live in town. On July 13th, the Town’s consultants outlined a range of allowable out-of-town differentials (**from 97% to 228%**), so please ask your Council members to support a differential that allows you a decent return on your investment in our utility system. Maintaining the out-of-town differential at, or over, **100%**, where it is now, would help keep our in-town rate increases within the normal range of inflation. Unlike the out-of-town water users, you are a Leesburg taxpayer and an owner of our utility system and you have a right to expect your Council to keep your rates down, protect your investment, and increase your rate of return.

This is why it is important for you to either contact your Town Council members at council@leesburgva.gov or come speak at the public hearing at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 11th in the 2nd floor council chambers of Town Hall, at 25 W. Market Street, near the Tally Ho Theater. State Senator Jill Vogel has promised to support our Town residents on the water rates. But please contact Senator Mark Herring district33@senate.virginia.gov and Delegate Joe May DelJMay@house.virginia.gov and ask them to protect **your** interests in the General Assembly. **They are under pressure from wealthy, out-of-town constituents to support state legislation that would force the Town to lower out-of-town rates and raise our rates to cover the difference.**

Very sincerely yours,

Kristen C. Umstatt

Authorized and Paid for by Kristen Umstatt, “Kristen for Mayor”, P.O. Box 2836, Leesburg, VA 20177
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