



# HOUSATONIC WATER WORKS COMPANY

SINCE 1897

Dear Residents,

October 1, 2024

We are writing to address an issue of great importance to our community: the future of our water supply and delivery system. Decisions surrounding Housatonic Water Works (HWW) affect not only its direct customers but also have broader implications for all residents of Great Barrington. It is crucial that we fully understand how this issue impacts our town's infrastructure, finances, and overall quality of life.

## **Rate Case Impact**

Our rates are scheduled to rise by 90% over the next five years. While HWW may be well-positioned to address its immediate and mid-term capital projects following the approval of the rate increase, if it remains independent, the rates required to meet its long-term capital needs will be substantial. These future projects will likely necessitate significant additional rate hikes, creating a heavy financial burden for many village residents.

## **A Path Forward: A Community Decision**

We now have an opportunity to move beyond past controversies and work collaboratively toward a sustainable water management system that benefits every resident. By focusing on what truly matters—ensuring reliable, affordable, and resilient water infrastructure—we can build a future that strengthens our community, protects our natural resources, and positions us to meet both current and future challenges with confidence and unity. This is a chance to make a lasting impact for generations to come, and it is essential that we approach this opportunity with the seriousness and foresight it deserves.

## **Proposal: Housatonic Water District (HWD)**

The Town of Great Barrington has the opportunity to take a leading role in managing one of our most precious resources—water—in a way that is both economically and ecologically efficient. The proposed plan involves a three-step process:

1. **Acquisition:** The first step would be to acquire HWW and establish a new, independent water district, tentatively called the Housatonic Water District (HWD). This district could be structured similarly to the Great Barrington Fire District (GBFD), with its own bylaws, governance, and taxing authority.
2. **Creation of HWD:** The town's role would be to facilitate the creation of HWD while state and federal funds for capital improvements are still available. This new quasi-municipal entity would allow us to access funding not available to private companies like HWW, enabling necessary system upgrades without overburdening residents.

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3. **Efficient Management & Potential Merger:** Creating HWD would provide local control over water management, allowing for more efficient operations and improved sustainability practices. Additionally, this new district could lay the groundwork for a future merger with GBFD, streamlining operations and reducing costs by consolidating water and fire services.

### **Acquisition of HWW**

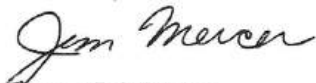
Under this proposal, the initial purchase of HWW's assets would be funded by all town taxpayers. Once the acquisition is complete, the newly established water district would operate as a freestanding entity. From that point forward, only those who use the water services would be responsible for covering all related expenses. The town would manage the district temporarily, transitioning it to full independence, with the potential for future integration with the Great Barrington Fire District (GBFD).

### **Invitation to Public Meeting**

To provide further information and encourage public participation, HWW will host a Zoom meeting on **October 16, 2024**. This meeting will be an important opportunity for all residents to engage in the process, ask questions, and help shape the future of our town's water management. Information on how to join the meeting is posted on our website at **[housatonicwater.com](https://www.housatonicwater.com)**.

We hope you will take part in this important discussion.

Sincerely,



James J. Mercer

Treasurer  
Housatonic Water Works Company