



HOUSATONIC WATER WORKS COMPANY

SINCE 1897

Dear Valued Customer,

March 31, 2025

On **April 17, 2025**, a Special Town Meeting will be held to vote on the citizens' petition proposing that the Town of Great Barrington acquire Housatonic Water Works Company (HWW). We fully support this acquisition at a fair market value, which would be negotiated with the Town if the proposal passes. Furthermore, we believe that this transition to public ownership under a newly established, independent Housatonic Water District (HWD), like the Great Barrington Fire District, which has water rate-setting authority and taxing powers, will significantly benefit our community.

Why do we support this move?

Quite simply, it will unlock resources and structural advantages that a small private utility like HWW cannot access on its own. We have always taken pride in serving you, but we also understand that our community's water needs have outgrown the small private-company model. By voting for the Town to acquire HWW, we can tap into greater opportunities for improvements, funding, and long-term stability for your water service. It is also important that it remain an independent public entity rather than a town department subject to annual budget constraints.

Benefits:

- **Avoid Significant Rate Hikes:** If HWW remains private, customer rates are projected to increase nearly 90% in the coming years to cover critical infrastructure improvements. An independent water district can secure public financing options, significantly reducing potential rate increases.
- **Improved Water Quality and Fire Protection:** Under the independent district model, necessary infrastructure projects—such as replacing mains and enhancing fire protection—can be expedited.
- **Better Access to Funding:** Public ownership opens the door to federal and state grants and low-interest loans unavailable to private utilities. These resources would substantially reduce the cost burden for improvements.
- **Local Control and Accountability:** A dedicated Housatonic Water District, governed by locally elected representatives, would remain independent from the Town government. Decisions regarding rates, maintenance, and upgrades would be transparent, directly accountable to residents, and solely focused on providing high-quality water service.

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We emphasize that creating a dedicated water district, similar to the existing Great Barrington Fire District, is critical. The goal is not to make HWW a town department but to establish an independent entity that ensures stability, affordability, and local accountability.

We encourage you to attend the Special Town Meeting on April 17 and vote YES to support the establishment of an independent Housatonic Water District. Your participation is vital in securing reliable, safe, and affordable water for future generations.

For more details, please visit housatonicwater.com. Feel free to contact us directly with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James J. Mercer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James J. Mercer

Treasurer
Housatonic Water Works Company