



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Senator Michelle Hinchey and Assemblyman Anil Beephan Urge PSC to Reject Dover Plains Water Company Rate Hike at Virtual Public Statement Hearing

MICHELLE HINCHEY February 6, 2024



DOVER, NY – Senator Michelle Hinchey and Assemblyman Anil Beephan delivered testimony today at a virtual public statement hearing of the Public Service Commission (PSC), where they emphasized the need to reject a request by the Dover Plains Water Company for a 67% rate increase and a \$30 quarterly surcharge on residents' water bills. Following the hearing, Hinchey submitted her third formal letter to the PSC as part of the utility commission's public comment period on the rate filing.

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “Clean water is a fundamental right that must be affordable for our residents. A rate increase this extreme isn’t fair to those with fixed and moderate incomes and must be rejected. Today, I was proud to stand against this unconscionable increase during the PSC hearing alongside my colleague Assemblyman Beephan, local officials, and community members, and I will continue to speak out on behalf of the residents of Dover. We must fight for a fair solution that upholds the right to affordable water access for everyone.”

Assemblyman Anil Beephan Jr. said, “We strongly oppose the proposed 68% increase for the Dover Plains water district. Today, alongside Senator Michelle Hinchey, the town board, and numerous residents, we participated in the public service commission hearing to advocate for the community. The commission must understand that our community cannot afford such an astronomical increase in the price of water. Additionally, we emphasized the need for an in-person public hearing to allow residents to voice their concerns effectively. With only 20 participants, including government officials, it is clear that holding these meetings at 2 PM on a weekday is not feasible for working households. We will continue to fight against these rate increases and stand with the residents.”

The following is a transcript of Senator Hinchey’s remarks at the virtual public statement hearing on Tuesday, February 6.

Good afternoon; my name is Senator Michelle Hinchey, and I have the privilege of representing the Town of Dover in the State Senate.

This is the third testimony I have submitted advocating for the people of Dover against the astronomical rate increase and surcharge that has been proposed by the Dover Plains Water Company.

Access to clean and affordable water is a fundamental necessity, as well as a right that voters enshrined

into our State Constitution. It's the responsibility of every water utility to provide services at fair rates. Nearly tripling the water bills for people with fixed and moderate incomes is far from fair.

Dover is an economically disadvantaged community where essentially 18% of residents live below the poverty line. This rate hike would inflict immediate financial hardship on our neighbors.

*Many people are already dealing with serious economic difficulties. Some are forced to choose between paying for essentials like their rent or mortgage, while others are grappling with whether they have enough to heat their homes, buy groceries, or cover a medical bill. **Adding an exorbitant water bill to this list is unconscionable, which is why the PSC must reject this proposal.***

I also urge the Commission to carefully consider the human impact of this proposal and, in doing so, hold in-person public hearings in the Town of Dover.

While we appreciate the Commission's effort to hold this virtual hearing today, it does not accommodate the needs of a rural community with limited internet access.

It is incumbent upon the PSC to ensure that public hearings are accessible to everyone, particularly in this rate case where the financial stability of an entire community is at stake.

*I appreciate the Commission's attention to this important matter and dedication to protecting customers throughout New York State. **I hope you can see why this proposal simply shouldn't stand.***

I will continue to be an advocate for the residents of Dover, and I look forward to working together towards a fair and equitable solution.

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