

Donna Conkling

From: Brice Kirkendall-Rodríguez <bricek@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, March 26, 2018 10:03 PM
To: Manager's Department; mayor@scarsdale.com; Matthew Callaghan; Jane Veron; Carl Finger; Marc Samwick; Seth Ross; Deborah Pekarek
Cc: Clerk's Department
Subject: New rates provide discount for excess water consumption

Mayor Hochvert, Board of Trustees and Village Manager Pappalardo,

Scarsdale has prided itself in taking at least small steps toward improved sustainability and environmental stewardship through introduction of the county's first food scrap recycling program, a pilot program for LED lighting on village roads and proactive tree replacement for fallen trees along the village right of way. Individuals in our community have also taken steps to bicycle to the train station, purchase hybrid and electric vehicles and install solar panels on their roofs. In short our inclinations are in the right place even if we haven't made huge lifestyle changes to counter the effects of our carbon footprint.

Thus our most recent water rate changes and their implicit reward of excess consumption came as quite a surprise. While we continue to pay unusually low water rates for the area and even the nation, those Scarsdale households that manage to consume within the base rate range can nonetheless expect to pay 12.28% more for their water whereas the small minority of large volume water consumers are being granted a 3.67% reduction on their excess consumption. This seems incongruous with a community that prides itself on sustainability.

The average family of four in the United States consumes about 100 gallons of water per day per family member. This works out to about the 50 units of water in a three month period that comprises our base rate. In short, our base rate is not a hardship. Excess water consumption is usually due to water leaks, landscape irrigation or water supply to a swimming pool.

Let's consider a tale of three families. The first consumes 50 units of water in three months, the second consumes 97 units in three months and the third family consumes 1,038 units in three months. With the new rate change, our first family will see their three month bill rise from \$142.50 to \$160. The second family will see little change in their \$611 three month bill whereas the third family will see the cost of their excessive use of water (more than twenty times the national average) drop by almost \$353. In fact, the savings is equivalent to over 65,000 gallons of water or enough to fill a typical swimming pool more than three times. Isn't this what we would call a moral hazard?

I am not advocating a rate increase to excess water users. However, providing a discount seems completely contrary to the culture of sustainability that has until now been promoted by the village administration. As our water rate increase letter clearly states, we have major infrastructure projects that need to be undertaken. This is not the time for a regressive change to our water rate structure or a time to reward excess water consumption. While we may all have to accept an increase in our base rate, let's keep the excess rate of \$9.975 per unit where it was last year.

My third family scenario of 1,038 units of water consumed in three months is not fiction. I have met families that were shocked with a \$10,000 water bill at the end of last summer. They have both a pool and an irrigation system for their property. There is a viable alternative for these families that would actually save even more money than the new excess unit discount without the village incentivizing excess consumption.

Drill a well. Only about 10% of households in Westchester County avail themselves of well water. Most of these households are probably in the north county. Furthermore, we are fortunately enough to have a high water table and live far from large industrial consumers of water. Drilling a well is not likely to significantly impact our local natural water resources and the Westchester County GIS maps suggest the ground water in Scarsdale is accessible and of good quality. This water could be used for irrigation and for supplying a pool and the household could limit its use of municipal water to the same amount that is typical for most members of the Scarsdale community. Such projects require a permit but would probably see a return on investment in as little as one season depending on consumption patterns with benefits to last in near perpetuity thereafter. Furthermore, if excess water users tap their own wells then this would reduce demand on our strained municipal water supply. Also, our reduced dependency on New York City water would help ease tensions

with our neighbors to the north who supply the water and are held to much higher constraints on land use than we encounter because they are in the watershed that supplies our region.

I urge the village to correct the discount provided to excess water consumers. As I have just outlined, there is a sensible alternative that will save these consumers even more money and the village won't create the impression that its sustainability policies harm those least responsible for excesses.

Thank you for your time, attention and service.

Brice Kirkendall-Rodriguez
19 Fox Meadow Road
bricek@yahoo.com