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October 21, 2021

Luly E. Massaro, Commission Clerk
Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission
89 Jefferson Blvd
Warwick, RI 02888

Dear Ms. Massaro :

Please accept this letter from the Pawtucket Water Supply Board (“PWSB”) as its response to the September 29, 2021, Notice to Solicit Comments in Docket 5022 (“Notice”) issued by the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”). As set forth in the Notice, on March 16, 2020, the Commission voted to enter an emergency order related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The order included various restrictions on several regulated utilities in the State of Rhode Island, many of which were subsequently lifted. However, in its July 15, 2020 Order, the Commission extended the prohibition on the assessment of late fees, interest charges, credit card fees, debit card fees, and ACH fees. The Notice indicates that the Commission will consider whether to lift these prohibitions at a future open meeting and will accept written comments from the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers and other interested parties as to whether the prohibitions should be lifted, the amount of notice to be given to customers prior to the lifting of the prohibition, and the rationale for the position.

The PWSB’s position is that the prohibitions should be lifted as the inability to charge interest fees does play a role in hindering the collection of outstanding balances. The PWSB has absorbed the “convenience fees” associated with payments by credit cards or debit cards since 2012. Thus, the reinstatement of these fees will not affect the PWSB.

As for notice to customers, the PWSB would like to reinstate interest fees thirty days after the Commission lifts the prohibition. The PWSB would provide notice to its customers through a “bill stuffer” included with our monthly bills.

Sincerely,

James DeCelles
Chief Engineer