

Editorial

Flood Of Opposition To Water Rate Hike

The New York City Water Board has us all by the ice cubes.

This past Monday, the Water Board unanimously voted to adopt the biggest increase in 15 years. Beginning in July, water and sewer rates will go up by 11.5 percent. The rate hike will mean that water and sewer rates will increase by 54 percent over the next four years.

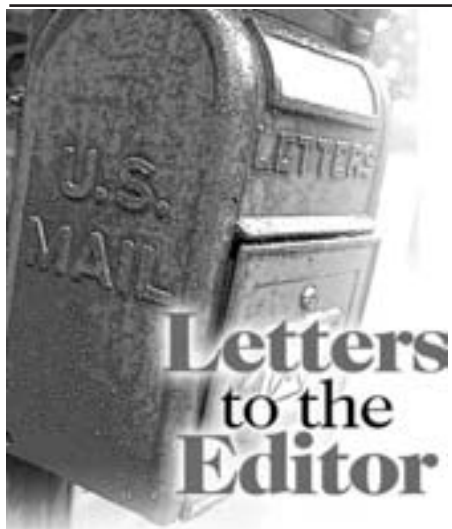
When the rate hike first came to our attention we inveighed against it in our Apr. 18, 2007 edition. At that time, we pointed out that the upstate reservoir system established more than a century ago by far-sighted city officials eliminated the need for costly filtration plants and elaborate water treatment. We noted that the costs attendant upon owning property in New York City are escalating, confronting the city with the prospect that its middle class, the socio-economic cohort that makes up the greatest part of the taxpayer base, will leave the city in increasing numbers, a situation that will have only undesirable consequences.

What has many elected officials hot under the collar on behalf of their constituents is the fact that, as City Councilmember James Gennaro charges, \$75 million of the rate increase has nothing to do with water service delivery, but will go directly into the city's General Fund. City Comptroller William Thompson concurred, noting that most of the increase actually represents excess rent payments. Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. also agreed, calling the rate hike "a tax increase that can and must be stopped".

The councilmembers and Thompson also point out that the Water Board is doing very little to collect outstanding water bills. This, too, it seems to us, is punishing taxpayers for a problem that they did not create and are not responsible for solving. The *New York Times* examined water records in 2006 and found that of the city's 828,000 water accounts, 21,000 had made no payments at all for at least two years. Thousands more of the city's water accounts were in arrears for shorter peri-

ods. Records were so unreliable, however, that the city could not prove that the unpaid bills were accurate and so had not attempted to shut off service to any delinquent residential customers.

It is not possible to live without water. It is not possible for a city to exist without a viable, burgeoning middle class. As we have said on numerous occasions, the police, teachers, bank tellers, cab drivers, small business owners and their employees who make up this group are really the people who keep the city running and through the taxes they pay, provide the financial wherewithal that this metropolis must have to function. No one expects a free ride; we accept that taxes and water and sewer rates are the price we pay for living here. But to saddle an already beleaguered middle class with an 11.5 percent increase in water rates—and the assurance that more such increases are due to come—will serve only to do lasting harm to the city and the people who choose to make it their home.



He Saw, He Said, He Did

To The Editor:

I would like to applaud this video clerk who was asked to transfer a terrorist video onto DVD. He saw these guys were dangerous and alerted the authorities. Now six Muslim terrorists are under lock and key and Fort Dix is safe for awhile until the next terrorist threat.

This video clerk saw something and did something by saying something. Like the saying goes, "Evil thrives when good men do nothing." Well, this clerk did something and America is a little safer for that
Frederick R. Bedell Jr.
Bellerose

St. Mary's S.C. Must Close

To The Editor:

After decades of service in Long Island City, Catholic Charities Brooklyn & Queens with the New York City Department For the Aging have made the difficult but necessary decision to no longer provide services from St. Mary's Senior Center after June 29.

Through the transition process, Catholic Charities will help to acquaint seniors with several neighboring senior centers, so that they can choose the center where they feel most at

home.

In the past five years, the number of seniors accessing services at the center has declined significantly. Today, St. Mary's Senior Center has gone from serving 100 seniors to 30 seniors a day. This has to do with the changing landscape of Long Island City; seniors are leaving the neighborhood, and young professionals and families are moving in. In addition, the St. Mary's Senior Center is housed in a building that is over 100 years old. The cost of maintaining and upgrading it is prohibitive.

Catholic Charities Brooklyn & Queens understands that the consolidation will be a major adjustment for our seniors, for whom the center is a home away from home. Our existing transportation services will focus on the needs of Long Island City seniors, providing them access to shopping, medical appointments and transportation to other senior centers. Service to homebound clients will not be interrupted by this change; they will continue to receive Meals-On-Wheels and other assistance.

Sincerely,

Donna Corrado
Chief Operating Officer
Builders For Family & Youth, Inc.
Catholic Charities Brooklyn & Queens

No Rate Hikes!

To The Editor:

I strongly disagree with the increase in Con Edison monthly fees. Along with the increases in monthly rent, the cost of a postage stamp, food, clothing, health care and medication, a family or a single person of any age, will be left with very little to save. It seems that as prices rise, the quality of services decreases. The post office and Con Edison always increase their prices and yet their services and caring for the public decrease. Again, public hearings should be held where consumers will be able to voice their opinions. That is the democratic way to follow, where we voice our

choice. It is unfair for consumers to not have a voice in matters that affect them.

I truly support and agree with Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. for his tireless efforts in combating lewdness. The public hearing conducted several weeks back and the passage of a law by the council to give harsher punishment for lewdness will greatly protect the quality of life and promote the protection of women. I applaud Councilperson Vallone Jr. for caring for all of us and being our voice.

I also am appalled at the entire notion of Bicycle Sunday, with its closings of streets, bridges and tunnels. This is self serving on their part and if an emergency should God forbid, happen, traffic would not be able to go through. This is unnecessary hardship upon the quality of life of Astoria residents.

Cynthia Groopman
Long Island City

Tax Cuts Cost More

To The Editor:

Republican New York state Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno's proposal to provide tax rebates for seniors is really bad news for taxpayers. This proposal could cost hundreds of millions of dollars which New York state doesn't really have. It is easy for any politician, be it liberal or conservative; Democrat or Republican, on the city, state or federal level, to announce a tax cut. What they all fail to do is identify how this lost revenue will be made up. Does this mean cuts to other state services, increase debt, borrow more money or asking the federal government for additional financial assistance? Washington already has its own financial problems to deal with.

New Yorkers face the highest tax burden in America. New York state is number two nationally, with each resident responsible for \$3,515 of the \$50 billion dollar total debt.

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