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TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

SELECTBOARD

STATEMENT ON GREAT BARRINGTON FIRE DISTRICT CONNECTION TO HOUSATONIC WATER WORKS SYSTEM

April 3, 2025

At the March 24 Selectboard meeting, Interim Town Manager Chris Rembold gave a brief update on the efforts of the Selectboard regarding the Town's possible acquisition of the Housatonic Water Works Company and the 2024 order of the Department of Public Utilities regarding the rate increase request of Housatonic Water Works. That order approved a settlement agreement between the company and the office of the Attorney General. The agreement contains several proposed capital improvements and related cost factors. One of the proposed improvements is the interconnection of the Great Barrington Fire District water system to the Housatonic Water Works system.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, and the DPU order, the interconnection project is subject to approval of the three towns who intervened in the rate case, Great Barrington, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge. Through Town Counsel and Interim Town Manager Rembold, the Selectboard has informed Housatonic Water Works of approval of the interconnection project. Stockbridge and West Stockbridge have also given their approval.

Although this project will involve a related water rate increase, it is the smallest of any of the increases included in the DPU order, a 7.33% increase over the rate for the preceding year. More important, the project will enhance public safety and fire protection by improving overall resources and water supply capacity for general water distribution and emergency purposes.

The Selectboard believes that the interconnection of the two systems will benefit Housatonic Water Works customers and Great Barrington Fire District customers. It will be an enhancement of the public water supply infrastructure serving the Town.

I want to point out that approval of the interconnection project shows that the Selectboard and the Town of Great Barrington are willing to work cooperatively with Housatonic Water Works Company when there is a reasonable and fair approach to issues and mutual benefit to all parties. What the Selectboard is not willing to do is agree to company proposals and positions that are not reasonable and fair for the community. The Selectboard will continue to advocate for rate relief for all customers of Housatonic Water Works, and for reasonable and practical solutions to the water supply needs and concerns of Great Barrington.

*For the Great Barrington Selectboard,
Stephen Bannon, Chair*