

For 8 years, we have asked Council to demonstrate some measure of accountability for years of failures of Water & Light and more specifically, the water utility. You have not done this now, or as a full Council in the past. The city manager has not done this. The utilities department directors have not done this.

We have asked for comprehensive changes to irrigation citywide. We have asked for projects funded by the 2018 water bond to be completed or in a longshot, just even started. We have asked for the utility to be good stewards of ratepayer revenue. We have asked for visionary leadership in the water utility that incorporates public input and acknowledges where things have gone wrong. We have asked for just one member of city leadership to be visible and vocal, recognizing the failures of the past and to provide a roadmap for the future. We have asked for transparency and accountability. We have asked for critical public infrastructure, that which protects our drinking water, to be more than a punchline in this city's inadequate attempt to provide necessary services.

We operate in a world of cause and effect.

When voters overwhelmingly support a water bond and then it takes 6 years to see any hint of execution, the effect is that voters will not support a future bond and will also speak out against water rate increases. Don't forget that bond was supported with our backs against the wall of what would happen if it didn't pass.

When you promote that bond with a specific timeline and structure of rate increases and then bait and switch 2 months after the bond is approved, the effect is that you make voters believe they've been had.

When you fail to follow mandated lead and copper testing protocols and have to be called out by a citizen advocacy group (us), the effect is that you lose all credibility with the public.

I've spoken before about our friends to the north, Hannibal, a community who pursued a petition initiative spurred by an advocacy group similar to ours. Voters approved stopping chloramine use in April 2017. By February of 2018, they had chosen their treatment alternative, GAC. They also voted on a water bond in August of 2018. They moved quickly and with intention. Their project sped along and under budget toward completion in March of 2020. Did they feel a greater sense of urgency since this was now required by the DNR? Perhaps. Did they raise rates over the

years? Yes. But they accomplished a significant upgrade to their infrastructure, something Columbia can't seem to do.

We have long advocated for incremental rate increases for operational expenses and appropriate increases to offset bond funding as long as they coincide with appropriate cost of service. The utility failed to implement operational increases FY13 through FY16. Why? Have you asked?

Not one member of city staff or elected leadership can accurately explain the cost of service to ratepayers and how rate increases align with that cost of service. You have allowed the utility to plan around drawing higher revenue in summer months even when proclaiming conservation.

This community is tired of excuses. That is all we get in Columbia. We are a population of over 128,000 people being managed like we're a town of 30,000 and sometimes, worse than that.

Rate increases matter and most of the time, they're warranted.  
This water utility deserves no new rate increases until there is a massive overhaul.  
And you are the only ones who can make that happen.

We deserve a vision.  
We deserve someone to stand up and take responsibility.  
We don't deserve having to fund the absence of true leadership.  
The water system is a crumbling pile of bricks. Anything that might be occurring now is too little, too late. It is only by luck that this community hasn't become a catastrophe like Flint, Michigan.

This city has not operated with leadership.  
It has operated out of cowardice, out of arrogance, out of woefully misguided priorities.

It is your responsibility to do what is right and hold the utility and city management accountable.

You cannot in good conscience approve a rate increase when this utility cannot maintain appropriate infrastructure or execute capital improvement plans efficiently and effectively.

Voters will remember your decision. We again endorse no confidence.  
We are asking for no new rate increases until pacifying the public stops.