

COMMISSIONERS
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SANDRA D. KENNEDY
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0000094801

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

March 23, 2009

ORIGINAL

To: Docket Control

RE: Far West Water & Sewer, Inc. - Customer Comments
Docket No. WS-03478A-08-0454

Please docket the attached 6 customer comments OPPOSING the above filed rate case.

Customer comments can be reviewed in E-docket under the above docket number.

Filed by: Utilities Division – Consumer Services

Arizona Corporation Commission
DOCKETED

MAR 24 2009

DOCKETED BY	<i>[Signature]</i>
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ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION
DOCKET CONTROL

2009 MAR 24 A 10:15

RECEIVED

WS-03478A-08,0454

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

UTILITY COMPLAINT FORM

Investigator: Al Amezcua

Phone: [REDACTED]

Fax: [REDACTED]

Priority: Respond Within Five Days

Opinion No. 2009 - 77541

Date: 3/16/2009

Complaint Description: 08A Rate Case Items - Opposed
N/A Not Applicable

Complaint By: **First:** Jessie **Last:** Sheltra

Account Name: Jessie Sheltra

Home: (000) 000-0000

Street: n/a

Work: (000) 000-0000

City: Yuma

CBR: [REDACTED]

State: AZ **Zip:** 00000

is: E-Mail

Utility Company: Far West Water & Sewer, Inc.

Division: Water

Contact Name: Roxanne Fiddes

Contact Phone: [REDACTED]

Nature of Complaint:

Docket # WS-03478A-08-0454

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 06, 2009 1:21 PM
To: Utilities Div - Mailbox
Subject: Farwest Water increase proposal, 2 votes for NO

To whom it may concern,

Please see the attachment noting that both my husband and I are completely against the proposed increase that has been requested by Farwest Water and Sewer in Yuma, Arizona. Docket # WS-03478A-08-0454.

For working families such as ours, we have a hard enough time paying the roughly \$50/\$60 a month for water and sewer, and to increase it as this proposal states, we would be even more financially distressed to the point of not been able to afford this essential product.

My understanding from the Farwest water site is they are claiming to need the money to pay for improvements. Any respectable company would have already set aside profits to plan for future necessary improvements related to their business operations and not be seeking to pass this financial burden onto it's customers.

Please do not allow this outrageous proposal to pass.

Thank you,
Marc and Jessie Sheltra
End of Complaint

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION
UTILITY COMPLAINT FORM

Utilities' Response:

Investigator's Comments and Disposition:

3/16/09 Letter emailed to Ms. Sheltra.

March 16, 2009

RE: FAR WEST WATER & SEWER, INC.

Dear Ms. Sheltra:

Your email regarding the Far West Water & Sewer, Inc ("Far West") rate case will be placed on file with the Docket Control Center of the Arizona Corporation Commission ("Commission") to be made part of the record. The Commission will consider your comments before a decision is rendered in the Far West application.

The concerns raised in letters received from customers will assist the Commission in the investigation and review of the rate application. The Commission's independent analysis of the utility and its rate request attempts to balance the interest of the utility and its customers.

Commission Staff is very sensitive to the burden that high utility rates can place on the consumer, and though constitutionally required to allow a fair return to the utility, does everything within its authority to protect the consumer.

Staff appreciates your comments and the interest taken on the proposed rate increase.

Sincerely,

Alfonso Amezcua
Public Utilities Consumer Analyst II
Utilities Division
End of Comments

Date Completed: 3/16/2009

Opinion No. 2009 - 77541

Arizona Corporation Commission Public Comment Form

Step 1

This form should be used for public comments pertaining to a specific pending case only. Please be sure to reference the appropriate docket number so your comments are filed in the docket promptly. Please use the Consumers Services Assistance Form for complaints, inquiries or general inquiries.

Step 2

YOUR NAME Mary Howard	DATE 3/20/2009
ADDRESS, CITY, STATE AND ZIP 14772 E. 50th St., Yuma, AZ 85367	YOUR PHONE NUMBER (208) 869-4225
DOCKET YOU WISH TO COMMENT ON: Rate Application of Far West Water & Sewer Company	DOCKET NUMBER WS-03478A-08-0454
CASE OR UTILITY NAME Far West Water & Sewer Company	YOUR POSITION ON THE DOCKET PRO <input type="radio"/> CON <input checked="" type="radio"/> OTHER <input type="radio"/>
YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS mqhoward@gmail.com	

Step 3

ENTER YOUR COMMENTS HERE:

Please see attached.

If you need additional space for your comments, please use the continuation page below.

Step 4

This form may be completed electronically, printed and mailed to:
 Arizona Corporation Commission, Consumer Services Section, 1200 W. Washington St.
 Phoenix, Arizona 85007;
 or

You may e-mail it as an attachment to:
mailmaster@azcc.gov

RE: Docket No. WS-03478A-08-0454
Docket No. WS-03478A-08-0608

I am writing to oppose both the emergency and permanent rate increase requested by Far West Water & Sewer under the above referenced docket numbers. An increase of this magnitude is unjustifiable by any stretch of the imagination. In its application for rate increase Far West states that it needs to increase rates to pay for upgrading existing facilities and provide for future expansion as well as earn an 8+% rate of return on their facilities. I would like to make the following comments regarding these issues.

Rick Stacks at Yuma County Development Services told me that in order to get permits to develop the Foothills properties H & S Development simply had to provide the county with a letter from Far West Water & Sewer that it could provide adequate water and sewer service to the properties. Not hard to do when ownership of both companies was intermingled. Far West either falsified those letters or did not build its treatment plants to the specifications necessary to adequately handle the volume it said it could accommodate. The resulting overload on the system and improperly treated sewage created an ongoing intolerable odor problem. Arizona Dept. of Environmental Quality finally investigated the problem and cited Far West with multiple violations. Now Far West is having to correct those violations which never should have occurred if the plants been correctly built for the volume it certified to the County that it could handle. There is plenty of blame to go around on this issue -- Far West for overstating its capability to the county and not building its plants to necessary specifications; Yuma County for not recognizing the inappropriateness of accepting certification from an entity (Far West) so closely tied to the land developer (H & S Development) without independent verification of adequacy; and Yuma County and/or Arizona DEQ for not properly inspecting treatment plant construction and operation. We trusted that government agencies and Far West would do their jobs professionally and provide us what was represented when we purchased -- an adequate and properly operating sewer system. However, as is all too common in this day and age, we seem to be left holding the bag and are now being asked to pay exorbitant rates to pay again for what we already paid for once in the price of our lot. Whatever expenses Far West has in bringing their facilities up to par should not be passed on to existing customers through rate increases. If they have inadequate resources and are forced into bankruptcy, then so be it. In no way is their problem our fault or our responsibility to correct. Perhaps bankruptcy would allow another competent private entity or county or state agency to step in and operate the system.

As far as the rate increase is requested to provide for facilities expansion to allow for future connections, I again object. Expansion of facilities for future growth should be paid for by impact fees assessed against the developer of new properties being added, not through rate increases paid by existing customers. Why are developers being allowed to continue to develop and sell lots in the Foothills when Far West is unable to adequately service the properties already online? As I write this letter today (3/20/09), there is still considerable sewer odor at the corner of Fortuna Rd. and South Frontage Road so their system is still not operating properly with the existing volume, let alone adding more.

I also object to Far West's rate structure in general. We own a lot on which we have two RV hookups. We currently pay \$21.75 a month for 12 months a year even though we occupy the lot only 4 months of the year. An RV park would currently pay \$10.88 a month for the same two RV hookups. How can that be considered equitable? Much of our area of the Foothills is occupied by part-time snowbirds, usually two-person households who are here 3 to 4 months of the year, yet we pay the same sewer charge as a family of 4 to 5 persons who are full-time residents. Again, how can this be equitable since

our impact on the system is much less than the larger family with full-time occupancy. Even the commercial rates seem out of order. A retail outlet or bank surely puts less waste into the system than a restaurant, laundromat or car wash. A fairer way to assess sewer fees would be metered service based on water useage. This would be easy for Far West to do since they also provide metered water service to the properties.

As far as the 8+% rate of return they are requesting, wouldn't we all like to have that kind of return? Unfortunately, that is not reality today. If they are able to make a 2 to 3% return in today's economy, I think they would be considered to be doing very well. Perhaps if they operated more efficiently and quit creating problems they later have to clean up, they could attain a reasonable 2 to 3% return with existing revenue.

I believe Far West has proven themselves incapable of properly operating a sewer system. It is also possible they have manipulated their financial statements to distort their ability to correct the problems they themselves caused and, instead, are looking to pass the burden on to existing customers. I respectfully request that you thoroughly investigate Far West's operations and finances as you consider this rate case and that you deny their request for both the emergency and permanent rate increases.

Arizona Corporation Commission Public Comment Form

Step 1

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Step 2

YOUR NAME Billie Wilson	DATE 03/18/2009
ADDRESS, CITY, STATE AND ZIP 14538 E 50th St. , Yuma, AZ 85367	YOUR PHONE NUMBER 928-257-9171
DOCKET YOU WISH TO COMMENT ON: Request for permanent rate increase	DOCKET NUMBER WS-03478A-08-0454
CASE OR UTILITY NAME Far West Water & Sewer	YOUR POSITION ON THE DOCKET PRO <input checked="" type="radio"/> CON <input type="radio"/> OTHER <input type="radio"/>
YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS rwbw35@adelphia	

Step 3

ENTER YOUR COMMENTS HERE:

I believe far west rate increase is in fact an injustice to the people of the foothills area. We are paying for residential \$21.75 per month. The monthly monies for this service seems adequate to cover the cost of sewer. I and many others have had major concerns that far west has continued year after year to connect new family dwellings and new subdivisions on an already taxed and inadequate sewer system. I find it outrageous that with our current economic crises and your of failure and/or neglect to update and/ or bring your services into compliance with the obvious growing demands in the foothills area, come at a time when our citizens must be very pro-active and voice our concerns on many current and future decisions to be made I can not see even a small increase.

If you need additional space for your comments, please use the continuation page below.

Step 4

This form may be completed electronically, printed and mailed to:
Arizona Corporation Commission, Consumer Services Section, 1200 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007;
or

You may e-mail it as an attachment to:
mailmaster@azcc.gov

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Bob & Rose Moodie
13400 E. 53rd Lane
Yuma, Az. 85367

Step 2

YOUR NAME <i>Robert & Rose Moodie</i>	DATE <i>3-20-09</i>
ADDRESS, CITY, STATE AND ZIP <i>13400 E 53rd Lane, Yuma AZ 85367</i>	YOUR PHONE NUMBER <i>928-305-2873</i>
DOCKET YOU WISH TO COMMENT ON: <i>WS 03478A - 08 - 608 Emergency rate</i>	DOCKET NUMBER
CASE OR UTILITY NAME <i>FAR WEST Water & Sewer Company</i>	YOUR POSITION ON THE DOCKET PRO <input type="radio"/> CON <input checked="" type="radio"/> OTHER <input type="radio"/> <i>increase</i>
YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS <i>moodiern@netscape.net</i>	

Step 3

ENTER YOUR COMMENTS HERE:

Far west wants an increase of 100% on an emergency basis. They have property they want to develop & want current users to pay for it. They have mismanaged this company for years while lining their pockets from their other companies including the land they own. I believe management should be thrown out. They have refused to meet the environment laws for years I assume they are asking for such an outrageous increase to get what they want. Knowing they will not get the full amt. What are other communities paying for sewer service I doubt if anyone is looking at rates increases this much.

If you need additional space for your comments, please use the continuation page below.

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Phoenix, Arizona 85007;
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Step 2

YOUR NAME <i>Sharalee Rogers</i>	DATE <i>3/17/09</i>
ADDRESS, CITY, STATE AND ZIP <i>1147 E. 25th pl. Yuma, AZ 85367</i>	YOUR PHONE NUMBER <i>(928) 344-6979</i>
DOCKET YOU WISH TO COMMENT ON: <i>Request for Permanent Rate Increase</i>	DOCKET NUMBER <i>WS-03478A-08-0454</i>
CASE OR UTILITY NAME <i>Far West Water & Sewer</i>	YOUR POSITION ON THE DOCKET PRO <input type="radio"/> CON <input type="radio"/> OTHER <input checked="" type="radio"/>
YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS <i>Speedracers2@juno.com</i>	

Step 3

ENTER YOUR COMMENTS HERE:

Far West Water & Sewer Co. (FWWS) customers protest the proposed rate hike. According to the joint news release from ADEQ and the Arizona Attorney General's Office, dated September 10, 2008, FWWS has had long standing violations. The neglect of their responsibility to construct and maintain their sewer system resulted in their present crisis. FWWS apparently cut corners to save money and the owners profited in the continued growth as they developed other business interests. This, combined with inadequate planning to maintain compliance with ADEQ regulations resulted in their self made crisis. Now that ADEQ has required them to bring all treatment sites up to standards, FWWS wants customers to pay for the mismanagement. Please deny the FWWS request for a rate hike. Any alleged financial hardship appears to be associated with poor management and greed and therefore, is not the responsibility of the customers.

If you need additional space for your comments, please use the continuation page below.

Step 4

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Arizona Corporation Commission, Consumer Services Section, 1200 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007;
or*

*You may e-mail it as an attachment to:
mailmaster@azcc.gov*

Lorraine & Kurt Ueeck
HC 60 Box 3560
Delta Junction, Alaska 99737

Commission of Utilities
Consumer Services Section
1200 W. Washington St.,
Phoenix, AZ 85007

March 19, 2009

Re: Docket No. WS-03478A -08-0454
Application for rate increase by Far West Water and Sewer Company

Far West Sewer Company currently back charges seasonal residents for ALL of the months between when the service was stopped and when it is started again. All winter residents are charged for the full year of service even though service was shut off for six months or more and no water or sewer services were used.

Enclosed are the copies of "first billing" for 2007 and for 2008. We only hook up seasonally and as you can see, we were back charged \$174.00 in 2007 which was increased to \$195.00 in 2008, this figures out to a \$3.50 per month increase for the six months the sewer service was not being used, though according to their billing, their monthly rate stayed the same. So, was this increase sanctioned or was it just slipped in under the table? . Both bills also have a \$25.00 charge for turning on the water..

I would like to make a formal protest in regards to the extreme rate increase requested by Far West Water and Sewer Company in Yuma.

Thank you for your response.

Sincerely,


Lorraine Ueeck

attachment: 1

turned on 12-29-08
 Will be turned off
 April 6, 09

turned on 12-28-07
 turned off 3-30-08

2008-9

2007-8

FAR WEST WATER & SEWER, INC.

13157 E. 44th ST. - YUMA, ARIZONA 85367
 PH. 928-342-1238 FAX 928-342-7108 TOLL FREE 866-342-1238

BILLING DATE	SERVICE ADDRESS	
02/13/2009	14804 E 51ST ST	
PRESENT READING	PREVIOUS READING	CONSUMPTION
58550	52680	5,870

02/03/2009	12/29/2008	
WATER BASE FEE		15.53
WATER USAGE FEE		9.61
SEWER FEE		21.75
ENVIRONMENT/MANDATES		0.00
WATER		0.04
TAXES		3.36
OTHER FEES		0.00
ESTABLISHMENT/RECONN		195.75
OTHER SERVICE CHARGES		25.00

Current Charges	271.04
Previous Balance	0.00
Amount Due	271.04

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION 1-800-222-7000	0000039594 ACCOUNT NUMBER	271.04 PLEASE PAY TO
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Due and payable 15 days from bill date. 1 1/2% per month (18% APR) finance charge on balances 30 days after bill date.

FAR WEST WATER & SEWER, INC.
 13157 E. 44th ST. - YUMA, ARIZONA 85367
 PH. 928-342-1238 FAX 928-342-7108 TOLL FREE 866-342-1238

BILLING DATE	SERVICE ADDRESS	
02/08/2008	14804 E 51ST ST	
PRESENT READING	PREVIOUS READING	CONSUMPTION
50060	49150	910

01/31/2008	12/28/2007	
WATER BASE FEE		15.53
WATER USAGE FEE		1.49
SEWER FEE		21.75
ENVIRONMENT/MANDATES		0.00
WATER		0.01
TAXES		2.82
OTHER FEES		0.00
ESTABLISHMENT/RECONN		174.00
OTHER SERVICE CHARGES		25.00

Current Charges	240.60
Previous Balance	0.00
Amount Due	240.60

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION 1-800-222-7000	0000039594 ACCOUNT NUMBER	240.60 PLEASE PAY TO
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Due and payable 15 days from bill date. 1 1/2% per month (18% APR) finance charge on balances 30 days after bill date.

First Bill 2009
 PD 2-25-09
 #1219

First bill 2008
 PD 2-13-08
 #1136