



For Immediate Release

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East Chicago Water Rate Case: OUCC Invites Public Comments

IURC Hearing Scheduled for March 6

If you would like to comment on the East Chicago Municipal Water rate case, you have the chance to do so.

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC), the state agency representing consumer interests in cases before the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC), is inviting written consumer comments for the official case record through mid-March. In addition, the IURC will hold a public field hearing in East Chicago on Mar. 6, 2023.

Written Consumer Comments

OUCC analysts and attorneys are reviewing the utility's testimony. The agency is scheduled to complete its review and file testimony on Mar. 29, 2023.

Public comments are invited in writing through Mar. 22, 2023. Consumers who wish to submit written comments for the case record may do so via the OUCC's website at www.in.gov/oucc/2361.htm, by email at uccinfo@oucc.IN.gov, or by mail at:

Public Comments
Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC)
115 W. Washington St., Suite 1500 SOUTH
Indianapolis, IN 46204

The OUCC needs to receive all written consumer comments **no later than Mar. 22, 2023**, so that it can: 1) Consider comments in preparing its testimony and 2) File them with the Commission to be included in the case's formal evidentiary record. Comments should include the consumer's **name, mailing address**, and a reference to either "**IURC Cause No. 45827**" or **East Chicago Water**. Consumers with questions about submitting written comments can contact the OUCC's consumer services staff toll-free at 1-888-441-2494.

Public Field Hearing

The IURC's public field hearing on the water utility's request is scheduled for Monday, Mar. 6, 2023, at East Chicago City Hall (4525 Indianapolis Blvd.). The hearing is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m., local time, in the Common Council Chambers and is statutorily required in this case.

The field hearing's sole purpose is to receive public testimony. No final decisions will be made at the hearing.

- Consumers can speak directly to the Commission under oath and on the record.
- Oral comments presented during the field hearing will become part of the case record. They will carry the same weight as written consumer comments submitted to the OUCC by March 22.
- Utilities do not make presentations or answer questions during field hearings. The focus, again, is on public input. In this case, East Chicago filed testimony and exhibits in December 2022.
- Commissioners are not allowed to answer questions about the case. They will ultimately render a decision after weighing evidence from the utility, the OUCC, and intervening parties.

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Case Overview

East Chicago is proposing a three-phase rate increase to be implemented through 2025. The utility's request would raise a monthly residential bill for 5,000 gallons from the current rate of \$18.66 to \$29.95 in September 2023, \$34.79 in September 2024, and \$40.39 in September of 2025.

The city is also requesting authority to issue up to \$26.62 million in long-term debt. According to its filing, the utility is seeking the changes due to increased operating and maintenance costs and the need to make major infrastructure replacements and repairs, including a new standpipe, lead service line replacements, and several water treatment plant improvements.

Only East Chicago's water rates are at issue in this case. The city's current water rates received IURC approval in 2017.

A group of the utility's industrial customers (including Cleveland-Cliffs Inc., Linde, and USG Corporation) has intervened in the case. Any testimony it files is due by Mar. 29, 2023.

A settlement agreement is possible in any legal proceeding. Such an agreement, if reached, would require IURC approval finding that the settlement terms are in the public interest.

The OUCC is posting case updates online at www.in.gov/oucc/watersewer/key-cases-by-utility/east-chicago-municipal-water/. Case updates are also available through the agency's monthly electronic newsletter. Consumers can subscribe at www.in.gov/oucc/news/.

(IURC Cause No. 45827)

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal bodies that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC's mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education, and creative problem solving.