

Bonny Davis – FaceBook post from May 13, 2023

I started investigating this issue back in 2015 when the Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township, Montgomery County, PA was looking into selling the Township's sewer system.

Long story short (but still going on), I did A LOT of research and brought it to the attention of the Board in September 2015. I told them that the sewer rental bills would increase by 200% to 400%. I explained other ways the Township could increase the Revenue from the sewer rental, but they did not agree with anything I said. The Board, the people who were paid to make sure we got a fair price, the representatives (lawyers) from Bucks County Water & Sewer, all laughed at me, shook their heads, rolled their eyes, and dismissed me summarily after 10 minutes of speaking so that others could have a turn. (No one else was waiting to speak) The residents of the Township who were attending the meeting applauded me.

At their meeting on December 9, 2015 (the last for two Commissioners who would not be returning to the Board in January), the Board voted 6-1 to sell the sewer system for \$16.5 million as of January 1, 2016. Commissioner Peter Wilson was the lone dissenting vote. The new owner promised to use the rate that had already been voted on by the Board for the 2016 budget.

However, they changed other things immediately, and when that promise ended, so did the low sewer rental bills. I wish I could say I was wrong but unfortunately, I was Nostradamus, and predicted the future very accurately. Bills went up. Some doubled, some tripled, some increased even more. 200-400% was pretty accurate.

But there was even more that I told the Board in September 2015. I told them the sale price was too low. Again, they didn't listen to me. I'm an Accountant and at the time I was the Tax Collector and Township's Treasurer. Did they trust my judgement and calculations? Nope. "results show that the average annual water bill is \$144 higher in the privately owned water systems than in the publicly owned water systems,"

So, after a few months of confusion, double billing, added late fees, and so many phone calls, emails, and nasty comments a lot of the residents asked if we could get the sewer system back. Nope.

Limerick sold its sewer system in 2018 for \$75.1 million.

When Upper Pottsgrove Township in Montgomery County hired a consultant to help decide whether to sell its sewer collection system. the consultant, Public Finance Management, offered to work for \$50,000 and 1.5 percent of the sale price, should the township commissioners decide to sell. The commissioners voted against the sale. In 2020, the township's board voted 4-1 to sell the system to Pennsylvania American for \$13.75 million in the wake of a series of public meetings run by PFM. Two years later, the PUC approved a 39.1% sewer rate hike for Pennsylvania American, even more than it had sought, and Upper Pottsgrove sewer customers saw the promise of slowly rising rates evaporate.

The city of Chester's sale of CWA to Essential Utilities, which also does business as Aqua America, is currently held up in court awaiting potential arguments before the state Supreme Court. Chester City Council, which has its own financial concerns, voted unanimously in September to approve a \$410 million sale to Aqua. The CWA and residents opposed the sale and filed an appeal with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. A request for comment from Essential Utilities' press office went unanswered. In December 2022, residents of Towamencin opposed the \$115 million sale of their sewer system and are rewriting their town's charter to ban the transfer of assets to private owners.

<https://www.inquirer.com/.../pennsylvania-water-sewer...>

Then in 2022, BCWSA proposed a \$1.1 billion sale of its sewer system to Aqua Pennsylvania. It was called off - for now. Who knows when it might be resurrected? Essential Utilities' Aqua Pennsylvania Agrees to Purchase Greenville Wastewater System for \$18 Million.

This is the link if you want to try that first.

<https://www.mcall.com/.../pa-seeing-feeding-frenzy-of.../...>

If this link does not work, I will post the entire article for free because I had to pay \$3 to read the article.

If you've read this far, you might be wondering why I am bringing this issue up again. Well, yes there is this recent article. But, also, I had never heard of Essential Utilities before.

I wondered where I had heard that name before. Oh yes, on the campaign finance report of one of our candidates running for Montgomery County Commissioner.

It was only \$1000 but this is only the Primary. IF that candidate wins the Primary and runs in the fall, how much more \$\$ will Essential Utilities put towards her election?

That scares me, and it should scare you. Who funds campaigns for fun? No one. The bigger the money, the bigger the favor one expects when the candidate they funded takes office.

Vote for the grass roots, candidates. Those that get most of their funding from people like you and me.