Bill No.: HB-5014
Title: AN ACT REQUIRING THE PROVISION OF NOTICE TO CERTAIN PUBLIC OFFICIALS WHEN AN APPLICATION IS MADE FOR A CHANGE OF CONTROL OF A WATER COMPANY.
Vote Date: 3/12/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/19/2019
File No.: 140

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Energy and Technology Committee

CO - SPONSORS OF BILL:

REASONS FOR BILL:
To require a single person or individual who submits an application to the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority when a change arises pertaining to the control of a water company to provide a notice to certain public officials that contains specific information regarding officials within the service territory of such water company, each legislator whose district lies in whole or part of such service territory, the docket number assigned to the application by the authority, a statement listing public school officials within the service territory. The bill seeks to add additional transparency and keep the public and public officials in the know when water companies change leadership structures.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
John W. Betkoski, Acting Chairman, State of Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA): PURA believes legislators, ratepayers and, and members of the public should be notified of any change in ownership or leadership regarding a water company, permitting hearings to be held allowing the opinions of the people to be heard on the matter. PURA thinks that the application for 30-day notification period should include critical information including the public hearing schedule, data for the public to learn the expected change in rate to the customer, and will call for more than one form of notification to be sent to customers.
Elin Katz – Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC): The OCC supports the bill which will notify municipal leaders and government officials of water company transactions within their district. This notification will allow public hearings to be organized to listen to the opinions of the public. The OCC also believes that customers need to be aware of any merger or change to the system regarding their water provider as well. OCC feels a 30-day notice from the date of application submission will allow any government or interested parties enough time to submit statements with PURA on the proposal given to PURA by the water companies.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Elizabeth Gara – CT Water Works Association (CWWA): CWWA would like the bill language to be expanded to include a customer notification of the water company being acquired as well as the situation of the existing system to prevent any legal issues and provide a more definite description of the transaction. CWWA would like to modify the language to ensure the notification comes within 30 days of the application regarding the sale, permitting public hearings to take place to allow public opinion to be heard.

Margaret Miner – Rivers Alliance of CT: The River Alliance feels there needs to be more transparency to residents and customers regarding transactions of water companies. River Alliance believes the public needs to know what is happening in their towns and particularly when it comes to the mergers and acquisitions of water companies that impact them directly. They support that this bill might provide crucial information regarding changes in leadership. Local businesses also have an interest in making the transactions public knowledge to understand how if rate changes will affect the way their company operates.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Water (CT Water): CT Water is concerned with confusion on legal issues regarding time-related transaction requests if the applications are time sensitive to the scheduled merger, acquisition, or change to the corporate structure. CT Water feels a notification would allow proper time for testimony to be submitted to PURA. The current procedure is to notify State, and local officials who represent towns serviced by water companies on proposals but a formal required notice would detail the full transaction would be more appropriate. CT water believes. They hope they have the opportunity to provide advice and assistance in the final language of the bill.

Reported by: Ethan J. Meskill Date: 3/25/19