

INDEPENDENT CONSUMER ADVOCATE

Quarterly Report July 1-Sept. 30, 2020

As the impact of the pandemic lessened, there was increased activity for the Independent Consumer Advocate to address.

INDIVIDUAL CONSUMER ISSUES

There were approximately five new individual customer issues raised. Two of these represented more than one customer. The issues included high bills, high water pressure, questions regarding the CWPC, and metering questions. Questions were also raised by current and former customers concerning the impact of the Glastonbury settlement for these particular customers. The ICA researched how those customers would receive their share of the settlement.

PANDEMIC ISSUES

The MDC had adopted a policy of no terminations and no interest charged on overdue bills. This policy underwent certain changes during this quarter. The ICA tracked these changes to ensure compliance with Executive Orders and to protect MDC consumers.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

In reviewing the monthly CEO report, it appeared that the abandoned call rate experienced by the MDC was in excess of 5% of all calls received. This exceeded the generally accepted standard for abandoned calls. It means that over 5% of customers who contacted the MDC were unsuccessful in making contact. The ICA raised this question and subsequently the MDC revised how it reported its abandoned calls. It separated those that were abandoned by the caller in under a minute and others. This clarification is important in that it permits an objective review of the level of customer service which customers are experiencing. While it is not reasonable for every call to be immediately answered, a high percentage (greater than 5%) of calls abandoned after more than a minute on hold, indicates substandard service. This metric is now within appropriate standards.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

The ICA reviewed the outside audit in detail since it provides an independent view of the state of MDC financial status. It also provides certain information which, while not generally discussed, provide important data. For example, the audit indicated the level of activity in the Rate Stabilization Fund associated with the CWP over the audit period including beginning and ending balances. The ICA also began its review of the preliminary numbers for the 2021 budget for both water and sewer.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS

During the quarter, a group at Yale University issued a report on the CWP. That report raised several issues regarding that project and the role of the ICA. The ICA provided comments on that study. Most importantly, the study raised questions regarding the lack of availability of information about this project in Spanish. That matter was raised with the MDC and it appears it is being addressed.

The ICA also arranged for and held its statutorily required consumer meeting. This meeting was delayed somewhat due to a delay in noticing it on customer bills. The meeting was held in person and by phone. Only 3 consumers participated.

Finally, the ICA reviewed the changes to the MDC website which, in the view of the ICA, were effective in making the website more customer friendly.

Respectfully Submitted

Independent Consumer Advocate

By David Silverstone