

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

1. Please Attend the APRIL 5th and 19th City Council meeting

Bring friends and neighbors. Guarantee that councilors are aware of your concerns. City Council meetings take place at City Council Chambers at City Hall. Meetings start at 7:30 p.m.

2. Join us in encouraging the following city councilors to vote NO on funding the Aquarion contract

Tell them you want the city to retain an *independent* engineering consultant to develop an alternative bid for a municipally run plant. Ask them to keep control of Holyoke's waste water treatment plant local. Encourage them to keep control of sewer rates local, and to find viable alternatives to cleaning up the Connecticut River.

R. Feyre (at large) **536-6638**

J. Leahy (at large) **535-3353**

J. McGivern (at large) **536-6557**

J. Lecca (ward 4) **533-7737**

J. McDermott (at large) **536-7844**

D. Lopez (ward 2) **532-4496**

J. Brunelle (ward 5) **532-0627**

M. Joyce (ward 7) **536-1097**

For more information on this issue
www.water.homestead.com
www.holyokehealth.info/water/

To read the proposed contract go to
www.holyoke.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A CSO?

A Combined Sewer Overflow occurs when the volume of rainwater and sanitary wastewater exceeds the combined sewer system's capacity. Untreated sewage flows into the river through CSO out falls

WON'T THE EPA FINE HOLYOKE?

No. The EPA permits the city to "notify" them of its inability to comply on time with the reasons and "an approximate date" when the city will "perform the required action," in the same written order to Holyoke to begin improvements to the Berkshire Street CSO by July 1, 2005,

HOW MANY COMPANIES SUBMITTED BIDS FOR THIS PROJECT?

One. State and national professional standards require at least more than one bid for large public works projects.

WAS THERE A PROPOSAL FOR A CITY RUN PLANT?

No. City documents reveal that consultants were hired to choose ONLY a private company to do the work. In fact, the City Council voted 14-1 in favor of an independent study to determine the costs of the city doing the project itself, but the mayor vetoed it.

IS HOLYOKE CITIZENS FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT ANTI-PRIVATIZATION?

No. We support the best option for ratepayers and the river. The Aquarion contract is bad for the city, DPW workers, and citizens.

WON'T SEWER RATES GO UP EITHER WAY?

Yes. But if the Aquarion contract is signed, rates are set to go from \$1.95 to \$5.00 and beyond. Preliminary analysis by Holyoke City Councilors suggests that a municipally managed project could be funded by lower rates. An increase is necessary, but the Aquarion rate structure is too high.

Holyoke Citizens For Open Government
99 Martin St.
Holyoke, MA 01040

INSIDE: STEPS TO REASONABLE CITY SEWER RATES
PARA UNA VERSIÓN ESPAÑOL: 536-5560 O VAYA A www.eldialogo.com

Dear Neighbors,

Holyoke Citizens for Open Government (HCOG) is a diverse group of non-partisan, Holyoke volunteers. We are working to encourage open discussion in the City Government about options for Holyoke's wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and combined sewer overflow (CSO) problems.

As you know, Mayor Sullivan is about to sign a \$176 million contract with Aquarion, a private company, due to concerns about fines from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Here are some of the reasons that HCOG is concerned about the contract with Aquarion:

- ***There has been no *independent* study and proposal for a city-operated waste water treatment plant to compare to**
- ***There was only one bid for this project**
- ***Hidden costs are not counted**
- ***The contract does not fix 11 of the 15 Combined Sewer Overflows**
- ***Once the contract is signed, the city is committed to Aquarion for 20 years**
- ***The city has not explored cost-cutting options that could be implemented now**
- ***DPW workers do not support the plan, contrary to Union leadership**
- ***Sewer rates will increase from \$1.95 to over \$5, averaging up to a \$300 increase per household, per year**

This is a major decision that will have a lasting effect on the community, the Connecticut River, and democracy in our city. Please read the enclosed information and consider joining us in supporting municipal control of our city's critical services.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Smith
On behalf of all members of HCOG



WE HAVE MANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE CONTRACT WITH AQUARION

* The cost is NOT fixed. There are many cost escalators, contingencies, and add-ons built into the Aquarion contract. Sewer rates would continue to increase. Aquarion is guaranteed cost-of-living increases based on inflation. The City of Holyoke is still legally responsible for paying for many "uncontrolled circumstances." Thus, if EPA guidelines are strengthened, the city, not Aquarion must pay for any upgrades. Likewise, if what is considered "prudent engineering" changes, the city must pay for the required upgrades. The city must also pay for all undefined "major changes" as well as all pipe replacement over \$100,000 annually.

* Once this \$176 million contract is signed, the city is subject to 20 years of rate hikes. It would cost \$3 - \$9 million to get out of the contract. The fact that Aquarion was the only company to bid on the project also raises concerns.

* No TRUE optimization study was done to see how much it would cost the city to do the project itself using the most efficient methods. Holyoke did not develop an alternative. City councilors have asked the DPW for an engineering & cost study to see if the city could do it cheaper than Aquarion, and pass the savings to rate payers.

* The city has not explored many cost-cutting options that could be implemented NOW. These include using cheaper chemicals at the Waste Water Treatment Plant (chemicals which are used by Springfield and Chicopee) or developing a bulk-buying cooperative with neighboring cities to buy supplies more cheaply. Other cost-cutting measures, such as In-Pipe Technology, have also been suggested.

* There is clear evidence that HDR, the consultants hired by the city, overstated the cost of a city-run alternative in order to justify an alleged benefit. They also excluded the costs of hiring an administrator for the contract, which is essential to holding Aquarion accountable to the contract. Since the consultants' contracts limited them to developing a privatization proposal and negotiating a privatization contract, they never compared an efficient municipally-run operation with a privatization option.

* Why isn't the Mayor lobbying the federal government? Many Holyoke residents are on fixed incomes. Federal law authorizes a 55% match for distressed communities. Holyoke has not launched a serious, vocal campaign to obtain more federal funding. Instead, the Mayor has lobbied before Congress on behalf of a pro-privatization group, the Urban Water Council.

