

Letters to the Editors



It's time to rethink buying water utility

If we'd known then what we know now, we would have made sure Mayor John Kinsey was successful in his bid for public ownership of the water company. It certainly seems as if the time has come for us to reconsider that option.

The people of Felton, Calif., won a bid to buy back their water district from Cal-Am, Tennessee-American's sister company and will drop rates by 30 percent. It may cost us to do it, but it probably won't cost any more than the company's continued double-digit increases, and the benefits will far outweigh the expense.

I'm not opposed to allowing companies to make a profit, but there is a limit when the business holds the public interest in its hands. Typically, we can go elsewhere to do business if we're not happy with a company's prices. But because Tennessee-American has a monopoly on the system, we don't have the option of shopping for less expensive water.

If you believe that water is a right — like the air we breathe, then we should urge our elected officials to ensure access to affordable water by regaining control of our water.

JEANNETTE CUTRER

Water company should cut costs

As president of the Chattanooga Manufacturers Association, I can tell you that many of the 280 members we represent are very concerned about the 20.6 percent rate increase requested by the Tennessee-American Water Co. All of TAWC's customers should be concerned about this increase and the pattern of requesting larger and larger rate increases at decreasing intervals.

Just over a year ago TAWC received a 12.3 percent increase, a large portion of the 19.7 percent requested. Approval of this request would give TAWC a rate increase of 35 percent in about a year. If approved, it would also mean that TAWC has increased its rates 45 percent since August 2003.

It would appear that it is time to correct the out-of-balance condition that exists between the interests of ratepayers and the TAWC shareholders. Breaking the pattern of granting larger and larger increases at more frequent intervals would be a good place to start. Perhaps it would help if TAWC were introduced to some of the principles of lean manufacturing practiced by many of their customers. It might also learn that cost reductions can have the same effect on the bottom line as revenue increases.

RAY CHILDERS

Chattanooga Manufacturers
Association