

Statement from Bucks County Commissioner Chair Bob Harvie:

For the past several months, there have been many questions and much concern about the possibility that part of the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority will be sold to a private company. We have heard those concerns from our residents and from elected officials throughout the county, and we thank them for being advocates for our county.

There are some advantages private companies have over public utilities, just as there are areas where public utilities have advantages over private companies. The Authority's Board members have been exploring the possibility of a sale because they take seriously their responsibility to do what is in the best interests of their customers. The Authority has been acting as they should, asking questions, exploring options, weighing the benefits and costs. I respect their professionalism and their efforts to be transparent through this process.

The purchase of public utilities by private companies has accelerated in recent years and while we don't yet know what the long-term effects of these purchases will be, we do know that they have led to increased costs for customers.

Because neither the Commissioners nor our staff have been part of the negotiations, the County had many questions we needed answered. We sent about 50 questions to the BCWSA and posted them publicly. The Authority promptly answered those questions for us, and their answers were also made public. Speaking for myself, the answers we received did give me more clarity on this issue, but also raised some additional questions.

While I see much potential in adding an estimated billion dollars to the County treasury, I cannot say that I feel comfortable with this transaction. I did speak with the Chair of the Authority to ask that he and the rest of the Board stop any negotiations and not sell any of the BCWSA operations. As a Bucks County Commissioner, I don't have a direct vote on whether or not a sale should happen, but I and the other Commissioners do have the power to change the charter of the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority.

Following my conversation with the Chairman of the Authority I believe the board of the BCWSA will do what is necessary to end discussions with Aqua, Inc.