

**Statement from Commissioner Vice Chair Diane Ellis-Marseglia:**

Today, I am calling on the Bucks County Water & Sewer Authority to end consideration of its proposed sale to Aqua, Inc. I have carefully reviewed all information available regarding this sale and cannot recommend that the BCWSA continue to entertain Aqua, Inc.'s proposal.

I greatly appreciate the diligent work of the BCWSA, its board and staff in vetting this proposal and maintaining transparency with the public by holding town halls, public meetings, and responding promptly to the Commissioners' concerns and questions. When \$1.1 billion was offered, BCWSA, whose systems may face over \$250 million in upcoming repairs, had a fiduciary responsibility to thoroughly research the proposal and listen to feedback from the public, weighing pros and cons.

While the financial aspect of this deal is a reasonable alternative given the expensive infrastructure work ahead, what we heard from the public was clear, nonpartisan, and near-universal: do not sell off the publicly-run BCWSA sewer system to a private entity. Fear of ballooning rates, as evidenced by similar takeovers around the country, and loss of a well-managed, highly-regarded public utility topped the feedback I have received.

Granted, the Commissioners do not have the power to approve or deny any such sale – that responsibility rests with the independent BCWSA – we can only advocate a position on behalf of Bucks County residents. That said, the Commissioners do appoint the BCWSA board and reserve the power to dissolve the authority entirely, and I trust that the members of the BCWSA will do what's in the best interest of the ratepayers.

To be clear, this doesn't get us out of the woods. Harsh realities do await in the form of the aforementioned system repairs, an issue that will eventually face ratepayers. But I believe we can find solutions to those issues without involving the sale of one of our public institutions to a private corporation, under which we'd no longer have any oversight.