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June 16, 2023

Dear Neighbors,

On Wednesday, June 14, 2023, the Town Council voted to approve a 15% step increase to our water and wastewater rates for the upcoming 2024 Fiscal Year.

The new rates will take effect July 1 and the first bills with the new rates applied will be mailed the first week of September. The Council decided to spread the necessary rate increase across two years to smooth the impact on household budgets. Another 15% rate increase is currently forecast as necessary for next year. Rates will continue to be reviewed every year, and as circumstances change so will the rates.

These new rates will allow the Town to float new debt required to build several critical infrastructure projects, most importantly a second water tank for our main zone, as well as a complete rebuild of the Town's oldest water treatment plant. The new rates also provide for the construction of a major new well behind Kedleston Court, and the purchase/installation of new tertiary filters for our wastewater plant. They also help fund many other smaller, but essential projects including: safety improvements for several well vaults and lift stations, new water meter readers and software, replacements for dozens of inoperable water valves, relining of our wastewater reactor basins and even a backhoe for small improvement projects/emergencies.

Many other important projects that were recommended by the Town Engineer, the Utility Staff, and the Town Manager were cut just to make room in the budget for these highest-priority items. The foregone projects include addressing high system pressure and chlorine treatment in Stoneleigh, a new water plant to treat the last unfiltered well in our main zone to improve water quality, refurbishing one of our lift stations, finding future water sources, rehabilitating existing wells, improving the daily working conditions of our utility staff with a dedicated office building, and several other long term capital projects.

That is a long list of important projects we have been compelled to delay indefinitely in order to minimize the impact of any rate increase, but this Town Council would not ignore the overall need to invest in our utility system, so we all have safe and reliable drinking water and environmentally

sound wastewater treatment for Round Hill. We are very focused on what we believe are the most critical projects.

Over the past 15 years, we have only raised rates cumulatively a total of 12% (an average of 0.8% per year since 2008). We have held the line on rate increases for far longer than may have been fiscally prudent from human nature and the inertia of getting major projects built. For example, the second water tank was originally supposed to be built in 2019 (the site was acquired in 2014).

Raising rates by 15% in a single year was a very difficult decision by the Town Council, and we appreciate all the comments and especially the time taken by those involved to participate in the public hearing. We will continue to study ways and investigate options to bring in outside funding from county, state, and federal agencies and when we succeed, we can reexamine future rate adjustments.

One major result for the Town Council from all the public comments will be a renewed emphasis on better communication with our customers as well as better education and outreach about how customers can help manage their own water bills. We can do a better job of helping customers understand their own usage and provide them with the they need to reduce their own bills. One of the projects that is funded by the rate increase is an updated water meter reading system that is projected to allow Town staff to read meters daily and provide more detailed reporting to our customers to identify water leaks and other unintended use.

I will close this letter by repeating my desire that all our customers one day be able to pay the same water rates. I strongly believe that Round Hill is one community, and our Town government needs to represent the voices of everyone in that community. Finding the best way to adjust our boundaries will be my personal focus for the coming year and I welcome any support or suggestions from those both in-town and out-of-town as I pursue that goal.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Ramsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Scott Ramsey

Mayor, Town of Round Hill