



Agenda Date: 5/21/25

Agenda Item: 7A

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**Board of Public Utilities**  
44 South Clinton Avenue, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Post Office Box 350  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350  
[www.nj.gov/bpu/](http://www.nj.gov/bpu/)

CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF NEW JERSEY-	)	ORDER
AMERICAN WATER COMPANY, INC. FOR APPROVAL	)	
TO CLOSE AN OFFICE IN THE TOWNSHIP OF HAZLET,	)	
COUNTY OF MONMOUTH, STATE OF NEW JERSEY	)	
FOR CUSTOMER TRANSACTIONS PURSUANT TO	)	
N.J.A.C. 14:18-5.1 AND N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e)	)	DOCKET NO. WO24110858

**Parties of Record:**

**Stephen R. Bishop, Esq.,** New Jersey-American Water Company, Inc.  
**Brian O. Lipman, Esq., Director,** New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel

**BY THE BOARD:**

On November 25, 2024, New Jersey-American Water Company, Inc. ("NJAWC" or "Company") filed a petition with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("Board"), pursuant to N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e), seeking authorization to close its office located at 1709 Union Avenue in the Township of Hazlet ("Union Avenue Office") for customer transactions ("Petition").

**BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On November 2, 2016, American Water Works Company, Inc. ("American Water"), Shorelands Water Company, Inc. ("Shorelands"), and NJAWC filed a joint petition with the Board requesting authorization for American Water to acquire control of Shorelands ("November 2016 Petition"). The November 2016 Petition also included a request for Board approval to close the Union Avenue Office. By Order dated March 24, 2017, the Board approved a stipulation of settlement in that matter which required that the request to close the Union Avenue Office be withdrawn without prejudice.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In re the Joint Petition of American Water Works Company, Inc.; New Jersey-American Water Company, Inc.; and Shorelands Water Company, Inc. for: (1) American Water Works Company, Inc. to Acquire Control of Shorelands Water Company, Inc.; (2) for Shorelands Water Company, Inc. to Transfer upon its Books and All of its Capital Stock to American Water Works Company, Inc.; (3) Shortly Thereafter, for Shorelands Water Company, Inc. to be Merged into New Jersey-American Water Company, Inc.; and (4) for Such Other Approvals as May be Necessary to Complete the Proposed Transaction, BPU Docket No. WM16101036, Order dated March 24, 2017.

By the Petition, NJAWC renews the request to close the Union Avenue Office for customer transactions and to remove the customer payment drop box. According to the Company, transactions at the Union Avenue Office have been limited to the collection of payments via drop box located outside the building since 2021. The Petition indicated that there has been a steady decline in use of the drop box since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the Company noted that customer complaints and service inquiries can be addressed via phone or on the Company's website. As such, the Company asserted that closing the Union Avenue Office to customer transactions is not unreasonable and will not unduly prejudice public interest.

By the Petition, NJAWC also indicated that, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e)(2), the Company served notice of the Petition upon its customers and the municipal clerks of the affected municipalities, including notification of alternative payment locations. The Company additionally indicated that it would publish such notice in a newspaper serving the affected area within three (3) days of filing the Petition.

By letter dated February 12, 2025, the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel ("Rate Counsel") indicated that it did not object to Board approval of the Petition, provided that the Company has satisfied the notice requirements of N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e). Further, Rate Counsel recommended that the Board require the Company to continue allowing customers to make bill payments at United Check Cashing locations with no fee.<sup>2</sup>

By letter dated February 21, 2025, the Company indicated that, due to a new vendor contract for authorized payment locations, there would be no alternative payment locations available within the Township of Hazlet effective March 31, 2025 ("February 2025 Letter"). By its February 2025 Letter, NJAWC provided a list of alternative payment locations within the Township of Hazlet that will be available to customers between the second and third quarters of 2025. As a result, the Company indicated that it would be amenable to keeping the Union Avenue Office drop box open until alternative payment locations become available within the Township of Hazlet. The Company stated that multiple locations will be available within Hazlet by the end of the third quarter of 2025.

By letter dated February 25, 2025, Rate Counsel indicated that it did not object to the Company's intention to keep the Union Avenue Office open until the alternative location issue is resolved, conditioned upon the Company keeping the Board and Rate Counsel informed about any action it takes regarding the matter.

Board Staff has not received any comments, other than those filed by Rate Counsel, concerning the closure of the Union Avenue Office.

## **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

After careful review of the entire record in this matter, including the comments filed by Rate Counsel, the Board **HEREBY FINDS** that closure of the Union Avenue Office is not unreasonable and will not unduly prejudice the public interest, and that NJAWC has complied with the requirements of N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e), including the relevant notice requirements. However, because the closure of the Union Avenue Office would leave no other payment locations available within the Township of Hazlet, the Board **HEREBY FINDS** that it is appropriate for NJAWC to keep the Union Avenue Office open until alternative payment locations are established pursuant to

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<sup>2</sup> In its Petition, NJAWC noted six (6) alternative customer payment locations in or near the Township of Hazlet, including a United Check Cashing location one-and-a-half (1.5) miles from the Union Avenue Office.

NJAWC's new vendor contract.


Therefore, based on the foregoing, the Board **HEREBY APPROVES** the closure of the Union Avenue Office, subject to the following conditions:

1. NJAWC shall keep its Union Avenue Office open until an alternative payment location within the Township of Hazlet becomes available for customer transactions. NJAWC shall provide notice to the Board and Rate Counsel of the closure and availability of alternative payment locations no less than seven (7) days before closing the Union Avenue Office drop box.
2. Prior to closing the Union Avenue Office, NJAWC shall post notice of the closure at the Union Avenue Office, including notification of accurate alternative payment locations.
3. This Order shall not be construed as directly or indirectly fixing for any purposes whatsoever the value of any tangible or intangible assets now owned or hereafter to be owned by the Company.
4. This Order shall not affect nor limit in any way the exercise of authority of this Board or of this State, in any future petition or in any proceedings with respect to rates, franchises, service, financing, accounting, capitalization, depreciation or any other matter affecting the Company, including any request that may be made to recover costs associated with this closure.

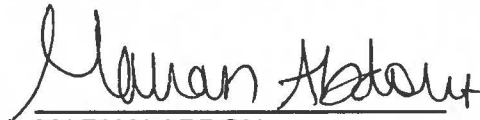
The effective date of this Order is May 28, 2025.

DATED: May 21, 2025

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES  
BY:

  
CHRISTINE GUHL-SADOVY  
PRESIDENT

  
DR. ZENON CHRISTODOULOU  
COMMISSIONER

  
MARIAN ABDOU  
COMMISSIONER

  
MICHAEL BANGE  
COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:

  
SHERRI L. LEWIS  
BOARD SECRETARY

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the within  
document is a true copy of the original  
in the files of the Board of Public Utilities.

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF NEW JERSEY-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY, INC. FOR  
APPROVAL TO CLOSE AN OFFICE IN THE TOWNSHIP OF HAZLET, COUNTY OF MONMOUTH FOR  
CUSTOMER TRANSACTIONS PURSUANT TO N.J.A.C. 14:18-5.1 AND N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(E)

BPU DOCKET NO. WO24110858

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