

**City of Providence**  
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

# RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

*No. 68*

**EFFECTIVE February 13, 2017**

WHEREAS, Water is a precious and limited resource that is necessary for sustaining human life, not simply a utility of commodity; and

WHEREAS, The City of Providence's history is intimately linked to the local water supply, as Roger Williams decided to settle on the east bank of the Providence River because a natural spring was located nearby; and

WHEREAS, Recent events have brought attention to issues surrounding the regulation and sale of water as a public utility; and

WHEREAS, Providence Water is a division of the City of Providence, created in 1915 by an act of the General Assembly, that provides water to approximately two-thirds of Rhode Islanders; and

WHEREAS, Providence Water provides water to nine wholesalers, including institutions, such as Bristol Water, Lincoln Water, and the Kent County Water Authority, and municipalities, such as the City of Warwick and the Town of Johnston; and

WHEREAS, Providence Water is heavily regulated, with its revenue regulated by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), its discharge regulated by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), and its drinking water regulated by the Department of Health (DOH) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and

WHEREAS, This complex regulatory framework places limits on how Providence Water operates and how much revenue it can receive from the sale of water; and

WHEREAS, While Providence Water is heavily regulated, many of the wholesalers it provides water to, including the Town of Johnston, are unregulated, allowing them to resell water provided by Providence Water at a much higher price than Providence is permitted to charge; and

WHEREAS, On January 10, 2017, the Town of Johnston approved a 20-year contract selling water to a private company that is seeking to open a power plant in Burrillville; and

WHEREAS, By State statute, the amount of water the Town of Johnston is allowed to purchase from Providence Water is based on the number of people living in the town yet, under this agreement, this water will not be used by Johnston residents, but by a private company not even located in Johnston; and

WHEREAS, Such a use seemingly runs contrary to both the intent of the State statute and the goal of establishing safe, clean, potable water for the residents and families of Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, On January 25, 2017, representatives of Providence Water and the City Solicitor explained to the Special Committee on Municipal Operations and Oversight that agreements such as the one recently approved by Johnston were unforeseen when Providence Water was established more than a century ago and, absent a change in State law, neither Providence Water nor the City of Providence, by all indications, have authority to prevent or modify any such sales.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence recognizes that water is a scarce and precious resource vital to sustaining life.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence does hereby request that the Chairman and General Manager of the Providence Water Supply Board provide the City Council with a report reviewing and explaining, with specificity, the regulatory structure and operations of the Water Supply Board.

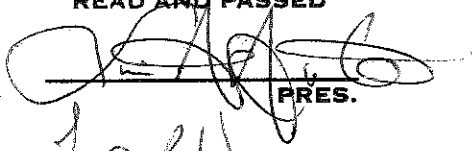
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence does hereby urge the Rhode Island General Assembly to enact legislation restricting the resale of excess publicly provided potable water by municipalities.

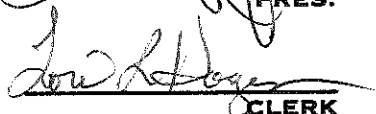
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That, upon passage, copies of this resolution be sent to the General Manager and the Chairman of the Providence Water Supply Board, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the entire Providence delegation to the General Assembly.

**IN CITY COUNCIL**

**FEB 02 2017**

**READ AND PASSED**

  
**PRES.**

  
**CLERK**

Effective without the  
Mayor's Signature

  
**Lori L. Hagen**  
**City Clerk**