



17 March 2021

Board of Water Commissioners
Detroit Water & Sewage Department
735 Randolph Street Building 1st floor
Detroit, MI 48226

To the Board of Water Commissioners of the Detroit Water & Sewage Department:

For residents to be fully involved, and for researchers and journalists to have easy access to information necessary to do their work, the Detroit Water & Sewerage Department (DWSD) needs to be as transparent as possible. Unfortunately, DWSD has been moving in the opposite direction, disclosing less information, not more, in what appears to be a deliberate attempt to deprive the public of vital “metrics”.

At this point, even the most basic information is inaccessible. I challenge any of you to go online to the DWSD website and find a monthly Director’s Report produced within the last three years using the search function. You can’t do it. The most recent Director’s Report posted in the area designated for them to appear online is November 2017.

The older reports, however, are illuminating because they provide a clear indicator of how much information, for no apparent reason, DWSD has *stopped* providing, keeping the public entirely in the dark. Previously, DWSD provided monthly “metrics” detailing, among other things, the number of customers involved in payment plans, how many customers were more than 60 days in arrears, the number of accounts where water service has been shut off, and the number of households receiving assistance from the WRAP program.

None of that information is currently being reported.

That is unacceptable.

I am here today to ask that the Board of Water Commissioners act immediately to address this situation and demand that DWSD leadership begin providing the following information in the monthly Director’s Report:

1. Total number of residential and commercial customers.
2. Number of shutoffs, if any. We understand there is currently a moratorium on shutoffs, but it would be reassuring to have the fact that no shutoffs have occurred reported on a monthly basis.

3. Number of customers eligible for disconnection but avoided disconnection because of a moratorium.
4. Number of customers who have had service restored.
5. Amount of time between shutoff and service restoration.
6. Number of customers still without water service.
7. Debt – Number of customers in arrears, total amount of arrears, the average amount of arrears, and the number of accounts and dollar amount of arrears by bands of age of arrearages.
8. Assistance and debt plans – Enrollment and utilization statistics for any customer assistance program, deferred payment plan, arrears management programs and any assistance and affordability programs.
9. Monthly accounting of current funds available in WRAP and any other assistance programs.
10. Excel: The data should be compiled in an excel workbook and published on the Board website for public review.
11. Geographic information: It must be broken down by zip code or census tract so that disparate racial and socioeconomic impacts can be analyzed and to better aid local aid providers in outreach to affected populations.
12. Dates: The Board should provide data that is broken down on a monthly basis. It must capture historical data from January 1, 2015 through March 1, 2021, and then provided on a monthly basis going forward permanently. Historical data is necessary to establish a baseline for comparison to monitor trends and changes to fully analyze and assess the impact of Covid-19 on water service providers and their customers.
13. Customer class: Information should be provided by customer class.

This data should be used to inform policies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and pre-existing affordability concerns on low-income households through the establishment of percentage-of-income payment plans and arrears management programs.

Signed,

Monica Lewis-Patrick

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Monica Lewis-Patrick', with a stylized flourish at the end.

President and CEO

We the People of Detroit