

WATER ENGINEERS PICK HIGH PLAN S TOO EXPENSIVE

Lehigh Company Estimates Were Less Than Half of Cost

By LEEDS MOBERLEY
The board of consulting engineers of the Mayor's Water Commission figures the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company's water supply plan actually would cost upward of \$345,000,000. It was learned yesterday.

That is more than \$60,000,000 higher than the estimated cost of the favored Lehigh Commission, to tap a new source on the Upper Delaware River at Wallpack Bend.

5 Times Lehigh Estimate
It is almost two and a half times the \$145,122,000 estimated by the Lehigh Company's engineers.

The Commission's engineers made a special study of the Lehigh plan and presented their findings in a confidential report in January. This report, it can now be concluded for the first time, bluntly accuses the Lehigh Company of misrepresentation, misallocation of funds, and "inadequate engineering design."

That is what was contained in the engineers' bulky final report which was released for newspaper publication on Saturday. The latter document was an overall survey of the water problem which made only passing reference to the Lehigh Plan.

Must Tap New Source

It was, however, a definitive study which among other things corroborated the layman's conviction that Philadelphia never will have really good drinking water until we tap an uncontaminated upland source. It offered no hope of ever fully reclaiming the grossly polluted Schuylkill and Lower Delaware.

The engineers estimated the cost of the favored Wallpack Bend project at \$285,588,000. They found the waterworks so run down that if we keep our present sources we will have to spend at least \$62,568,000 on it. Even if we decide on an upland source, we will have to spend \$31,203,000 on the existing waterworks to guard against breakdowns during the construction period.

The final report devotes only one typewritten page to the Lehigh plan. It goes into no details but simply concludes that "Lehigh plan would not yield a sufficient quantity of water for future needs of Philadelphia; that the water is unusable for use without filtration (contradicting one of the company's most-touted selling points) and that the cost of construction would greatly exceed \$142,122,000."

Say Yield Overestimated

The plan proposes to dam the Upper Lehigh River and from two to five of its tributaries, bring the impounded waters through an aqueduct to a reservoir on Jericho Creek and thence

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PHILADELPHIA, APRIL 24

Philadelphia Must Get A New Source of Water

There is no sensible alternative to a new source of water supply for Philadelphia. Many Philadelphians have been convinced of that for years. They are now confirmed in their opinion by experts.

Never can the city expect to get good drinking water from the Schuylkill and Delaware.

That's the most significant conclusion in the final report of the consulting engineers of the Mayor's Water Commission.

It could hardly come from higher authority, or be based more substantially on fact. The engineers are career men of national reputation in their field. They devoted nine months to the first really complete engineering appraisal of the city's water problem.

Of course, the present system could be "fixed up." The engineers cover that in their report. The system could be patched up just as it has been for years whenever the city took the trouble to do anything at all.

It would cost \$62,568,000 to restore and modernize the present Schuylkill-Delaware system, the engineers estimated.

If the Schuylkill were abandoned (almost inescapable, they indicate) and the city's water taken entirely from the Delaware, the cost would be \$28,000,000 more.

A total of \$87,568,000. For what?

For more chlorine cocktails.

That would be throwing good money after bad water.

Phila., Fri., June 28, 1946

Cost of Good Water

FOR about \$91,000,000, at Philadelphia has been pointed out, Philadelphia can assure itself of pure and palatable water without drawing upon distant sources. By the first steps of this expenditure it can get odorless, healthful water, devoid of any unpleasant taste, within one year.

The outlay is many millions less than the cost of any other solution of the water problem.

The overall figure includes the expense of increasing the daily supply to 500,000,000 gallons—a quantity not needed now or in the foreseeable future. That expenditure could be reduced to \$65,500,000 by providing only the required quantity of water. Unforeseen need can be met when and if it seems likely to arise.

What would the city get for the \$75,500,000?

For \$28,000,000 the Schuylkill, undesirable because of its unreliable flow, its hardness and the high manganese content, could be abandoned. Water taken from the Delaware at Torresdale could be delivered by pumps and conduits to the Belmont and Queen Lane filter plants for treatment and subsequent distribution to present Schuylkill consumers.

For about \$28,100,000 the city could make all the improvements included in the "Revised Water Bureau Program" not purchasable with the unexpended balance of the current water loan. These would include improvements to pumping and purification facilities, and extensions and improvements in the distribution system.

The heavily polluted lower Delaware and Schuylkill are the worst water source in the country for any major American city, the engineers reported.

And no matter how successful the cleanup of those rivers being carried on in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, they will never be pure enough to provide Philadelphia with good water.

"It is certain," said the engineers, "that much pollution will remain."

That should destroy finally any desperately held hopes that the city any longer can avoid its obligation to find a new source.

The engineers considered a number of proposals to tap upland water sources. It laid emphasis in its report on the Wallpack Bend project.

It provides for bringing pure water into the city through an underground tunnel from an artificial lake near Bushkill on the upper Delaware.

The cost was estimated at \$284,588,000. Some \$31,203,000 more would be needed for stop-gap improvements in the present system pending completion of the project.

Total cost would then be \$315,791,000. For what? A drink of good water whenever you want it, as far ahead as our vision can take us.

Does that sound like a lot of money? A prohibitive sum? Sounds are deceiving.

For it would cost only an increase of little more than two cents a day in the average household's water bill.

Is that too much for good water? Long before next November, when the water loan project is placed on the ballot, Council should conduct public hearings based on the engineers' report. If there are still questions to be asked, let's ask them and get the answers.

Then Council should endorse a specific plan for a new source of water supply for Philadelphia people, who are ready to pay the bill.

Philadelphians don't want a project simply because it costs more than any other. Nor does it want the cheapest because it appears to be a bargain.

They want the best. They are purchasing Philadelphia's future.

For \$4,000,000 the city could install facilities for taste and odor control.

For \$19,400,000, the city could have what the Water Commission's consulting engineers call the "Future Water Bureau program," including universal metering (an important step if present sources are to provide the quantity of water needed); improvements to three reservoirs (including roofs) and extensions, replacements, cleaning and lining of mains.

The water obtainable from these improvements would not be inferior in taste, odor, or purity to that obtainable from distant mountain sources at a cost four to five times as high. And the quantity obtainable can be made sufficient for the present, the years immediately ahead, and perhaps for all time.

WATER HEARINGS OPENED BY CITY ONLY FEW ATTEND

NO MORE THAN 40 Present —and They Aren't the 'Public'

City Council opened its well-advertised public hearings on the Philadelphia water problem yesterday—and played a practically empty house.

For all the criticism of the "Schuylkill cocktail" and all the discussions pro and con of a new source of supply, hardly anybody seemed interested.

Galleries Deserted
The galleries were deserted. The only spectators were a few men and women, numbering less than 40 at the peak and most of the time no more than two dozen, who sat in folding chairs at the back of the Council chamber.

And they weren't what you'd call "the general public." In the main, they were residents of Bucks and Montgomery counties who would have to move out to make way for the proposed Warington reservoir. Among them, were representatives of various civic and business organizations like the Bureau of Municipal Research, the Pennsylvania Economy League, the Committee of 70, and the Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade.

Only Cynical Not Surprised

The small turnout surprised all but the most cynical, but the first hearing otherwise lived up to expectations.

Spokesman for the Water Bureau stoutly defended the city's present drinking water. Lysle L. Jones, the Bureau's sanitary engineer, cited figures to show that "average" pollution and the amount of the raw water supply is within the U. S. Public Health Service tolerances. And he insisted that the water doesn't really taste or smell so awfully bad.

That inspired Councilman George W. Mansfield to blame the press—especially The Record—for the "notoriety" Philadelphia water has acquired.

"I seem to be unique," chimed

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 1946

Apathy of Citizens Revealed As Water Hearings Open

(Continued From First Page)

in Councilman L. Wallace Egan, "because I have never found any of the facts about this water; although I have lived here for 51 years."

This symposium of eulogy was rudely interrupted by Councilman Clarence K. Crossan.

"I'd like to believe," he said, "that my colleagues are really convinced that Philadelphia water folk will have a taste—an unpleasant taste—and a highly deplorable one. I'd like to believe that is not true, but in my own observations, drinking it in my own home, prove that it is."

Long Lines at the Springs

"We see long lines of people at Fairmount Park—and these lines are growing all the time—seeking water from the springs here that is so safe. I think it is our present obligation to get a quality of water that is above criticism."

That reminded outgoing Councilman Henry J. Trauner of the time he went to the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904 and the wonderful things they were doing with "liquid mud" from the Mississippi River then.

"How About St. Louis Method?"

"We went out to the water-works," he said, "and saw this muck going through the treatment processes, and then we saw the water that was put on our tables at the hotel that night, and you couldn't beat it."

"They always said that if Mayor Weaver had seen the Weir system that St. Louis used we would never have used filters in Philadelphia. I wonder if we couldn't try the St. Louis method here."

Francis S. Friel, secretary of the board of consulting engineers of the Mayor's Water Commission, said St. Louis doesn't take its water from the Mississippi any more. It changed over to the Missouri in 1920 and is using filters now anyway. Besides, the raw water isn't anything like as bad as the stuff that comes out of the heavily polluted Schuylkill and Lower Delaware.

Temporary Improvement?

Crossan, apparently taking it for granted that the Water Commission's plan to tap the Upper Delaware at Wallpack Bend will be adopted, asked if it wouldn't be possible to effect some temporary improvement in the present supply as a stopgap. He pointed out that it would take at least five years to complete a new water supply project.

He suggested moving the intake on the Delaware River from Torresdale—where it is contaminated by Philadelphia sewage washed upstream from the Torrens-Beech Lane treatment

works —to Yardley, which is above the tidal flow.

Not Practicable

Friel and Joel D. Justin, another of the Water Commission's consulting engineers, said that would not be practicable for a number of reasons. The Schuylkill treatment plant.

Friel finally agreed to make a study of the problem and a report ready in time for the next hearing, to be held on May 22.

Most of yesterday's session was taken up with a detailed and technical report by Friel and Justin, Herbert W. Goodall, chairman of the Water Commission, opened the Commission's studies and revealed that the original plan was to hold a referendum at next Tuesday's meeting.

The voters were to have been asked to choose between the Wallpack Bend program, at a cost of \$284,588,000 plus \$31,203,000 for stop-gap repairs to the present water-works, and a general rehabilitation and expansion of the present supply at a cost of \$62,568,000. Justin, however, called off the referendum to allow more time for study.

ENGINEERS DOUBT WATER'S PURITY

BULLETIN 6-28-46

Dispute Lehigh Assertion

Pocono Supply Would Not need Filtering?

Engineers of the Philadelphia Water Commission today disputed assertions by spokesmen of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Co. that it would not be necessary to filter water drawn from the Lehigh River basin.

The engineers, members of the commission to study plans for new courses of city water, testified at a public hearing of City Council's Public Works Committee, in Room 400, City Hall.

About 40 persons at the hearing heard the engineers speak in rebuttal to testimony given yesterday by spokesmen of Lehigh who sought to sell the city a plan to draw water from the Lehigh River. The engineers have recommended the Wallpack Bend project.

Approval Doubtful

"I am quite positive the Pennsylvania Department of Health will not approve a new source of water supply without filtration," said Francis F. Friel, secretary to the Board of Consulting Engineers.

Charles A. Emerson, a member of the board, recalling that commissioner engineers' ultra-conservative, declared: "We feel that they are over-answering. I don't believe we should cut any corners in the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars."

WATER IS WORST AT QUEEN LANE, 11 TASTERS FIND

Bottled Product, Suburban Supplies Win Out in Test

Eleven hungry men and women yesterday punished their taste buds in an effort to determine just how bad Philadelphia water tastes.

When the test—conducted at a luncheon meeting of the Citizens Committee on City Planning at the Sylvania Hotel—was over, 11 unstable fact emerged: a water produced by the Queen Lane pumping station is the worst of a bad lot.

Even Samples Tested

To insure a fair test, seven samples of water were used—bottled water; some from the Springfield-Cheltenham area; a sample from the Springfield-Narberth supply; water from a Fairmount Park spring; and some from the Belmont, Torresdale and Queen Lane stations.

Morris W. Wood, who conducted the test, could tell by facial expressions when the tasters were sipping the Philadelphia product—which a wit once said is the only water in the world that gives off dust.

Bottled Water Best

When the tests were completed, and the 11 sipped some strong water as an astringent, these were emerged:

1. Bottled water won first.

2. Second was Springfield.

3. Third, Springfield.

4. Fourth, Fairmount.

5. Fifth, Belmont; sixth, Queen Lane; and Queen Lane a distant seventh.

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