

Water board members who crossed line must quit



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Monroe County Water Authority board members failed this community in 2002. It has now been more than a month since state Comptroller Alan G. Hevesi released his scathing audit of the Water Authority revealing disgraceful behavior on the part of authority officials. Yet, three members who were on the board in 2002 and bear responsibility for this scandal remain on the authority payroll. It is time for them step down.

The Water Authority fiasco will end up costing the public much more than the nearly

\$500,000 in unearned salary and benefits documented by the audit. There are long-term costs that the auditors did not calculate. During his tenure as executive director of the authority, John Stanwix received pay raises that boosted his salary nearly 45 percent. The audit report does not quantify the inflated pension payments that Mr. Stanwix and his spouse will receive over the course of their lives. Yet, every county, city, town and other participating employer in the New York State Retirement System will bear the burden of these costs.

The report also underestimates the cost of the unearned lifetime health insurance granted to Mr. Stanwix and another employee who received a similar sweetheart deal. These expenses will be passed on to the authority's ratepayers.

Taking into consideration

these long-term, unethical payouts, this scandal will end up costing ratepayers and taxpayers well over an estimated \$1.1 million. This comes straight out of the pockets of Monroe County residents, Democrats and Republicans alike.

The Water Authority board is to blame for this mess. Board members were entrusted with the grave responsibility of governing this public entity on behalf of citizens who use its services and pay its bills. However, individuals serving on the board during the period covered by the audit neglected to provide adequate oversight of authority operations, failed to review overgenerous employment agreements, and approved the excessive pay raises to Mr. Stanwix.

Unbelievably, three of those board members still serve. With the unanimous support of my Democratic colleagues, I have

called on the president of the Monroe County Legislature, Wayne E. Zyra, R-Brockport, to demand their resignations.

The public is now paying for the Water Authority board's dereliction of duty. Yet, three of these men are still drawing salaries from the authority and still accumulating pension benefits at the authority's and the public's expense. This is unconscionable; it would never be tolerated in the private sector and certainly must not be tolerated in a situation where public monies are involved.

The county must re-establish public trust in the Water Authority. If these men will not step down, I hope the Republican majority will demand that they resign. □

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