Written by Mark Jaeger
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The Public Service Commission has approved the Village of Saukville's request for a 22% hike in municipal water rates.

The ruling came last week, following a public hearing before the PSC in Madison on Aug. 18.

The new rate will go into effect in the quarterly billing cycle that begins Oct. 1.

Local officials said the increase, which was unanimously recommended by the Village Board, is needed to make up for the reduced use of water by businesses that have cut back on production because of the economy.

According to documents submitted to the state, the water utility would generate operating revenues of just over $1 million — about $206,000 less than needed to cover costs if rates were not increased.

The village estimated that for a household that uses an average of 18,000 gallons of water a quarter, the rate increase will cost an additional $12.13.

Even with the hike, Saukville's water rates will be lower than in Port Washington and Mequon, according to figures provided by the PSC, although higher than the charges in Grafton, Fredonia and Belgium.

Village water rates were increased by 3% in October 2009 and October 2008, but those hikes were not subject to PSC review.

Water bills were also adjusted this year, when the village shifted the charge for fire protection — in the form of fire hydrant charges — from the property tax bill to the water bill.