



Gabe Howard, Maury County Commissioner | Heart Columbia (Mule Town), Tennessee

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PAUSE & PLAN — BEFORE WE MAKE A \$500+ MILLION MISTAKE

Over the last few months, I've spoken repeatedly about one central truth: Maury County and the City of Columbia are growing faster than our infrastructure was ever designed to handle. And when growth outpaces planning, two things happen every time:

 1 Long-timers get stuck with the bill, and

 2 We lock ourselves into decisions that aren't sustainable for the next generation.

That's exactly where we are with the proposed \$500+ million CPWS Duck River water intake expansion.

Let me be clear: I am not against growth. I'm against irresponsible, unplanned, "figure it out later" growth that puts the burden on families, farmers, and businesses who have already paid their share — and then some.

A FUNDING FORMULA NIGHTMARE

CPWS is proposing 20% annual water rate increases for five years, compounded, totaling nearly 150% in rate hikes.

Maury County residents — who have no representation in CPWS governance — will bear these costs through Maury County Water, which buys water from CPWS.

Meanwhile, the City continues approving dense growth without adequate long-term planning or funding mechanisms in place.

This is backwards.

This isn't growth paying for growth —

This is growth being subsidized by the people who built this community.

We Need a Regional Water Authority

I've said it in meetings, in work sessions, and again last night:

Maury County needs a neutral, regional water authority — not one controlled solely by a single municipality whose decisions impact the entire region.

Water decisions should not be made through a silo.

They should be made cooperatively, transparently, and with all affected communities at the table.

This Ties Directly Into Our Temporary Building Moratorium






Maury County's temporary building moratorium is not anti-growth — it's pro-planning.

We need a Comprehensive Land Use Plan that aligns our zoning, our infrastructure, and our regional water strategy before we rubber-stamp more strain on systems already operating past capacity.

Why are we talking about adding more straws in the Duck River without first creating a responsible, regional plan to share, protect, and diversify our water future?

PAUSE & PLAN

Before we commit to a half-billion-dollar water intake expansion, we need to:

-  Evaluate alternative sourcing options
-  Build a regional governance model
-  Create a funding formula that puts the cost of growth on growth
-  Protect long-timers and current ratepayers from massive, unnecessary rate hikes
-  STOP rushing decisions that have 50-year consequences

We have one shot to get this right.

If we charge ahead without planning, we will regret it — financially and environmentally — for generations.

Your Voice Matters

The City of Columbia votes on this Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 5:30 PM CST at City Hall, 700 North Garden Street, Council Chambers.

Ratepayers, taxpayers, farmers, and small business owners — show up and be heard.

We deserve transparency, representation, and long-term solutions — not reactive decisions and skyrocketing rates.

Maury County and Columbia both deserve better.

Let's pause, plan, and build a sustainable future — together.

— Commissioner Gabe Howard

Maury County District 8