

Water Provider Transition

Madeira to Transition Water Service to Greater Cincinnati Water Works

Letter to Madeira Residents from Mayor Henning (February 2026):

Dear Madeira Community,

I am writing to provide a clear and straightforward update regarding City Council's recent actions involving water service for our community. Over the past 18 months, Council conducted a thorough evaluation of service providers. This process included public meetings, expert analysis, financial review and invaluable feedback from residents. On behalf of City Council, I want to thank everyone who participated in forums, shared correspondence or offered thoughtful input. Your engagement helped shape this decision. I also want to recognize our administration and staff for their transparent, professional leadership throughout this process.

Following that careful review, Council took the following actions:

- October 27, 2025: Approved a contract with Greater Cincinnati Water Works (Ordinance 25-12).
- November 24, 2025: Issued a formal Letter of Termination to Indian Hill Water Works, initiating the required two-year transition period.
- February 6, 2026: Filed a civil complaint in Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas.

Each of these steps followed established legal processes and careful consideration.

The decision to file a lawsuit was not made lightly. In fact, it was deeply disappointing. Our goal remains exactly what it has always been: to carry out a safe, orderly and lawful two-year transition to Greater Cincinnati Water Works while maintaining reliable water flow, strong fire protection and system stability for residents in both Madeira and Indian Hill.

To do that responsibly, Madeira must have access to certain public records related to the water system. For several months, the City has formally requested these records so our engineers and technical experts can properly plan the transition. Many of those requests have been denied. In addition, Indian Hill leadership has conditioned cooperation on Madeira agreeing to additional payments that are not included in the water agreement, with estimates reaching up to \$13 million. These are taxpayer dollars. Before any community agrees to such a demand, it is entirely reasonable to have all the facts and to seek legal clarity.

Our legal action is narrow and focused. We are asking the court to enforce public records laws and to clarify what the contract requires so the transition can proceed lawfully and efficiently. This is about transparency, accountability and protecting the health and wallets of our residents.

Let me be clear: this lawsuit does not change our commitment to collaboration. We will continue to work toward a professional and cooperative transition over the remaining 22 months. Madeira and Indian Hill have shared a long history as neighboring communities, and it is our sincere hope that once this matter is resolved, that partnership will continue in the spirit it has held for more than a century. We will provide updates as new information becomes available. As always, City Council remains committed to acting in the best interest of Madeira residents and safeguarding the services you depend on every day.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why is Madeira transitioning to Greater Cincinnati Water Works?

In short, the decision was about protecting both public health and household budgets. After a year and a half of study and comparison, Madeira City Council decided that Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW) is the best long-term option to protect residents' health and keep water expenses more affordable.

One major factor was cost. Madeira households would have paid significantly more to remain on Indian Hill Water Works. For a typical household, monthly water bills under Indian Hill's rates were projected to be roughly 20 to 25 percent higher than under Greater Cincinnati Water Works. Over time, that difference adds up. Another key consideration was PFAS, sometimes referred to as "forever chemicals." Greater Cincinnati Water Works has already made the necessary investments to remediate the chemicals. Indian Hill would need to build new treatment facilities to comply with regulations, which would increase costs and add financial risk for customers.

Does this lawsuit affect water service right now?

No. Water service continues as normal. The purpose of this legal action is to make sure the transition can be planned safely and responsibly so there are no service interruptions in the future.

What is the timeline for the transition?

Madeira provided notice of termination in December 2025, beginning a two-year transition period. All Madeira residents will be served by Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW) once the process is complete.

Does Madeira have the legal authority to transition away from Indian Hill Water Works?

Yes. Madeira's water agreement with Indian Hill allows either party to end the arrangement with proper notice. In December 2025, Madeira formally exercised that right and provided notice of termination, initiating a two-year transition period. During that time, Madeira continues to meet its obligations while planning for a smooth service transition. Choosing a different long-term water provider is a policy decision within the City's legal authority and does not require approval from Indian Hill. Disagreement with that decision does not change the terms of the agreement or override public records laws that apply during the transition process.

Why is Madeira suing Indian Hill?

Madeira took legal action because Indian Hill has refused to provide public records that are required by law and has tied cooperation to demands for payments that are not part of the water agreement. Indian Hill has asked Madeira to agree to additional costs, with estimates reaching as high as \$13 million, before sharing information or working through the transition. Madeira tried for months to resolve this cooperatively but could not get the basic system information needed to move forward. The City does not want this to become a public spectacle. The lawsuit is intended to obtain clear guidance from the court on what the contract actually requires, so the transition can proceed legally, efficiently and without service disruptions.

What records is Madeira requesting from Indian Hill?

Madeira is requesting basic public records needed to ensure a safe and smooth transition of water service. These include:

- Maps and records showing water mains, connections and flow paths
- Fire hydrant and water pressure testing and related reports
- PFAS testing results and regulatory compliance records
- Consultant studies and technical reports used to evaluate system impacts and costs

This information is standard for public water systems and is necessary to avoid service interruptions and address fire protection concerns.

Why does Madeira need these records now?

The transition involves planning for water flow, fire protection and system reliability. Without access to existing system records, it is difficult to fully evaluate options, costs or impacts and ensure residents in both communities remain protected.

What about fire protection concerns?

The Madeira Indian Hill Joint Fire District identified potential hydrant pressure impacts in limited areas of Indian Hill. Madeira takes these concerns seriously and is committed to working collaboratively on a cost-effective solution. However,

developing an informed and responsible solution requires access to records that show existing infrastructure conditions and associated costs. Without that information, it is difficult to accurately evaluate options or ensure that any proposed approach is fair and effective for both communities.

Is Madeira paying for upgrades in Indian Hill?

Madeira has a long history of working cooperatively with Indian Hill, including more than 70 years of partnership on water service. That history matters, and the City wants to continue being a constructive partner. At the same time, being a good partner does not mean writing a blank check. Madeira cannot commit to open-ended financial obligations, particularly without access to the records needed to fully understand infrastructure conditions and costs. First and foremost, the City has a responsibility to the families and businesses who pay taxes in Madeira. Any future investments must be clearly defined, legally justified and fair to both communities.

Why involve the courts at all?

Madeira would prefer to resolve this quietly. For several months, the City pursued this matter through informal and formal public records requests and repeated attempts to work collaboratively with Indian Hill. Unfortunately, those efforts did not produce the information needed to move forward responsibly. The courts provide a neutral way to resolve disagreements about public records and contract requirements. Seeking judicial clarity helps remove uncertainty and allows the transition process to move forward in a structured and lawful way. Madeira has intentionally kept this action narrow and focused. We remain hopeful that reasonable cooperation can still be reached and that both communities can move forward in a way that protects residents, supports the joint fire district and avoids unnecessary conflict.

Can Indian Hill withhold records because it disagrees with Madeira's decision?

No. Public records laws apply regardless of policy disagreements.

Is Madeira asking the court to stop the transition?

No. Madeira is moving forward with the transition to Greater Cincinnati Water Works as planned. The City is asking the court to clarify the contract and require compliance with public records laws so the transition can proceed lawfully and efficiently.

Is Madeira trying to avoid paying its fair share of costs?

No, Madeira is willing to work collaboratively on reasonable, clearly defined costs. What the City is challenging are open-ended payment demands that are not included in the water agreement and are being used as a condition for cooperation and transparency.

Will this cost Madeira taxpayers more money?

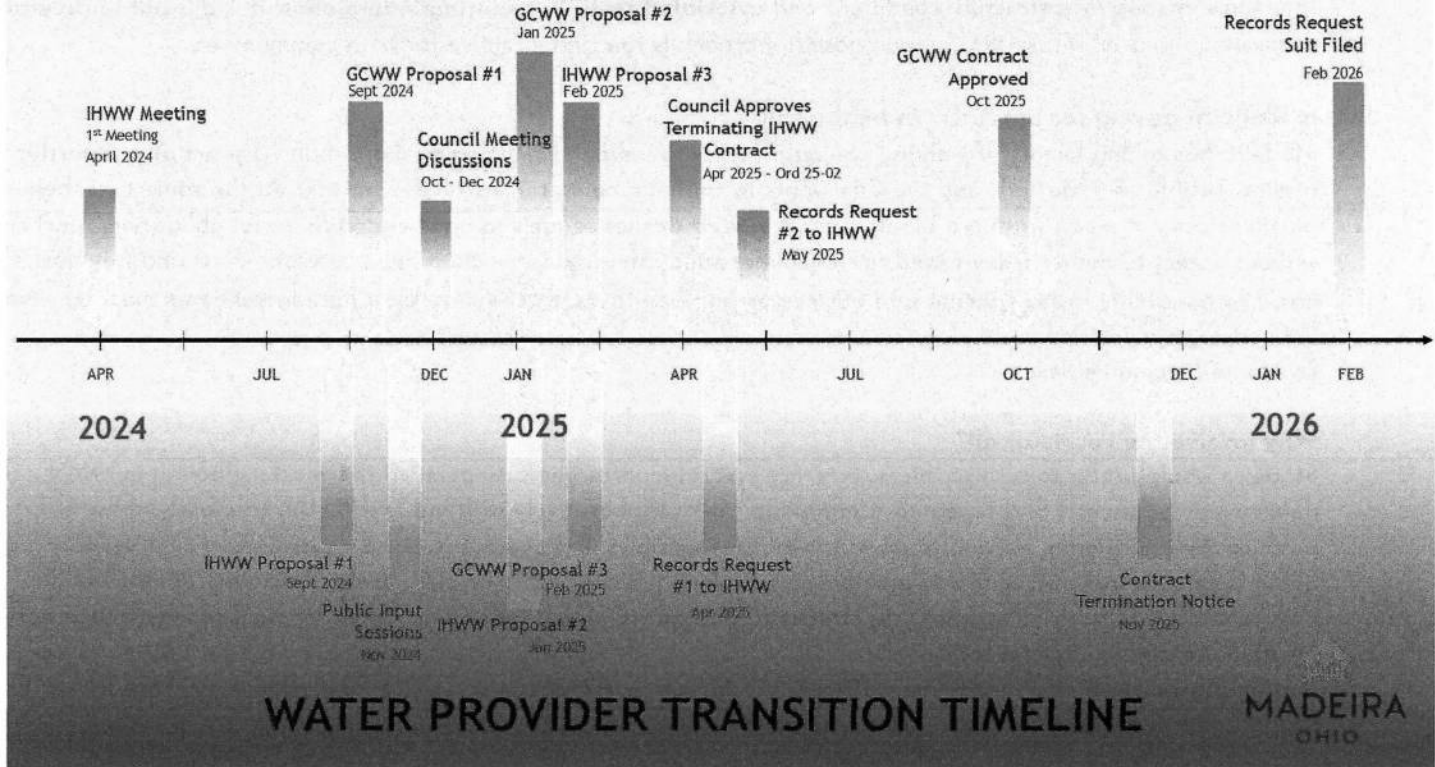
Seeking clarity now helps prevent larger financial risks later and supports a more cost-effective transition. The City's goal is to protect taxpayers by avoiding unnecessary or undefined costs.

Is Madeira still willing to work with Indian Hill?

Yes. Madeira remains open to cooperation and has repeatedly expressed a willingness to work collaboratively. The City hopes that transparency and good-faith cooperation can still be achieved.

Timeline:

City Council has passed an ordinance ([Ord. 25-02](#)) in April of 2025 to terminate the water provider contract with Indian Hill Water Works (IHW). IHW provides water to the east side of Madeira; the balance of the city is served by Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW). Following the passage of Ord. 25-02, the City negotiated with GCWW to amend the existing contract to expand the service area to the east side of the city. The agreement between GCWW and the City was approved in October 2025 ([Ord. 25-12](#)). The transition will be over a two-year period, which started on November 24, 2025 when the City provided the Village of Indian Hill official notice of the contract termination.



Background:

Madeira is currently served by two water providers - Indian Hill Water Works (IHWW) on the east side of the city and Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW) on the west side of the city. Both systems must comply with Federal regulations regarding PFAS ("forever chemicals") by 2029. IHWW approached the City in the Fall of 2024 with a proposal for a 30-year contract extension, which includes a new PFAS treatment facility. Before agreeing to the contract extension, the City approached GCWW to provide a water service proposal so that Council could evaluate the best option for water delivery on the east side of the city.

For further information on City Council's review and analysis of the issue, please review the [FAQ's](#) from the November 2024 public input sessions and the [Water Provider Update](#) from February 2025.

Status:

Madeira and GCWW have begun analyzing the existing water system to ensure a smooth transition. A key part of this analysis are the records pertaining to system operations, infrastructure, and fire protection needs that are held by the current provider, Indian Hill Water Works. Madeira has requested from Indian Hill the public records related to the water system to ensure a systematic conversion of the water service. Despite repeated requests and efforts to work collaboratively, Indian Hill has not shared the necessary records. Without access to the existing records, it is difficult to fully evaluate options, costs or impacts and ensure residents in both communities remain protected.

As a result of the lack of cooperation, Madeira has initiated legal action against the Village of Indian Hill to obtain the public records required and to seek clarity on what the existing water agreement requires as Madeira transitions its water service. Despite the legal action, Madeira and GCWW continue on the two-year transition path to put all of Madeira's residents on the same water system.