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## **Discussion on increase in water charges put off**

Special Correspondent

*This is not the right time, say councillors*

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*City facing threat of water scarcity 'Corporation should not look at revenue alone'*

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COIMBATORE: An all-party meeting at the Coimbatore Corporation on Tuesday put off discussions on the proposal to increase drinking water consumption charges.

Leaders of the parties in the Corporation Council and heads of standing committees and zones called upon Mayor R. Venkatachalam and Corporation Commissioner Anshul Mishra to take up at a later date any discussion in raising the charges.

Deputy Mayor N. Karthik was present at the meeting.

The councillors said that this was not the right time to discuss an increase in the charges when the city was facing the threat of scarcity because of the delay in the monsoon setting in.

Leader of the Opposition and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam member V.N. Udayakumar said the water charges should not be increased even if supply improved.

He said after the meeting that the Corporation should not view everything from the angle of revenue.

Social commitment demanded that the water charges should not be increased.

The State Government had sent to the Corporation revised water tariff, stating that the civic body could increase the rates in order to fund the Rs.113-crore Pilloor Phase II drinking water scheme.

A proposal moved for the increase at the Corporation Council meeting on June 22 said that the project estimate had increased to Rs.140 crore because of cost escalation.

This could be met through an increase in the charges.

The meeting was convened to also discuss connection and usage charges for underground sewers that the Corporation planned to provide under a Rs.377-crore scheme.

While the parties agreed that service charges had to be collected for the maintenance of the sewers, they wanted the Corporation to ensure that the public were not burdened by exorbitant rates.

Mr. Udayakumar said that the officials were requested to study the rates prevailing in all the

local bodies that had implemented underground sewer schemes.

“We want the Coimbatore Corporation to fix rates that are lower than the lowest among the other local bodies.”

Another issue discussed at the meeting was about hoardings at bus shelters.

With rules on the size of hoardings having been violated earlier, the Corporation decided that it would provide the design and size specifications.

Officials said that the areas where such hoardings could be put up would also be identified by the civic body.