

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
WATER, SEWER AND STORM WATER  
RATE BOARD PUBLIC HEARING  
TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2018  
MINUTES OF FORMAL HEARING

\* \* \*

LOCATION: White Rock Baptist Church  
5240 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19139

REPORTED BY: Lisa M. Cooper, Court Reporter

\* \* \*

HELD BEFORE:  
Nancy Brockway, Hearing Officer  
Sonny Popowsky, Chair

\* \* \*

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1 \* \* \*

2 MS. BROCKWAY: My name is Nancy  
3 Brockway. I'm the hearing officer hired by the Water  
4 Sewer and Storm Water Rate Board to conduct the  
5 hearings for the Board, and I also make a  
6 recommendation to the Board about how the case should  
7 be decided. But the decision is up to the Board. It's  
8 the members of the public appointed by the Mayor.  
9 We have the list tonight. The Chair of the Board is  
10 Sonny Popowsky, who was, for 30 years, the Consumer  
11 Advocate.

12 The way we do this is we want to accommodate  
13 if there are any public officials that need to go  
14 first. But what we generally do, we have -- we let the  
15 Water Department make a short presentation to tell why  
16 they think they need a rate increase. And after that,  
17 usually some representative from the Consumer  
18 Advocate's office comes and tells what their initial  
19 perspective is to review their perspective as it stands  
20 now. And then we're going to open it up.

21 We did ask tonight for people to say if they  
22 wanted to testify, but what I'm going to do is I'll go  
23 through the names that said yes, and at the end I'll  
24 ask if there's anybody else who wants to say something.

1 And your testimony, it's not like a court. We do have  
2 a court reporter here, but that's because one of my  
3 jobs is to take in all of the public comments that we  
4 get through these hearings and through e-mails and  
5 regular mail and summarize them for the Board so that  
6 they have an idea of what people are feeling or what  
7 have you.

8 If you have particular questions for the  
9 Water Department, we really can't do that through the  
10 hearing process, but we have the Commissioner of the  
11 Water Department, Debra McCarty, and she has other  
12 staff with her and I'm sure that after the hearing that  
13 she would be delighted to see what they can do to  
14 answer the questions.

15 Without further ado, Debra, do you want to  
16 introduce?

17 MS. MCCARTY: Thank you, Nancy. Welcome  
18 everybody. It's good to see a good turn out tonight.  
19 Hopefully we have some -- can share some information  
20 with you all and why we believe we need a rate  
21 increase. It's not something we take lightly, but it  
22 is important for your feedback and we're hoping to hear  
23 from you tonight, as well as the (inaudible) for the  
24 Rate Board.

1           The -- as Nancy said, we do have folks in the  
2 back that are here ready, willing and able to assist  
3 with any issues you might have. Any billing issues or  
4 questions you have. Please feel free to go up and ask  
5 them at any time during the meeting. They will be here  
6 through the duration and available after the hearing as  
7 well. So without further ado, I would like Joanne  
8 Dahme, she's our manager of public affairs and she's  
9 going to go through quickly why we need a rate  
10 increase.

11           MS. DAHME: Good evening everybody. As  
12 Debbie said, I'm going to do a general overview about  
13 the Department and talk about the reason for the rate  
14 increase. It's about a 15 minute presentation, so I'm  
15 going to try to go very quickly. So just essentially  
16 about the water company itself. So the Water  
17 Department is a City department and we're also a public  
18 utility.

19           The rate increases do not -- we're not  
20 looking for a profit when we increase our rates. What  
21 we are looking to do is to generate enough rates to  
22 ensure that we can operate in a sound way and manage  
23 really well. So it's not in it for a profit venture.  
24 So our revenues come from customers who pay their

1 monthly bills. We don't get anything above and beyond  
2 that.

3           We take very seriously the safety of the  
4 public. That is our top priority. And we are really  
5 (inaudible) providing top quality safe drinking water.  
6 We're able to do that through the very robust  
7 infrastructure that we have. We have three water  
8 treatment plants. We have over 3,000 miles of main.  
9 We also have a staff of people who run these facilities  
10 24/7. We're really dedicated to ensure to provide the  
11 top product. To make sure that everybody has top  
12 quality drinking water.

13           Our rivers are sources for drinking water,  
14 and so we have a strong commitment to ensuring that we  
15 take the waste water that is delivered to our system  
16 through over 3,000 miles of sewer mains. We have three  
17 waste treatment facilities. We clean that water so  
18 that it is returned to the Delaware River cleaner than  
19 when we withdrew that. We take a lot of pride in that.  
20 We are able to do that because we have a waste water  
21 treatment system that ensures that we are meeting our  
22 regulatory obligations and protecting our resources.

23           So the storm water infrastructure. Storm  
24 water is the component that cost our utility the most.

1 It's about 25 percent of our capital budget. And  
2 that's mostly related to the regulatory operations that  
3 are required to make sure that we protect our rivers  
4 and streams.

5 One of those programs is our Green City Clean  
6 Water Program. That program is required by the Federal  
7 Government by the EPA. And that program is really  
8 designed to shorten that capacity in our sewer system  
9 so that we don't have combined sewer overflows going  
10 into our waterways. So our Green City Clean Waters  
11 program uses green infrastructure, which is placed on  
12 the surface. It captures that first one and a half  
13 inches of rain water to provide additional capacity for  
14 our sewer system.

15 We have over 2,000 projects. 2,000 of these  
16 have these green infrastructure features, like rain  
17 water green roofs throughout the City. And we found  
18 that the neighborhoods that we work in, where we're  
19 implementing these features, are very supportive of  
20 those, because they beautify the community and they  
21 provide additional (inaudible).

22 So what you're paying for. So when you get  
23 that monthly bill, you're paying for those three  
24 services. A portion of your bill is paying for the

1 water service, which is the water treatment component,  
2 the water delivery component. This is what you're  
3 paying today. So a typical customer is paying about  
4 \$66.50 for using 500 cubic feet of water per month.  
5 That's 3,740 gallons.

6 Another component of your bill is the sewer  
7 bill. That's the bill you're paying for the waste  
8 sewer treatment component complex of sewage as a  
9 leisure property. The storm water component, which is  
10 a flat fee for residential properties, but it's paying  
11 for those programs that encompass the rate (inaudible)  
12 obligations. And then there's a service component  
13 that's the billing and collections.

14 So we hope that everyone looks at their  
15 monthly bills, because it's really important to  
16 understand what you're paying for and to ensure that  
17 those bills are representing your actual usage. So why  
18 do we need a rate increase? There's a number of  
19 reasons, but main drivers are we go back to our  
20 infrastructure itself. The pipes and the plants.  
21 This increase we're looking to recover about 116  
22 million in operating revenues. And that's over a three  
23 year period, which equates to a six percent increase  
24 over that two years to your monthly bill at the end of

1 that period. That's released for quite a number of  
2 things. Primarily the pipes and the plants. We have  
3 an older infrastructure. We're an older City.

4           If you think about the past winter, we've  
5 had a lot of water main breaks. We've had about 600  
6 water main breaks between December and February. This  
7 is the result of the extreme cold weather, but also the  
8 result of an aging system and the system (inaudible)  
9 when you have these extreme events coming about.

10           So we are looking to increase our water main  
11 replacement rate from 28 miles to 40 miles per year  
12 over the next five years. And that's to ensure that we  
13 have a reliable system and we do not have the impact we  
14 have to (inaudible) when we have these breaks when  
15 homes are flooded and other issues. We're also looking  
16 to increase our sewer removal program. We're not  
17 replacing the sewers at the same pace, but rather  
18 additional miles per year to ensure we have that  
19 capacity.

20           The same goes with our water treatment plants  
21 and our waste water treatment plants. Water treatment  
22 plants upgraded to make sure we continue to meet our  
23 safety Water Act obligations, making sure you have top  
24 quality water. And on the waste water side, we are



1 able to treat and collect more storm water. So it's  
2 important for us to do that.

3           The people component. So we have over  
4 approximately 2,000 employees in the Water Department.  
5 These employees live in the City, they could be your  
6 neighbors, they could be a part of your family, but  
7 every good business relies on good people who work for  
8 it. And these are employees who, some of them work  
9 24/7 on repairing our facilities, repairing our mains,  
10 replacing our sewers, responding to emergencies,  
11 checking water quality as it goes out to the system.  
12 So people who are sort of dedicated to this issue.

13           Reduced consumption is a problem. When you  
14 think about it, people are more conscious about  
15 conserving water, and this is a national trend around  
16 the Country. We have seen a decrease in water usage,  
17 which means that the unit cost of water goes up when  
18 people use less water, because we have the same  
19 infrastructure that we use in place to make sure that  
20 we get that water out to the backup water.

21           And the decline that we see over the last  
22 four years really equates for this current rate  
23 proposal, about 11 million loss of revenue because  
24 people are using less water. We talked about the sewer

1 management component. We have no choice. We have to  
2 make sure we protect our rivers. We want to make them  
3 fishable, swimmable, accessible and beautiful. We are  
4 required to do that by law. But we also recognize it's  
5 the right thing for us to do, because, again, it is our  
6 drinking resources. It's what we need to survive.

7           So money is going into those programs to  
8 support those efforts. And we're always trying to  
9 balance the money by (inaudible) obligation with the  
10 affordability obligation. So the Rate Board. So the  
11 process we're going through today.

12           Nancy gives a little bit of background about  
13 the Rate Board. The Rate Board was created 2012 by a  
14 City charter change. City Council passed an ordinance  
15 making them official. Rate Board members were selected  
16 by the Mayor and City Council, and the Rate Board is an  
17 independent body who looks at the water parks proposal,  
18 but also assists in what the public has to say about  
19 that and is the public advocate.

20           So everyone's voice makes a difference in  
21 this process. We're currently in the public process  
22 now with the public meeting. The Rate Board will come  
23 to a decision after we have all the testimony, they  
24 look at all the records. Sometime in June. And we're

1 hoping to see a final decision by September 1 where we  
2 actually implement the first phase of the rate  
3 increase.

4           So -- and we want to emphasize that we  
5 appreciate people being here. It's really important  
6 that we're here. The Water Department takes seriously  
7 what we hear from our residents. From the final --  
8 from the last rate process we heard a lot of things  
9 that were important to our customers. One of those was  
10 the need for an Affordable Rates Program. We hear from  
11 a lot of you, low income customers who cannot afford  
12 rate hikes.

13           We did, with a partnership of Community Legal  
14 Services, and with Councilwoman Cody Sanchez, we  
15 created what we call a Tiered Assistance Program. I  
16 have a slide on that. I'll get to that on the next  
17 slide. We also have merged the Water Revenue Bureau  
18 and the Water Department's Customer Contact Center,  
19 where the people call when they have a water sewer  
20 emergency or when they have billing questions.

21           We have gotten a lot of complaints over the  
22 years that you can't get through, or if you finally do  
23 get through, we transfer you to another division. We  
24 transfer you to another department. We have physically

1 merged both of those centers. We're training all of  
2 our staff so that they are cross trained and that they  
3 can answer billing questions or emergency questions.  
4 So we're hoping by July. What we're aiming for is what  
5 we're calling First Call and Resolution. You call, you  
6 get through, we answer your question, so you don't have  
7 to hang on the line too long. Improved language  
8 access.

9           So we have always had language access  
10 available in the call center, but we've taken an  
11 additional step by insuring that our field set has  
12 access to calling in translators when they need them.  
13 And we have a customer service representative visiting  
14 a home, or a construction worker who is on the street,  
15 or somebody who is repairing a water main. If somebody  
16 is asking a question, they have the ability to call and  
17 have that information translated.

18           We've also looked in to translate a lot of  
19 our materials. We have a lot of materials translating  
20 to Spanish and we post that on our website. But we  
21 also have the ability to translate any other language  
22 that's requested. So we want to make sure that  
23 information is available if English is not the first  
24 language. That's Service Line Assistance.

1           So the last rate case, lead in drinking  
2 water, was really in the news. People heard about  
3 Flint, Michigan. We took that seriously, the Public  
4 Utilities did, and so we implemented a Lead Service  
5 Line Replacement Program. When we replace a water main  
6 in the street, we replace at no cost. A new service  
7 line, new customers, we have a lead service line.  
8 We also created a zero interest loan for other  
9 customers where we're not replacing the water mains if  
10 they're concerned about the lead service.

11           And lastly, we are working with Community  
12 Legal Services to ensure that tenants and occupants  
13 have easier access to become a Water Department  
14 customer. We're also looking to take that to the next  
15 step, working with an advisory phase so that those  
16 tenants and occupants who qualify for a TAP Program to  
17 take easier advantage of that.

18           So our TAP program, this is the program that  
19 we're really proud of working with the many partners to  
20 make this happen on July 1. This program is based on  
21 income. So for customers who are between 0 and 150  
22 percent of the Federal poverty level, they can get a  
23 monthly water bill that's based on their income and not  
24 on their usage. So some TAP customers who have applied

1 can get bills as low as \$12 a month.

2 And our goal, and I can go on, is to make  
3 sure that water is always accessible and affordable.  
4 So when a rate increase happens, a TAP customer's bill  
5 does not change, because it's based on their oncome.  
6 So they will not see their bills go up.

7 So what would you see when the increase  
8 happens, as the Water Department has proposed it, this  
9 is not how it is decided as of yet. But we talked  
10 about a three-year phase-in. 10.6 percent over those  
11 three years. So your current bill is about \$66.50.  
12 This September, 2018, we will increase that by 1.1  
13 percent. By September 2019, the following year, we are  
14 going to increase that by an additional five percent.  
15 And the following September, 2020, we're looking to  
16 increase that by 4.5 percent. So that equates to about  
17 a \$7 and 20 cents increase on that monthly bill after  
18 that three year period.

19 So one of our goals is going to make sure  
20 that our customers understand what we do, and we always  
21 want to open our facilities and service to people. We  
22 held open houses this past Saturday in the Southeast  
23 Waste Water Treatment Plant. We want customers to come  
24 in, they can take tours and ask questions. We have a

1 plan to have our Baxter Water Treatment Plant, which is  
2 up in the far Northeast on State Road, 10 o'clock to  
3 1:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. If you're interested, we want  
4 people to sign up and get yourself a behind the scenes  
5 tour of how our water utility works.

6           The public's role. So, again, really  
7 important that you're here. Nancy and the Hearing  
8 Board take all of what the public says, whether it's  
9 your standing up and testifying, because we have a  
10 transcriber. It can be you can send it mail. A letter  
11 to the Rate Board, an e-mail to the Rate Board. All of  
12 that communication is extremely important to the Rate  
13 Board to have and it helps them to evaluate our  
14 proposal.

15           Lastly, we have a survey. We've been doing  
16 customer surveys for three years now and we really want  
17 to make sure you understand how you think we can  
18 improve and how we can do that. So we ask everyone if  
19 they can take the time to drop off the survey. There  
20 might be some at the table. Because we use that  
21 information to really improve our services. So we  
22 thank you all for being here tonight.

23           MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you, Joanne.

24           UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I have questions.

1 MS. BROCKWAY: We'll do questions. We  
2 have one more person to make an introduction and then  
3 we'll get to questions and comments.

4 MS. PICKENS: I'll try to be brief,  
5 because I do want to get to the hearing remarks. Good  
6 evening. Thank you all for being here to bring your  
7 voice to this very important case. My name is Josie  
8 Pickens. I'm here with my colleague, Jolie Price. We  
9 are the lawyers at Community Legal Services. We work  
10 with a team of other employers and we have been  
11 appointed the public advocate to represent the interest  
12 of residential water customers and other small users in  
13 this case.

14 We have a flyer that can further you to voice  
15 your concerns and it lists a few of the bigger issues  
16 that we've identified in this case. In this case the  
17 Water Department is asking for a 116 million rate  
18 increase, which would be phased in over three years.  
19 If this request is approved, your rates would go up  
20 each year, beginning in October, and after two years  
21 we'll have an increase by between 87 to \$95 a year  
22 based on the average bill. This is about an 11 percent  
23 increase. And we want to know what impact that will  
24 have on your household budget.



1           In this case, the rate increase should not be  
2 granted unless it can meet the constitutionally based  
3 legal standard of just and reasonable rates. As the  
4 public advocate we're working with a team of experts to  
5 examine thousands of pages of financial figures that  
6 have been provided by the Water Department. We're also  
7 examining several large policy changes which the  
8 Department is proposing. I want to talk to you about  
9 those policy proposals.

10           In this case, the Water Department wants you  
11 to start paying approximately 8 million per year of  
12 water used by the fire department. And that has  
13 historically been paid out of tax dollars, because  
14 fighting fires is a public good and not a service that  
15 is only available to water customers. The Water  
16 Department also wants you to pay an additional 12  
17 million a year to finance construction projects. And  
18 those projects are supposed to benefit customers  
19 for decades, but their request is that you pay for them  
20 now.

21           The Water Department wants you to pay an  
22 additional \$10 million on top of the 15 million you  
23 already pay for grants to commercial customers and  
24 developers to construct green storm water

1 infrastructure. This is a big increase and we want to  
2 know whether it needs to be paid at once.

3 Now, you just heard from the Department's  
4 representative about the new water affordability  
5 program. We want to know about your experiences with  
6 this program. Have you been able to access it. Have  
7 you had any barriers. Are there other issues that you  
8 would like to see addressed. We also have concerns  
9 about the way the Water Department determines how much  
10 it needs you to pay, because the projections are always  
11 very conservative. And the Water Department has  
12 consistently ended up with more money in the bank than  
13 is (inaudible).

14 The last rate case in June of 2016 that the  
15 Water Department said it needed, that with the 89 and a  
16 half million rate increase that it received, that it  
17 would have 111 million in its Grace Stabilization Fund  
18 as of June 30th of this year. Now in this case, the  
19 Water Department projects that it will have 201 million  
20 in the bank. So in other words, by charging you 89 and  
21 a half million in rates, the Water Department ended up  
22 having 90 million in cash.

23 (Inaudible) policy issues we would want to  
24 hear your feedback on, but we also want to know about

1 your experiences as a water customer, whether they've  
2 been good or bad. So I thank you for being here this  
3 evening.

4 MS. BROCKWAY: We're going to do the  
5 witnesses. If you have a question that somebody from  
6 the Water Department can answer, you might ask them  
7 now.

8 MS. DUNN: (Inaudible.)

9 MS. BROCKWAY: Well, you can talk with  
10 her privately.

11 MS. DUNN: We want everybody to hear  
12 what we're saying. That's why we're here.

13 MS. BROCKWAY: The only reason I'm  
14 giving you a hard time is because --

15 MS. DUNN: Is because you have the power  
16 to do it.

17 MS. BROCKWAY: No. We have a list of  
18 people who have already signed up to talk.

19 MS. DUNN: If anybody objects to my  
20 questions, I have three questions. Number one, who am  
21 I? My name is Madeline Dunn. I'm 84 years old.

22 MS. BROCKWAY: I didn't hear your last  
23 name.

24 MS. DUNN: I've been working in the

1 community since I was 19, because it was important to  
2 do that, okay. Now, the question for you is -- and  
3 congratulations and I hope it's a healthy baby. The  
4 question is, when they raised that money, and they know  
5 they had that money, I even heard that in a meeting.  
6 They gave a lot of that money to the surrounding  
7 suburbs while threatening to turn our water bill off if  
8 we don't pay our bills.

9           So you know what we do, we flush the toilet  
10 once a day. We take a bath every other day. We don't  
11 drink as -- we don't drink no water. Because in the  
12 morning sometimes when we turn it on it smells like it  
13 has Clorox in it and sometimes it has a different kind  
14 of smell. But that money, (inaudible) didn't come back  
15 to those of us who pay.

16           And I want to know everybody in here that  
17 works for the Water Department, could you please stand?  
18 I just want you to stand. I just want to see the  
19 people who work there. Out of 12 people, two black  
20 people. And all the money we spend, all the money we  
21 spend paying bills. Water is money. And can be your  
22 death too. You can't get -- you don't get water, you  
23 can't flush your toilet. If you cut that so that they  
24 have money, and they make these projections, what do

1 you think City Council and (inaudible), if they get  
2 more money then they should have it that they return it  
3 to customers. Is that a good idea?

4 PUBLIC: Yes.

5 MS. DUNN: And for those who can't talk,  
6 I'm sorry the cat got your tongue. Because if you  
7 can't fight for yourself, who's going to fight for you?  
8 I'm 84. I'm not going to be here much longer, but as  
9 long as I'm here I'm going to do it. It is ridiculous.  
10 It is ridiculous. And that's what they did with those  
11 cameras around the City. They took pictures of us  
12 (inaudible). Money over money. They sent it to the  
13 suburbs. The people who already have money over money.  
14 So we want a difference. We want a  
15 difference. A trillion dollars. They wanted to give  
16 a corporation a grant. Is there a grant available for  
17 any of us who would like to have a new hot water heater  
18 when you see in some homes it takes a long time for the  
19 water to get hot? Would they not buy us a new hot  
20 water tank, water heater for the house? You know what  
21 I'm saying? Somebody is taking notes.

22 MS. BROCKWAY: We have somebody  
23 recording what you're saying, but they're having  
24 trouble understanding you. If you can use the mic,

1 that would be great.

2 MS. DUNN: I think I'm just about  
3 finished, because my oxygen goes down. (Inaudible.)  
4 We are forced. Every State in this Country  
5 (inaudible.) And that is my next question. And they  
6 would give us more -- more jobs that make more money?  
7 But we didn't get them. We didn't get them. Other  
8 people got those jobs. And so now not only are we  
9 poor, I'm 84. Where was I going to get any pension  
10 from? Mr. Dunn died in '01 and we had six houses.  
11 Listen to this.

12 They told me that, about seven years ago, my  
13 taxes were \$900 and then they told me I needed to pay  
14 1,800. And then the next year I needed to pay 2,700.  
15 And I said why? Nothing changed in my neighborhood.  
16 Well, actually some people lost their houses. They  
17 lost their houses. 28,000 people today is on the list  
18 of houses going up for sale. 6,000 of them are  
19 seniors. I done spent every penny Mr. Dunn and I  
20 saved. All my bonds are gone, my municipal.  
21 Everything is gone. I'm a poor woman. What am I  
22 supposed to do?

23 I'll take a job. They don't want me in  
24 there. So we hired young white college kids mainly. I

1 see two blacks out of 12. That's a bad ratio any way  
2 you cut it. And I'm not a man, because you don't have  
3 to be. Okay. Now, we bought these condos. These  
4 condos are all over the place. After a while they're  
5 going to build (inaudible). They're going to come and  
6 get it out anyway.

7 I wouldn't dare sign for assistance. I  
8 wouldn't take assistance for medicine. I take some --  
9 the one that cost me \$536 for my lungs. I take it  
10 every third day and I drink my water, okay. Because I  
11 plan to stay here until we get some change. If we  
12 don't work for change, you will all be out of here and  
13 you ain't going to get -- you are not going to do  
14 better moving into the suburbs.

15 We kept this town going and there's a lot of  
16 good stuff in this town that people want, okay. And so  
17 -- and we're the ones who put it here. We are the ones  
18 that put it here. And I say to you, with all of the  
19 love that I have for people, period, and that's just  
20 because of the kind of person I am and God made me that  
21 way, but I notice people moving in here in these  
22 condos. You will get nothing. You will get nothing,  
23 number one. And number two, I don't think they have a  
24 separate water bill, do they?

1 MS. BROCKWAY: A separate what, ma'am?

2 MS. DUNN: Water bill.

3 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: No, they don't have a  
4 water bill like we do. Not per house.

5 MS. BROCKWAY: Let's get an answer to  
6 the question, ma'am.

7 MS. DUNN: I'm sorry.

8 MS. MCCARTY: So you're talking about  
9 the high rise condominiums? They have -- they  
10 typically have a fire connection and what we call a  
11 domestic service. It could be like four inches. So  
12 it's a lot larger than it comes to your home.

13 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: They don't pay for  
14 water like individuals?

15 MS. MCCARTY: Well --

16 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Tell it like it is.  
17 It's four or five departments.

18 MS. BROCKWAY: Ma'am, let her answer and  
19 let's wait until she says the whole thing before you  
20 proceed.

21 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: She's not telling the  
22 truth.

23 MS. BROCKWAY: She hasn't finished.

24 MS. MCCARTY: Typically with the condos,



1 there will be a bill for the fire service and a bill  
2 for the water connection. And the condo homeowners  
3 association would divide the bill. It would be in  
4 their condo fees, if you will. So they wouldn't be  
5 direct customers to us, because the direct customer has  
6 to have an account and a meter. So every customer, or  
7 account, needs a meter, or at least a fire connection.

8 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: How much money per  
9 condo compared to individual homes?

10 MS. MCCARTY: It depends upon --

11 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: It's fact. You can't  
12 justify it.

13 MS. MCCARTY: Well, everybody pays --

14 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: What you charge in a  
15 small house with water shared, \$15 per house. Charging  
16 for lots that are vacant into one little block. We're  
17 paying all of this money. It doesn't compare to what  
18 you're charging a big condo with four, five houses and  
19 connected to the Water Department too. The fire  
20 department. Because we're paying for that too. So  
21 let's talk about money. It's about money.

22 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Excuse me. Let me  
23 understand this. The condos that I see going up in the  
24 community, they do not pay a water bill monthly? Is

1 that what you're saying?

2 MS. MCCARTY: That's not accurate.

3 Everybody that has a connection and has an account  
4 should be paying a water bill. They get a bill. Okay.  
5 Everybody gets a bill. And how a one property -- if  
6 there's several folks living in that one property, then  
7 it's up to that one property, whose ever name that  
8 account is in, to divvy up and figure out how to pay  
9 the bill every month.

10 MS. BROCKWAY: There's a lot of  
11 confusion, obviously.

12 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: It's about money.

13 MR. POPOWSKY: Can we please go forward?  
14 We have a list of people who have come here.

15 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I want to get my  
16 testimony in because I got a lot to say.

17 MS. BROCKWAY: Can we go through the  
18 list of people who have asked to testify.

19 MR. POPOWSKY: Can we go through the  
20 list?

21 MS. BROCKWAY: We'll go by the list.  
22 It's the fairest way.

23 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Huh?

24 MS. BROCKWAY: We are going by the list.

1 It's the fairest way. So the first person I have on  
2 this list, and, boy, I'm going to mess up some of the  
3 names. It looks like Dita White-Williams.

4 MS. WHITE-WILLIAMS: That's me.

5 MS. BROCKWAY: Maybe you can help us get  
6 your name right.

7 MS. WHITE-WILLIAMS: Dita, D-I-T-A,  
8 White-Williams. It's hyphenated.

9 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you.

10 MS. WHITE-WILLIAMS: Hello. My name is  
11 Dita White-Williams and I am here to speak today on  
12 behalf of the Philadelphia Office Benefit Council.  
13 This is a council that is a representative by delegates  
14 who represent other low income service worker members  
15 in the community. I am 57 years old, child care  
16 provider, and I've lived in Philadelphia since 1965.

17 I am greatly disturbed to hear about this  
18 rate hike as someone who works in the child care  
19 profession and is a retired teacher from the school  
20 system, I see a lot of people who are barely making  
21 enough to keep their families together. I see children  
22 coming into school with dirty clothes, dirty uniforms,  
23 dirty hands, and it hurts me to know that someone  
24 doesn't have water at home.

1           One of my students told me she spent her  
2 Christmas holiday at her aunt's house because the water  
3 was being shut off. I work and my wages have not gone  
4 up much over the last 20 years. My property taxes, on  
5 the other hand, have more than quadrupled. My property  
6 taxes were 186 in 2009, when I lost my husband after 30  
7 years. They are now \$1,200 a year. And that was only  
8 because I applied and was accepted for the Homestead  
9 Program.

10           My neighbors across the street went from 186  
11 to 2,000. The Water Department approved a rate hike 2  
12 years ago and the water bill increased almost ten  
13 percent in the last two years. In the last couple of  
14 years the gas electric rates have gone up as well as  
15 food cost. My check has not gone up. I own my home  
16 because I didn't fall within the poverty guidelines and  
17 a rate increase would be very difficult.

18           I'm also speaking on behalf of other members  
19 of the Philadelphia Water Benefit Council who are in a  
20 similar situation as homeowners. We understand that  
21 the Water Department claims that the proposed rate hike  
22 is needed and it's based on the expectations that the  
23 Water Department will lose revenue as more people sign  
24 up for the Tiered Assistance Program known as the TAP

1 Program. This is a faulty expectation.

2 If the Water Department does not shut off  
3 customers who otherwise be getting behind on bills and  
4 allow them to remain water users, the Water Department  
5 will get more revenue, not less. The reality is the  
6 Federal poverty guidelines are not based on reality or  
7 what it takes to survive in Philadelphia. A family of  
8 four would have to make less than 37 a year in order to  
9 be eligible for the TAP Program. I am 600 over what I  
10 need to be eligible for the TAP Program.

11 I make \$13 an hour. If you multiply that  
12 times eight hours a day, five days a week, that comes  
13 to 2,008 a month, or 24,960 for the year. My mortgage  
14 is 750 a month. My monthly expenses include 139  
15 for electric, 169 for my gas, 79 a month to 129 a month  
16 for my cell phone. My car insurance is 269 a month.  
17 My food cost is 200 a month. 60 to 80 for my car  
18 expenses. Because I work too much, but I don't make  
19 enough to pay for health insurance and then I have life  
20 insurance, which is 176 a month. This adds up to 1936  
21 a month. Or 23,232 for the year.

22 This leaves nothing for entertainment or  
23 dressing up or any desserts for my family and me. I  
24 have a 16-year-old daughter who is a honor roll

1 student, perfect attendance and has a career in art. I  
2 won't be able to afford to take her to the beach for  
3 two days, let alone five. Instead I have to make her  
4 work for the summer. Really? After she worked all  
5 year long getting perfect to get great grades in a  
6 school of classes with 25 students where half of them  
7 are off the chain. The teacher has no control.

8 But she sits in class and endures all of that  
9 and gets As and Bs. I should make her work for the  
10 summer? If you increase the eligibility guidelines  
11 for TAP Program for a family of two to 375 instead of  
12 150 percent, then it would mean that for a family of  
13 two they could get the help they need paying their  
14 water bills with the income of \$48,720.

15 If you do the math and figure out how much  
16 more revenue the Water Department would get if those  
17 89,416 houses that were shut off in the last 36 months  
18 were actually able to pay their bills, I don't think  
19 you would need to be sitting here talking about a rate  
20 hike. The United Nations General Assembly in July 2010  
21 recognized a human right for water and sanitation. The  
22 Union recognizes the right for every human being to  
23 have access to sufficient water for personal and  
24 domestic use, which must be safe, accessible and

1 affordable.

2           Water cost should not exceed three percent of  
3 a household income. And if it should be, it should be  
4 accessible. In 2015, September, 193 member nations of  
5 the United Nations, including the United States, agreed  
6 to endorse a 2030 sustainable development goals. Six  
7 States ensure availability and sustainable management  
8 of water and sanitation for all.

9           In other words, almost every government on  
10 the planet endorses a right to water. And yet, in the  
11 wealthiest and most advanced industrial nation in the  
12 world, poor people are denied this most basic human  
13 necessity due to the barbaric practice of shutting off  
14 water services to those who are behind in their bills.

15           The Water Department ongoing rate increases  
16 undermines the human right to water for our lowest paid  
17 workers and their families. The reality is that as  
18 long as the Board does not consider the health and  
19 safety of the rate payers and their inability to pay  
20 the ever increasing water rates, then we must fight for  
21 it and demand the City to do its job and look out for  
22 the public interest.

23           We said, stop water boarding the rate payers.  
24 They are drowning in bills. The Workers Benefit

1 Council demands the Water Board reject the water rate  
2 hike. The Workers Benefits Council demands that the  
3 Water Board impose a year round water moratorium on  
4 water shut for any household that are in below 300  
5 percent of the Federal poverty level.

6 The Workers Benefits demands that the Water  
7 Department reconnect any household that are below 300  
8 percent of the Federal poverty which has been  
9 disconnected and establish a reasonable payment plan  
10 and charge no reconnection fee. The Workers Benefits  
11 Council demands the City of Philadelphia in any  
12 practice of seizure or foreclosure of a residence as a  
13 means to force payment and arrears water bills.

14 The Workers Benefit Council demands a change  
15 to the eligibility guidelines for TAP to 300 percent of  
16 the Federal poverty guidelines, making it possible for  
17 more people to pay their bills. This Country was built  
18 on, In God We Trust. He has been showing us that one  
19 day he can give us summer and the next day turn around  
20 and give us winter.

21 We have been going from the gas and we will  
22 go from gas heating our houses to the electric trying  
23 to cool ourselves off. Because there is no more fall  
24 and there is no more spring. Thank you very much. And



1 you say not for profit? Really?

2 \* \* \*

3 (Applause)

4 \* \* \*

5 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. The next name  
6 that I got here is Jimmy Battle.

7 MR. BATTLE: I was just wondering. The  
8 water is supposed to be a tax, right? But the truth of  
9 the matter is you wonder how much is enough. When I  
10 got my first property we got water bills twice a year.  
11 Then they went up to four times a year. And now I pay  
12 more in a month than I pay for four times a year. So  
13 when does it stop? It keeps going up and up and up.  
14 And we're not getting any more. You know.

15 Corporate, they're getting lower rates, we  
16 get the higher rates. I understand you said everybody  
17 is conserving water, so that's why we need more money.  
18 Why can't you go get it from the corporates who can  
19 afford it. Not from my the neighbors who can't. You  
20 know. We're all suffering. our paychecks aren't going  
21 up, but all my bills are. You know.

22 It's like you're trying to push us out of the  
23 City. You know, if that's the case, then just let it  
24 be known. Don't just keep raising and raising and

1 raising where we can't afford to live in our houses.  
2 You know, put it out there. That's all I have to say.

3 \* \* \*

4 (Applause)

5 \* \* \*

6 MS. BROCKWAY: The next person I have is  
7 Jacqueline Brown.

8 MS. BROWN: Good afternoon. My name is  
9 Jacqueline Brown. I have lived in the City of  
10 Philadelphia for six decades and I am very upset about  
11 this whole process. I was looking on your website on  
12 the Water, Sewer, and Storm Water Rate Board website,  
13 and I see that you have a -- you have a document on  
14 there that talks about your process for department  
15 filings, which this is one.

16 And one of the things that it says is,  
17 beginning with the department making its advance notice  
18 and until the close of the final public hearing, the  
19 department shall post notice of the proposed changes in  
20 rates and charges, including the estimated average  
21 percentage small user bill increase in conspicuous  
22 locations in all Water Department and Water Revenue  
23 Bureau offices that accept customer payments or that  
24 provide customer walk-in service.

1           I work across the street from Municipal --  
2 from the Municipal Services Building and they accept  
3 payment. I went in there Thursday, there -- I looked  
4 all around, there was no sign about these hearings. I  
5 went in there Friday, there were no signs about these  
6 hearings. I went in there Monday, there were no signs  
7 about these hearings.

8           I did not go in today, but I am very  
9 disturbed that you would have these meetings and not  
10 have them posted for people to see. I -- everyone that  
11 I told about these hearings had not heard of them. And  
12 there's a problem. There's a problem. So that's one  
13 of my main concerns I have.

14           And as of yesterday, I saw an article in the  
15 Inquirer about the -- about these hearings and about  
16 the possibility of a rate increase. And that was the  
17 first article I saw. And I would like to say that my  
18 job -- one of the things I do is to look through the  
19 newspapers to get articles for the people with whom I  
20 work so that they can know what's going on in the City.

21           And so yesterday, the 16th, the first day of  
22 the first hearing, was the first time that I saw  
23 anything in print. I have heard nothing on KYW. I  
24 have heard nothing on WHY. I have heard nothing on

1 WURD about these hearings. People don't know. That is  
2 why this room is not packed.

3 Because for somebody to -- what we're  
4 talking, between the last increase rate that you did  
5 and the one that you are proposing now, we're talking  
6 about a 22 percent rate increase. I want to know who  
7 in this room has gotten a 22 percent salary increase in  
8 the past five years. Who? Who? Any way. So that's  
9 very disturbing to me.

10 There's another matter that's disturbing to  
11 me as well. This Water Rate Board is supposed to be an  
12 independent body. Rasheia Johnson is on the water rate  
13 Board. Rasheia Johnson is the treasurer of the City of  
14 Philadelphia. She is appointed by the Mayor. The --  
15 the CLS public advocate submitted a motion asking her  
16 to recuse herself from this Water Rate Board. She is  
17 -- it's a conflict of interest. It is. It just is.

18 I'm also concerned that -- let me see. What  
19 else am I concerned about? I was looking at the -- the  
20 meeting notes that you have for the Water Rate Board.  
21 And there are several months for which there are no  
22 minutes. No notes. For six meetings. May 5th, 2016.  
23 May 12th, 2016, May 19th, 2016, June 6th, 2016, June  
24 16th, 2016. Why are there no minutes -- why are there

1 no meeting minutes for those dates?

2 In addition, on one of the -- one of the  
3 meeting notes that I was reading, it referred to this  
4 process costing \$2 billion for the Water Rate Board to  
5 have these hearings. Now, that's what it said. I  
6 spoke to someone before the meeting who told me the \$2  
7 billion was just wrong. It was a mistake. Well, if  
8 there are errors in the record, the errors need to be  
9 corrected.

10 There are some other matters, but I am not  
11 going to take up any more time. I am going to put  
12 together a written statement and put it on the website.  
13 And for those of you who don't know, you can all -- if  
14 you're not prepared to make a full statement tonight,  
15 or you can't say anything you want to say tonight, you  
16 can go on the website and you can go put your statement  
17 on the website. Thank you.

18 \* \* \*

19 (Applause)

20 \* \* \*

21 MS. BROCKWAY: The next person I have is  
22 Isa A. Almuid, if I'm pronouncing it correctly. Sir,  
23 can you state your name?

24 MR. ALMUID: Isa Almuid. 19143

1 resident. I'm basically, like the sister said, the  
2 increase with the water bill isn't that bad by itself,  
3 but when you add real estate taxes and other things, it  
4 just adds onto a bad situation. My situation is when  
5 it comes to the Water Department they have to do a  
6 better job on selecting who collects outstanding water  
7 bills.

8           It appears, what I'm hearing, in the past is  
9 that they allow a company to get the most recent  
10 outstanding, what is known as accounts receivable. To  
11 collect accounts receivable. They don't give them the  
12 old bills to make it harder for them to earn their  
13 money. They give them the recent ones. Where that  
14 should be more of the City, to get the recent ones.

15           Now, since a fiscal year, June of 2014, they  
16 wrote off, the City wrote off, water bills. Around \$30  
17 million. 2015, they wrote off another \$30 million. In  
18 '16 they did a better job. I think about \$17 million  
19 written off. This is bad debt. I don't know how they  
20 classify it, but this is money that they're not  
21 collecting for whatever reason.

22           This went on years ago when they tried to  
23 make the rates increase again. Collect what is due.  
24 Do a better job with that. That's basically all I have

1 to say.

2 \* \* \*

3 (Applause)

4 \* \* \*

5 MS. BROCKWAY: The next name is Vernell  
6 Lloyd.

7 MS. LLOYD: Thank you very much. Good  
8 evening all of you. My name is Vernell C. Lloyd. I've  
9 been in Philadelphia for a good many years now as a  
10 homeowner. I've lived here almost 60 years. And,  
11 listen, and I primarily lived here in West  
12 Philadelphia. I've been moving around. I've been kind  
13 of stationary. And so over the years I've enjoyed some  
14 things in the 60s when I first come into the City. And  
15 there basically was no water bill in Philadelphia in  
16 the 60s. Unless you owned your property, you paid the  
17 water property once a year if -- if you exceeded the,  
18 the -- the amount of cubic feet of water that they  
19 allowed you to have. Okay.

20 You didn't pay a water bill. It was none.  
21 Okay. In the 60s. When I first came into  
22 Philadelphia. And, you know, that was -- that was kind  
23 of nice. You know, because, you know, nobody makes  
24 water. That is God given, okay. And it's supposed to

1 be free to everybody. So the idea that now our water  
2 has become a commodity of interest for the profiteers,  
3 you know, it's appalling, okay.

4 As years went on, you know, some things  
5 happened and it got to the situation where we got Mayor  
6 Goode. And then they said our water situation needed  
7 to be -- the plant needed to be refurbished. And I  
8 seen them guys say, hey, Mayor, I think they said that  
9 we shouldn't been having any more problems with our  
10 water system in Philadelphia for the next hundred or so  
11 years. I think that's what they said. Okay. So why  
12 are we today here talking about all this money for what  
13 a water system that they had said that they had  
14 foolproofed, okay, when they put the new water plant in  
15 there. All right. That's what I can't understand.

16 Now, listen, I'm not rich. Okay. I'm not  
17 rich anymore. I'll tell you, I'm poverty. I came in  
18 here rich, but guess what, right now I'm standing in  
19 poverty and a lot of people tell me they don't even  
20 know why I'm standing right. Okay. Because the cost  
21 of living on this planet is getting to be too much. We  
22 actually paying too much of every course, on every  
23 situation, to be on this planet.

24 And we've got all these major factors overtop



1 of us. College professors, we got people who have  
2 Master degrees and PhDs, and to this day, I'm going to  
3 tell you something, they are Master degrees and PhD  
4 dummies when it comes to putting what we're supposed to  
5 have on top of us running this United States. Okay.  
6 Now, let's get down to brass tacks. That situation  
7 that -- where they put into play, that land lot water  
8 bill, okay. Water falling out of the air on the ground  
9 and they charge for it.

10 Let me tell you something. I believe it was  
11 Nutter. Nutter said, Mayor Nutter, said that it would  
12 be a short venture. They only had to raise a million  
13 dollars for something that they wanted to get done,  
14 okay, in the Water Department. And he needed about a  
15 million dollars to do that. Okay. So Mayor Nutter had  
16 his -- he had his tenure in there as Mayor and he  
17 bombed. And the water bill is still on the land line.

18 It should have been suspended when he got to  
19 the million dollars. Okay. So where is that money  
20 going? Okay. So they found another avenue to use that  
21 money and still collect it from us, the water falling  
22 on the ground. I cannot afford to pay for water  
23 falling on the ground. Now I called them and  
24 complained about it. You understand me.

1           And then I found that they went over to  
2 Meyers (inaudible) Center and they were over there  
3 talking about the wonderful ways they're still using  
4 that money, which they're not entitled to, because they  
5 were supposed to spend it after Mayor Nutter got the  
6 one million dollars. And I think that it's time for  
7 them to suspend it.

8           Instead of using -- finding another avenue to  
9 use that money as a taxation against us and still  
10 collect it. It's not doing me any good, water falling  
11 on the ground. And probably the way they using it is  
12 probably not to my advantage either. Well, I decided  
13 it wasn't for me to complain about it anymore, because  
14 they had come up with an attachment, a reason to hold  
15 onto it. But I'm complaining about it here tonight and  
16 I'm saying this stuff got to stop. It's got to stop.

17           Not only is it the situation with the water,  
18 but it's a situation with all of the cost of living  
19 factors in the City of Philadelphia. And the tax  
20 system, public tax system is appalling. I'm  
21 a homeowner, and right now I'm telling you, I own two  
22 -- two properties and I owe the City \$44,000. And how  
23 they got this broom on me, I don't -- I don't know.

24           I done complained about it. I got lawyers on

1 it. And the lawyer tell me well, I still have to pay  
2 it. But I just fired him, because he don't want to go  
3 down there and argue with the City. Okay. I fired  
4 him. He tells me I'm a difficult customer. I got a  
5 right to be difficult. You done put me in poverty. I  
6 used to have a little belt, now I got nothing. Okay.  
7 All right.

8           So we're trying to push our senior citizens  
9 into the cemetery real fast, huh? Well, guess what, I  
10 ain't going. Uh-uh. God ain't going to let us go  
11 nowhere until we get these rats off our back. Now, let  
12 me tell you something, Water Department. Where you  
13 should be going to look for the revenue is Harrisburg  
14 and Washington DC. You're supposed to be on the floor  
15 and in the House of Representatives, the Senate, you're  
16 supposed to be in Washington lobbying for the money  
17 that you need to run your municipality.

18           Listen, let me tell you something. The  
19 luxury that you want to enjoy is not in the citizens'  
20 immediate pocket. Because, guess what, most of us only  
21 make seven dollars and forty-five cents an hour. And  
22 when I was working, I'm retired now, they only paid me  
23 \$2 an hour and paid my husband 1.50. You understand  
24 me? So we had to do a lot of math and a lot of

1 (inaudible) to buy two homes with that kind of income.  
2 And we didn't sell no drugs. We didn't do  
3 prostitution. And we didn't sell no liquor.

4 All right. So we come down to the situation  
5 where you want all of this money to rebuild the City,  
6 but you gradually put us out. Then you'll have a new  
7 thing and when we're all dead and pushed out, then  
8 you'll say thanks to the senior citizens that were  
9 here. But we're gone. My Bible says that let no man  
10 take the light in the light till the end. I'm to be  
11 here until the end. You sore rats. Because guess  
12 what, I'm fighting this crap.

13 Today I want my voice and my testimony to  
14 cover the testimony of those people who you, Water,  
15 Water Board, hope you didn't get to. There is nothing  
16 out there. No signs posted. Nobody talking Water  
17 hearing tonight. There is no alertment in the  
18 community as to what's going on over here tonight. I  
19 want my voice and my direction on this situation as a  
20 testimony against what you're asking to pay for 100,000  
21 people that you did not tell about this meeting  
22 tonight. You got that?

23 Now, I'm going to go forward and (inaudible).  
24 You understand me? But I do not think the Water

1 Department should be given this increase. First of  
2 all, I can't even drink the City water. I got to buy  
3 spring water. The majority of people who care anything  
4 about their health in this City are drinking spring  
5 water. You know.

6 Listen, there was a point in time when I  
7 couldn't take a bath in City water, and I called in and  
8 complained about it. Guess what, because it itched me.  
9 So they did make a change. Because I noticed it. And  
10 whatever they put in the water. I told them, I said  
11 this stuff is itching me. I can't take a bath in it  
12 every day. Now, I don't have a water bill problem at  
13 my home, because I got sensibility.

14 When the rates started going up and I saw  
15 that it was going to be a menacing problem, I called  
16 the plumber and I had him put water -- you know, a  
17 shutoff valve in strategic points where my water is at.  
18 Like in the basement at the sink. In the back of the  
19 toilet I got a shutoff there, okay. Wherever I got a  
20 water intake coming, there is a shutoff valve. So that  
21 means day and night those valves are shut off unless  
22 I'm -- they're using them. They just don't flow.

23 The water in the -- in my toilet, the same  
24 thing. I cut it off. I cut it off at night when I go

1 to bed. It's off during the day and it's off until  
2 it's used. Anybody comes in there, I get a visitor,  
3 they say, oh, there ain't no water. I say, no, it's  
4 controlled. When you finish your business, you got to  
5 (inaudible) and flush it.

6 All right. See, I come old school. When I  
7 was a little girl we didn't have inside utilities. We  
8 had an outhouse Um-hum. And it was a lot of luxuries  
9 we didn't have. We didn't have luxury. Electric in  
10 the house, I didn't have. I couldn't (inaudible) in my  
11 house when I was a child. Oh, by the way, I'm almost  
12 73, but I tell everybody I'm 37.

13 But, at any rate, listen, we didn't have gas  
14 or oil, you know. We had to go out and cut our own  
15 logs and make our own fires. So what I'm trying to  
16 tell you, my -- my background as a child was, you know,  
17 out of the tempered west, you know, as they would say.  
18 But, guess what, I learned a lot. And right now, I'm  
19 telling you, I'm -- you know, I invented my days as  
20 a child and reminiscent about that, because those are  
21 my best days.

22 And all I've been told by you guys is that in  
23 this (inaudible) that you've created for me is a  
24 nightmare, okay. That this is the best. But this is

1 going to be horrible. Because I don't know where I'm  
2 going to get the money from. They don't hire 73 year  
3 old people too fast. I talked some folks into giving  
4 me a little work last summer. I don't know what I'm  
5 going to get this summer to deal with this \$44,000 that  
6 I owe the City for property taxes.

7 Now, let me tell you something. I pay them  
8 on property taxes, I pay them one time \$13,000, but  
9 they told me I paid it too slow. I have to pay again.  
10 Interest rate. What the hell you going to do when  
11 you're a senior citizen with no income, retired, and  
12 Social Security don't give you that much? I go and  
13 talk to the Social Security Board and they say, hey, we  
14 give you what we give you and we ain't giving you no  
15 more.

16 I said, the tax department don't want to hear  
17 that. Where am I going to get it from? Now the water  
18 company has got to learn, okay, to conserve like we do,  
19 okay. We are not your cash cow. You can't come  
20 running to our wallet every time you want to have a big  
21 sizeable raise in income. You know, when you want more  
22 money in your pockets for salaries, luxuries and things  
23 that you want to do.

24 I don't have the statistics, but I can just

1 imagine, okay. Listen, you're gonna have to go to  
2 Washington. You're going to have to go to Harrisburg.  
3 You're going to have to go somewhere else to get this  
4 money, because the few that is left up in here, we are  
5 protesting strong, because we are seeing. Our eyes are  
6 open and we are seeing that we are being (inaudible).  
7 We are seeing that we are being taken advantage of.  
8 And we are seeing you are doing it to us because we are  
9 senior citizens, you think we can't find fight back.

10 But we know the story here in Philadelphia.  
11 The story in Philadelphia is this. The whole  
12 municipality here intend to eat up the senior citizens  
13 like oatmeal cookies and ginger snaps and we ain't  
14 going to go for it. Got it? We're not going for it.  
15 Thank you.

16 \* \* \*

17 (Applause)

18 \* \* \*

19 MS. BROCKWAY: Well, the next name I  
20 have, I can't work it out. Bazemore?

21 MS. BAZEMORE: That's me. Hello  
22 everybody. And I want to thank the Community Legal  
23 Service for making it possible that some of us heard  
24 about this meeting, because it was not noted. This is



1 my church, and we didn't even get the notice. But I'm  
2 not going to talk a lot about the Water Department.  
3 It's about our City. Our City is not for sale. And we  
4 need to actually have the City investigate it on the  
5 water, the gas, and PECO. Because none of them are  
6 legal.

7           And people who are making these laws are not  
8 about us. And they have no merit and we're asking City  
9 Council must work with Community Legal Service to find  
10 out how all of this is investigated. I am a senior and  
11 basically the Water Department has instituted the  
12 health program, which if you don't know what it is,  
13 it's about the sewer. And then it's your regular water  
14 department.

15           Now, the Water Department also put in our  
16 homes a \$15 sewer, but the Sewer Department, which is  
17 health, they are making us pay for water in our mains.  
18 And I had to pay a \$4,000 bill because they said that  
19 the water was blocked up the street. And this is  
20 something because the City had all these old pipes.  
21 And so the health thing is a five year contract  
22 separate from the water bill. And what they have done,  
23 and people need to know how you're being screwed. It's  
24 a contract that you can pay five years for a certain

1 amount that you agreed to and it's separate.

2 Understand when I say separate from your  
3 water bill. Last year they combined the sewer bill  
4 with our water bill and it's under one contract. It's  
5 illegal because they cannot do it. But what you don't  
6 really know is thanks to the Community Legal Service  
7 they came out and gave us a presentation, because us  
8 people don't know that your water bill is attached to  
9 your house.

10 And so when they combine your water bill with  
11 a \$4,000 sewer bill, your house is going to be in  
12 closure. We're losing all our houses through the  
13 manipulation of these developers coming in doing all of  
14 this crazy stuff that you don't know in order to take  
15 our homes. Philadelphia was the highest homeownership  
16 in the Country. Now we are the poorest City and our  
17 homeowner is 41 percent.

18 It's tied up to our real estate. It's tied  
19 into everything. And I say that we need to investigate  
20 how the City do business. Thank you.

21 \* \* \*

22 (Applause)

23 \* \* \*

24 MS. BROCKWAY: We have a Charlotte.

1 MS. MEARS: Good evening everyone. I  
2 just wanted to ask a question. Now, they came, and my  
3 neighbor and I looked out the window. This was in the  
4 late '90s. We saw two guys from the Water Department  
5 digging up the sidewalk. We knew what they were doing,  
6 so we just stood there and watched them, looking out  
7 our windows. Next thing we know, we get a bill in the  
8 mail. She got one for 500 -- it was \$600. And I got  
9 one for \$600.

10 So I said, well, what did they do that we  
11 asked them to do that they charging us \$600 for it.  
12 And furthermore, what does it have to do with our  
13 property, because you're out there on the sidewalk.  
14 That's your equipment. We didn't ask you to do  
15 anything in our houses. We had to call in contractors,  
16 okay. The next thing I know, years later, I'm getting  
17 a help loan that I didn't ask for and somebody signed  
18 my name.

19 I mean, they forged my name on a loan. So  
20 I'm in the process of fighting that, which is why I'm  
21 here tonight, via Community Legal Services. I didn't  
22 know nothing about this meeting either. But they told  
23 me I should be here, because that was illegal. They  
24 broke the law. That's forgery. They signed my name.

1 I got the papers to prove it. I have my signature, my  
2 legal signature since 35 years ago until now, and that  
3 signature on those papers is not my signature.

4 And I don't have any intention of paying them  
5 \$600 for something I didn't ask for. And the  
6 contractor, some funny name, Freddy D's, or something.  
7 Somebody I didn't even heard of, going to tell me if  
8 you don't pay it, they going to cut your water off.  
9 Well, wait a minute, what gives him the right to say  
10 y'all going to cut my water off? Hello?

11 But the fact of the matter is, I never asked  
12 for any help loan. I didn't know nothing about a help  
13 loan. I didn't ask you to do anything to my house.  
14 Oh, wait a minute. They came in my house and asked for  
15 my ID to make sure I was the homeowner. Well, when did  
16 that happen? Because we stood there looking out the  
17 window and nobody came and asked us nothing. Okay.  
18 They took money I was paying on my water bill and put  
19 it on the help loan. So the bank called me. That's  
20 how I found that out.

21 So when I called them, now I went down there,  
22 took my papers with my signature and the phony  
23 signature that was on the help loan. I wasn't back  
24 home in my house before that woman called me on the

1 phone and said, well, we're taking all your money and  
2 putting it on your bill. I said thank you. But I'm  
3 still going to fight it, because you had no business  
4 signing my name to no loan. That was a crime when they  
5 did that.

6 But I'm not surprised, because they doing a  
7 lot of underhanded things. A lot of underhanded  
8 things. And it doesn't surprise me, because it's all  
9 money driven. It's greed driven. Okay. But it's not  
10 fair. It doesn't make it fair. Because you can't just  
11 be doing anything you want to do to people, okay.  
12 You're going to have to pay some kind of way for the  
13 wrong that you do. You're going to have to pay.

14 Now, what they're not going to tell you is  
15 all over this Country, there is a water shortage. Now  
16 they know on Wall Street and they're investing in that,  
17 okay. I mean, look, they're feeding cows corn. Since  
18 when did cows start eating corn? I mean, they usually  
19 eat grass, right? Did anybody notice that beef taste  
20 different now? You didn't notice it yet? You will.  
21 Believe me.

22 There's a water shortage, and it's not just  
23 here. It's all over the world. And God said he's  
24 going to do it. Because, you know, what happens in a

1 Country is directly connected to what the people do  
2 with Him. Okay. Direct correlation between what  
3 they're doing in that Country and what they're doing in  
4 his eyes. It is wrong. Believe me. You don't have to  
5 pay attention to it. But it's happening. He said he  
6 was going to do it.

7           There is a water shortage, but they know on  
8 Wall Street. Nobody else does, though. When you find  
9 out, it's going to be too late. Okay. But read your  
10 Bible. Read your Bible. I'm telling you. Everything  
11 happening He said was going to happen because He said  
12 he's going to do it. He said he was going to do it.

13           But I want to know who I can talk to here  
14 tonight about this forgery. That's what I want to  
15 know. Because I called the lawyers too. They told me  
16 about this meeting and to make sure I was here. So I'm  
17 here. I don't intend to pay for something I didn't ask  
18 for.

19           MS. BROCKWAY: Ma'am, the gentleman  
20 sitting in the middle of that row, Mr. Dussett, is a  
21 lawyer for the Department. He'd be a good person to  
22 talk with.

23           MS. MEARS: Okay. Thank you. Because I  
24 don't intend on paying for something that I didn't ask

1 for. That's not fair to me. And it wasn't fair for  
2 them to sign my name on a loan. That's a crime. It is  
3 a crime. And I want something done about it. I don't  
4 intend to pay this. I'm not going to pay it. My  
5 neighbor is gone now. God bless her heart. But she  
6 was the same way. We don't think we should have to do  
7 that.

8           And I sympathize with everybody here, because  
9 I know what you're going through. Because I'm  
10 a homeowner too. I know what you're going through with  
11 these bills. And I'm retired too. And it's just  
12 terrible. I take care of a 15-year-old grandson. And  
13 he's in a private school. And the income only goes so  
14 far. And when people start forcing you to pay stuff,  
15 especially something you never asked for. You know, it  
16 kind of -- it pisses you off, you know.

17           MS. BROCKWAY: You might also talk with  
18 Josie Pickens from CLS. Sounds like you have been  
19 working with CLS?

20           MS. MEARS: Um-hum. Thank you.

21                           \*   \*   \*

22                           (Applause)

23                           \*   \*   \*

24           MS. BROCKWAY: Next person is Peter

1 House. Peter House.

2 \* \* \*

3 (No response)

4 \* \* \*

5 MS. BROCKWAY: These are all the people  
6 whose names I have on the list. But there may be  
7 people who didn't know about signing on the list, or  
8 who heard something they want to say something about  
9 now. So is there anybody here -- ma'am, if you come  
10 up. Give your name and spell it.

11 MS. ROBERTS: Hello, everyone. My name  
12 is LaRhonda Roberts. I am a single mother of four. My  
13 oldest being 15, my youngest being two. I have three  
14 in private school. I work part-time. Was working two  
15 jobs, but I had to leave one, because I have no one to  
16 help me with my kids. This increase is not going to  
17 cut it for me. I don't make that much money.

18 I'm currently paying taxes on my  
19 grandfather's house because he passed. I'm paying back  
20 taxes. And I'm having a problem. I'm here because I  
21 want to know who I can talk to, because I'm having a  
22 problem with even becoming a customer for the Water  
23 Department. They're telling me that they can't help  
24 me. But I can pay taxes on this house, but I can't



1 have no water. They just don't make sense to me.

2 Out of my four I have two that are very sick  
3 and require water. Not that my other two don't require  
4 water. They all require water. But I have two very  
5 sick ones. And I'm here to find out who I can talk to  
6 get some help.

7 MS. BROCKWAY: The folks in the back  
8 should be able to help you.

9 MS. ROBERTS: This doesn't make sense.  
10 I'm not as old as some of these other people in here.  
11 But I do disagree with this increase. I'm going to be  
12 up in age and when I get up there how much am I going  
13 to be paying for water? How much is my kids going to  
14 be paying for water? Like the lady over here said,  
15 it's supposed to be free. And it just -- it just  
16 doesn't make sense.

17 MS. BROCKWAY: Ma'am, is the situation  
18 that you don't have the papers for your grandfather's  
19 house so they won't give you -- they won't give you  
20 a --

21 MS. ROBERTS: With my particular  
22 situation, they're telling me that this person had it,  
23 that person had, the person who had it has passed, and  
24 then another company had it and then that company

1 folded. Now nobody can find anybody. But y'all taking  
2 my money.

3 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: And they will take  
4 that money.

5 MS. ROBERTS: And that's what I was  
6 told. Even though I'm paying the taxes, because of the  
7 water situation they can still take this house. Like  
8 how? How?

9 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: That's because they  
10 put the water (inaudible) on your house.

11 MS. BROCKWAY: So this does sound like  
12 something that Josie Pickens from CLS might help you  
13 with.

14 MS. DUNN: On the 26th, we have made a  
15 call to the Governor and the Attorney General and I  
16 hope I have (inaudible.) We are asking for (inaudible)  
17 and nothing be sold in this City until they get all  
18 this garbage straightened out.

19 \* \* \*

20 (Applause)

21 \* \* \*

22 MS. BROCKWAY: We're just about over. I  
23 see somebody else with his hand up.

24 MR. EVANS: I'm Dan Evans. I live in

1 Rosemont. I would like to say something. This is very  
2 important. I mean, we can't do this throughout the  
3 flood, but we just got to believe Jesus is going to  
4 help you through this. I mean, no matter, He can help  
5 you through the worst situations. All it takes is  
6 dedication to his Word. Just read it. Meditate on it.  
7 Day and night. Every second. Every minute. He woke  
8 you up this morning. Believe in life. He put movement  
9 in your body.

10 MS. BROCKWAY: Mr. Evans.

11 MR. EVANS: Breath in your lungs. He  
12 can outdo any disease. He created the universe. He  
13 caused the flower to grow. So just believe. Believe  
14 and trust in Him. Because believe you me, without Him  
15 you don't want to go there. You don't want to go  
16 there. Just keep on trusting. He'll make it happen.  
17 Keep on trusting. Keep on fighting. And believe.

18 MS. BROCKWAY: So is there anybody else  
19 who has not had a chance to speak who would like to  
20 speak before we close the meeting?

21 MS. DUNN: We've been working on this  
22 other project for about a month and they've been having  
23 hearings and not enough people come out there. Or if  
24 you watch PCN or some of the public service stations

1 across this Country it's happening. All of the brown  
2 and yellow people are supposed to belong out of the  
3 City. They want the City back. We pay taxes.

4 I've been in my home 54 years. I cannot  
5 believe that I was paying \$900 tax and now I'm paying  
6 over \$3,000 taxes. I don't have no money. I still  
7 can't get over it. I pray. I do pray. But I'm  
8 looking for a job. And I can work. I can work. As  
9 long as these lungs hold and I get this medicine every  
10 second day and third day in and I drink the water. You  
11 only need so much heat. Pray and exercise. It's good  
12 for all of this. For the lungs. You got to do what  
13 you got to do. So get busy. Everybody needs to work.

14 On the 26th we're going to be in front of the  
15 Governor's office on South Broad Street. We put in a  
16 permit from 10:00 to 2:00. We're asking him and the  
17 Attorney General. They had a hearing. They said they  
18 heard the people. And we say if you don't, you get a  
19 vote. I've been a Democrat. I am now a dedicated  
20 human being and I will only vote for people who  
21 understand our needs and willing to work for them.

22 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you very much.

23 MS. LLOYD: Vernell Lloyd. It's late,  
24 folks, in the game. All of you listen here. We have

1 been bruised terribly. And it is our neighborhood. We  
2 have today to wake up. So we got to move with  
3 expedience. We got to move fast. We got to. We have  
4 to move, you know, with a plan to save the little bit  
5 that we got. That's left. You know what I mean.  
6 Because they're taking so much from us.

7           There are areas where they have come in they  
8 (inaudible.) Okay. And they plan on taking the rest  
9 of it. Now, listen, you tell the people, you know,  
10 that's around associated with, make it your business to  
11 make sure you tell the people. And tell them to tell  
12 somebody else about these meetings and hearings.  
13 Situations like on Broad Street that they're getting  
14 ready to put together, so they can all show up.

15           Our young people are of the mind that paying  
16 rent is the best way to go. You understand? Because  
17 they see how much their parents are going through  
18 trying to hold onto their homes. You know. And my  
19 other son, it irritates me so bad that he wants to pay  
20 rent. His father, grandfather, grandmom, his mother,  
21 we've always -- we are a family of homeowners. We've  
22 never paid rent to anybody.

23           But he is of the mind that this rent paying  
24 thing is the way to go. Because he seen the hell that

1 the City is putting us through trying to hold onto our  
2 homes paying water bills and going through water bills.  
3 You know. The property taxes out the window. And he  
4 seen me actively praying every night that nobody --  
5 anybody taking me over, take my property. Okay. And  
6 I'm telling you, in the last year two, 71, 72, 73 years  
7 old, I've been on the pavement. I don't have a car. I  
8 have a shopping cart, okay.

9 So you all got to do your work, because they  
10 intend, when we're gone, they intend to make our  
11 children economical (inaudible). They all going to be  
12 paying rent. You got that?

13 MS. BROCKWAY: We have to close the  
14 hearing now. But we have until 8:30 in this hall if  
15 people want to -- if you got to talk with one another.  
16 Is there anybody else who wants to make a comment?

17 \* \* \*

18 (No response)

19 \* \* \*

20 MS. BROCKWAY: We're going to close the  
21 formal part of the hearing now. I want to thank you  
22 all for coming out and making -- usually the work of  
23 a bureaucrat is very dull and you make it palatable for  
24 us. If you feel like there is something more you want

1 to say, or you want to reenforce something that you  
2 have said, remember that we have a website and there is  
3 an e-mail address.

4 We don't -- unfortunately, we can't take  
5 telephone messages. But if you don't have internet  
6 access you can send us a letter. And again, it's going  
7 to be my job to read everything that everybody sends in  
8 and go back over these transcripts to understand what  
9 people had in mind.

10 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Where's the website  
11 where we can put our written statements?

12 MS. BROCKWAY: It's on the Water Rate  
13 Board website.

14 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: It's on the handout.

15 MS. BROCKWAY: We're going to close the  
16 hearing. Thank you very much.

17 \* \* \*

18 (Whereupon, presentation adjourned.)

19 \* \* \*

20

21

22

23

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, Lisa M. Cooper, a Court Reporter and Notary Public, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and accurate transcript of my original stenographic notes taken at the time and place hereinbefore set forth.

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Lisa M. Cooper  
Court Reporter and Notary Public

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