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PHILADELPHIA WATER, SEWER & STORM WATER RATE BOARD

PUBLIC INPUT HEARING

Monday, April 16, 2018

Scheduled for 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Parkway Central Library

1901 Vine Street

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

REPORTED BY: Krista L. Schultz

HELD BEFORE:

Nancy Brockway, Hearing Officer

Sonny Popowsky, Chairman

Tony Ewing, Board Member

ALSO PRESENT:

Debra A. McCarty, Philadelphia Water Commissioner

Joanne Dahme, General Manager of Public Affairs

Andre Dasent, Esquire

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 MS. BROCKWAY: My name is Nancy Brockway.

4 I'm the hearing officer hired by the
5 Philadelphia Water, Sewer & Stormwater Rate
6 Board to conduct hearings for the Rate Board.
7 I'm also to make a recommendation to the Board
8 at the end of the process, but the Board will
9 make the decision. We have two Board members
10 with us today at the hearing board, Sonny
11 Popowsky and Tony Ewing, another member of the
12 Board.

13 The -- this hearing will be transcribed,
14 and we hope that if you want to talk we really
15 encourage you to do that, but there have been
16 some signup sheets floating around and that
17 would help us to see what's going on.

18 The Board is independent of the Water
19 Department. Members are appointed by the Mayor.
20 But for informational purposes, we want to start
21 with giving the Department an opportunity to
22 present its elevated speech on the increase, and
23 -- I shouldn't say that, should I? I tend to be
24 flip sometimes. That's why I'm not on the

1 Supreme Court. The Department would like to
2 introduce the proposal that it has put before
3 the Board, and first we'll start with the
4 Commissioner of the Water Department --

5 MR. HAVER: Hearing examiner, is there a
6 sign-in sheet for those of us who'd like to
7 testify?

8 MS. BROCKWAY: Oh, there has been. We'll
9 go off the record.

10 (Whereupon, a discussion was held off the
11 record.)

12 MS. BROCKWAY: Back on the record.

13 MR. HAVER: When I came in I asked where
14 do I go to sign up to testify. I was told to
15 come into this room. When I came into this
16 room, there was no signup sheet to testify. I
17 went back out there and they gave me something
18 to sign in that doesn't say I want to testify.
19 Doesn't even have a check mark.

20 If I may be so bold, I have been coming to
21 Water hearings for many years, I've gone to many
22 different hearings, this is the first time in my
23 memories where nobody has made it possible for
24 me to say, "I want to be heard," and I don't

1 understand it.

2 I thank you, Mr. Dasent, for giving me the
3 sheet now. I will fill it out. But I hope for
4 the future hearings that you will take care of
5 this and not put consumers and rank-and-file
6 people who may not feel quite as comfortable
7 standing up and speaking, as I do, a chance to
8 be heard. Thank you.

9 MS. BROCKWAY: Absolutely. And, actually,
10 I don't think this is the first time when the
11 sign-in sheet was absent an opportunity to show
12 that you want -- we've had this -- I don't know
13 what you call it. The Department puts out this
14 sheet, and last time the Board put out a
15 different sheet, but we didn't get people to
16 sign both and it became complicated, so we
17 decided to just stick with the Department's.

18 But you're correct that it doesn't show
19 anything about indicating an interest in
20 speaking, and we have been in touch with the
21 Department. Before the next public hearing,
22 that will be taken care of. Meanwhile, counsel
23 for the Department, Andre Dasent, who is
24 standing there, has been going around and asking

1 people individually.

2 All right. Without further ado, Debra
3 McCarty would like to address the assemblage.
4 Assembly?

5 MS. McCARTY: Thank you, Nancy.

6 And I would also point out that Nancy has,
7 at the previous public hearings that I've
8 attended with her, which they're all of them,
9 she's very good about even if you haven't signed
10 up, you can speak up. So, she does solicit
11 folks, anybody else that wants to speak. And
12 please know that that, of course, is welcomed by
13 all.

14 I want to welcome everybody here on what
15 was a rainy Monday and now seems hopefully it
16 won't be raining anymore. It's still a little
17 wet out there.

18 The -- we take this very seriously,
19 raising rates. All of us live here that work
20 for the Water Department, and work very hard to
21 control costs and keep it as affordable as
22 possible for all of our customers. And we've
23 done a lot, and Joanne's going to share what
24 we've done and what we're doing, to try to keep

1 rates down and why we believe that we do need
2 to, unfortunately, raise the rates.

3 So, I'd like to introduce -- oh, the other
4 thing that I do want to mention, if anyone here
5 has any issues with their bills or any other
6 questions, you can -- you know, please feel free
7 to ask. We have folks back there that are ready
8 and willing and able to assist with any problems
9 you might have, billing or otherwise. So, feel
10 free to go back and speak with them at any time
11 during this hearing and we're -- we're here to
12 assist in any way we can. So, thank you.

13 With that, I'd like to turn the -- it over
14 to Joanne Dahme. She's our manager of public
15 affairs.

16 MS. BROCKWAY: As Joanne is coming up, let
17 me give a couple more announcements: We also
18 have with us here representatives of the
19 people's advocate -- the public advocate. The
20 Board has hired Philadelphia Community Legal
21 Services to represent the interests of
22 ratepayers in the technical hearings that come
23 up, and after Joanne has finished her
24 presentation I'd invite them to give a brief

1 hello.

2 Okay. Joanne.

3 MS. DAHME: Thank you. Good morning,
4 everybody. What I will be doing is providing a
5 general overview on the Water Department
6 services and we'll dive into some of the causes
7 for the proposed rate increase.

8 Also want to mention there is a survey, so
9 hopefully if everyone has gotten a copy of the
10 survey and takes some time afterwards to fill
11 that out. It's one of our goals, to get a
12 better understanding about our customers'
13 opinions about how well we're doing.

14 I always like to begin about the
15 Department. We are a City department, but we're
16 also a public utility and our fees are based on
17 cost of service. We do not make a profit. So,
18 the monthly bill that our customers pay for
19 water, sewer and sewer management services are
20 really the funding we need in order to continue
21 operating in a high-performing way, making sure
22 we meet our mandate for safe drinking water and
23 clean wastewater.

24 The safety of our public is certainly our

1 top priority. We are really proud of an
2 unblemished record of providing really safe,
3 healthy drinking water. We've been recognized
4 by the EPA, the DEP. We always go above and
5 beyond what the standards are for doing that.
6 The reason we are successful with that is that
7 we have a really robust water infrastructure
8 system. We have three drinking water plants, we
9 have over 3,000 miles of water mains, and we
10 have people who are dedicated to this service
11 and ensure that we have a 24/7 operation and
12 continue to provide top quality service and
13 drinking water.

14 On the wastewater side, our rivers are our
15 drinking water sources, so our commitment to
16 ensuring that those sources are kept clean is a
17 real high commitment. We have three wastewater
18 treatment facilities. The goals of those plants
19 are to ensure that the wastewater it received is
20 cleaned and treated and delivered back to the
21 river in a way that's cleaner than the river
22 itself. We take a lot of pride in that. Our
23 rivers are probably the cleanest they've been in
24 150 years, and that's a testament to the Clean

1 Water Act and to the operations of the
2 Department and other utilities like us.

3 Our sewer infrastructure. So, stormwater
4 is the growing component of what we do.
5 Stormwater management is really important,
6 because stormwater can be the number one
7 pollutant, and, also, in this day and age it's a
8 challenge to our current system. So, stormwater
9 management is about 23 percent of our current
10 capital budget.

11 The Green City, Clean Waters program, as
12 some of you may have heard of, is one of the
13 largest stormwater management initiatives. The
14 goal of that program is really to manage the
15 water in an environmentally-friendly way,
16 catching rain from the surface, but allows us to
17 take advantage of a really robust sewer
18 infrastructure that lies beneath the streets,
19 that you don't see but that provides us with the
20 ability to provide extra capacity to that
21 system.

22 So, why do we need a rate increase? And
23 that's why all of you are here today. We are
24 requesting a rate increase for over a three-year

1 period to help us generate approximately 116
2 million in operating revenues, and that's about
3 10.6 percent over that three-year period to what
4 our customers experience on their bill.

5 We talk about infrastructure needs -- I
6 don't know if any of you saw the article in the
7 Inquirer this morning, which was a really nice
8 summary, it talks about the upcoming public
9 meetings, also -- but our infrastructure in an
10 older city, the average age of our mains is
11 about 70 years old. We think about this past
12 winter, between December and February we had
13 over 600 water main breaks. Yeah, that's
14 because of the extreme cold, but it also shows
15 we have an aging system, and if you have a lot
16 of old pipes in that system, you're going to
17 have breakages. So, our goal is to really
18 increase the water main replacement rate from 28
19 to 40 miles per year over the next five years.
20 Also, looking to step up our sewer replacement
21 rate.

22 We also need to expand our facilities.
23 We're going to be doing more water in our
24 treatment plants and we have to expand our

1 wastewater treatment plants to manage additional
2 stormwater to meet our regulatory obligations.

3 People are always an important component
4 of that. Our City employees are also probably
5 your neighbors, could be your family. We live
6 here in the City. But the people run our
7 plants, the people repair our mains, our sewers,
8 they respond to emergencies, they monitor our
9 drinking water quality. We have a workforce of
10 approximately 2,000 people. Certainly, there is
11 a cost associated with having a workforce like
12 that, so that's also a component of that.

13 Reduced consumption. So, that is
14 something that we are seeing not just in
15 Philadelphia, but nationally. Consumption over
16 the last ten years has certainly gone down. We
17 have -- I think everyone in the room probably
18 has -- or thinking about water conservation with
19 those devices on showerheads, toilet dams,
20 faucet aerators. So, we have certainly seen our
21 water consumption go down about 1.75 percent
22 over the last four-year period.

23 So, that equals about \$11 million in
24 potential loss of operating revenues, because of

1 that water consumption decrease, so it means
2 there's a rise in the -- I'm sorry, am I echoing
3 -- in the unit cost of those services. So, that
4 certainly has a component to that.

5 Environmental regulations. So, that's
6 really about the stormwater management
7 component. Stormwater management, the need to
8 clean up our rivers, it's a regulatory
9 obligation. EPA requires us to do that. We
10 agree that it's something that's necessary,
11 needs to be done, but does have a cost factor.
12 We're always trying to balance our environmental
13 obligations with affordability.

14 So, the Rate Board, Nancy introduced the
15 Rate Board, the Rate Board was established in
16 2012 by City Charter. City Council passed an
17 ordinance. This is the second rate process that
18 the Rate Board is evaluating. They certainly
19 have a really important role, but as the public
20 has an equally important role, they will be
21 evaluating our rate proposal, working with a
22 public advocate who also evaluates and comments
23 on the rate proposal. But everyone in this room
24 and those who cannot make meetings have an

1 opportunity to comment in a variety of ways, and
2 the Rate Board certainly looks at all of those
3 comments and takes all that into consideration.
4 Right here we have the public comment period.
5 We have a number of public meetings throughout
6 April until the end of April. The decision will
7 be made sometime in June. Depending upon what
8 the decision is, we hope to implement the first
9 component of the rate increase in September.
10 So, that's sort of the quick timeline.

11 Again, I want to reiterate how important
12 it is that people do voice their opinion for --
13 for the Water Department. Even as it impacts
14 our rates, we want to hear from customers so we
15 have a better understanding about what you think
16 we need to do better and what programs we should
17 be focusing on.

18 At the last rate increase we heard a lot
19 of discussion regarding impacts on low-income
20 customers. We worked with Councilman
21 Quinones-Sanchez, we worked with Community Legal
22 Services to create a low-income assistance
23 program that's based on usage -- I'm sorry,
24 based on your income, but not on your usage.

1 I'll talk a little more about that program in a
2 little bit.

3 We heard a lot of talk about frustration
4 about getting through to our call centers and
5 who to call, Water Department versus the Water
6 Revenue Bureau regarding billing and
7 collections. We have been working on a merger
8 for a long time. We recently successfully
9 physically merged in one building using one
10 number and we're cross-training our staff so
11 that we have what we call first-call resolution;
12 you call, you don't get transferred, we're able
13 to address your issue.

14 We've been looking to improve our language
15 access. We certainly adhere to the Mayor's
16 office to have -- requires every department to
17 have an improved language access program. We've
18 always had one at our call centers, but we have
19 expanded that so that our crews that are in the
20 field, people working in the streets, customer
21 service that visits people's properties,
22 construction, they have the ability to call up
23 using a card to have translation services when
24 required if they need somebody in the street who

1 needs that. We're also really dedicated to
2 ensuring that we have -- a lot of our materials
3 are translated, a lot of Spanish materials,
4 those that get requested for any other language,
5 make sure we provide that service.

6 Lead service lines. So, that was a big
7 issue reviewed the last time we did rate
8 hearings in 2016. We have dedicated, committed
9 our resources to ensure that when we are
10 replacing water mains in the street, if you, a
11 property, has a lead service line, we replace
12 that lead service line at no cost to the
13 customer. We also have a 0 interest loan
14 program for a service line that doesn't need to
15 be defective, but if it's lead and people have
16 concerns about that, we will replace that.

17 We've also been working with Community
18 Legal Services on tenant and occupant customer
19 applications, making that process a little bit
20 easier. We're working with an advisory
21 committee to ensure that once the tenant or
22 occupant is a low-income-approved customer, that
23 we have -- you can apply, have easy access to
24 our new low-income program called TAP.

1 So, managing costs. We do our best to
2 keep costs as low as possible. You know,
3 despite growing costs in the unit service, costs
4 of the operation, we look at our facilities, we
5 look at our staffs, we look at how we can sort
6 of minimize operations, minimize staff when we
7 can, do our own maintenance programs. So, we're
8 always looking to do -- you know, where can we
9 find a decrease in costs in our daily
10 operations.

11 But we also look at the, sort of, finance
12 side of things, just as any good business or
13 household would do. We look at our bonds. Our
14 financing refinances our bonds to ensure that
15 the interest rates are as low as possible so
16 it's a little cheaper for us to go back and we
17 use bonds in order to pay for our capital
18 programs. We also ensure we maintain good
19 credit ratings. As you know, any property, any
20 business, you need to make sure you have good
21 credit ratings so you can borrow at a reduced
22 cost. Good credit rating means that we are
23 recovering the operating dollars we need to be a
24 healthy utility and it makes it easier for us to

1 go to the market. So, we have a real focus on
2 that.

3 So, the question: How much will the
4 typical monthly water bill increase?

5 So, the typical bill today is about
6 \$66.50. That's based on a customer who's using
7 about 500 cubic feet of water per month, and
8 that's 3,740 gallons. To say this is a
9 three-year increase; the first phase of that
10 will be September 1, a 1.1 percent increase,
11 September 2019 we see a 5 percent increase, and
12 then by September of 2020 we see a 4.5 percent
13 increase. So, that would equate to about \$7.20
14 in the monthly bill by the time that total
15 increase is phased in from this September to
16 September of 2020.

17 So, what do you see on your monthly bill?
18 This is what we think is really important for
19 people to understand.

20 MS. BROCKWAY: Are you about finished?

21 MS. DAHME: Sorry?

22 MS. BROCKWAY: Can you wrap it up?

23 MS. DAHME: I'm going really fast. I'm
24 going really fast.

1 MS. BROCKWAY: Well, I know, but you might
2 have to miss some stuff, but I think it's
3 important that we get to the public comment.

4 MS. DAHME: Okay. Definitely.

5 Okay. So, monthly bill, I talked a little
6 bit about that. Integrated services, any
7 questions about that, we're here to ask.

8 What does the customer get from their
9 water billed portions? So, we talk when the
10 rates are at their full in 2020, you know,
11 really you're paying about \$2.40 per day for an
12 essential service like water. So, we think
13 that's really important for our customers to
14 know.

15 Our core mission is providing safe and
16 healthy water. We do that through a number of
17 ways; we have scientists that monitor our water
18 supply constantly, we do about 500 samples per
19 month, we have a regional consortium that looks
20 at what's happening in our rivers, so we get
21 warnings if there's a spill, if there's anything
22 unusual happening. And we also, you know, have
23 really top-rated wastewater treatment facilities
24 that clean the water, so that what we're

1 returning to our rivers is cleaner than what we
2 removed.

3 We keep our City running. So, examples of
4 that, we have a renovation project at our East
5 Park Reservoir, where we're replacing covered
6 reservoirs with new storage tanks to enhance the
7 quality and the management of that; replacing
8 transmission mains, which are sort of like the
9 arteries of the Department; and upgrading
10 technology at our water treatment plants so
11 we're always doing better.

12 Talked about improving customer service.
13 So, merge our call centers, looking at a new
14 metering technology in the near future that'll
15 provide more active information. Customers,
16 they can go online. It also provides some leak
17 detection capability.

18 We're doing surveys, this is our third
19 year, we want everyone to take the surveys if
20 they can, because we want to hear from our
21 customers where we need to do better.

22 I talked a little about Green City, Clean
23 Waters. Here at the Water Department, our DNA
24 -- you know, clean is in our DNA. We want to

1 make sure that we're looking to the future.

2 MS. BROCKWAY: Joanne.

3 MS. DAHME: Yes, I'm going really fast.

4 MS. BROCKWAY: I know you're going fast,
5 but why don't we put off the balance --

6 MS. DAHME: All right. Let me make sure
7 I'm not passing through TAP, just make sure
8 everybody knows about TAP.

9 MS. BROCKWAY: TAP is a good thing for --

10 MS. DAHME: TAP is a good thing for
11 everyone to know.

12 So, we have created a low-income
13 assistance program working with Community Legal
14 Services, Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez. This
15 is based on a customer's income, not their
16 usage. We are in the first year of the program.
17 We are looking for others to help us ensure that
18 we do the best we can to recruit, and we have an
19 advisory committee that helps us ensure that's
20 accessible and easy to get an application that's
21 online, by mail, people can call. Again, we're
22 only in our first year. We'd like to see this
23 program, you know, taken advantage by anyone who
24 needs this program, customers between 0 and 150

1 percent of the Federal poverty level.

2 We have other assistance programs, like
3 health, conservation assistance, we have
4 25-percent discounts for charities.

5 We recently had a treatment plant tour
6 this past Saturday at a wastewater plant, we
7 have one coming up this Saturday at our Baxter
8 water treatment plant, 10:00 to 2:00, it's in
9 the Northeast. It's really a great opportunity
10 for people to get a sense of what we do, so you
11 can see what you're paying for.

12 And, again, just can't emphasize how
13 important it is for the public, all the people
14 need to be here, people need to be testifying,
15 providing information. And if you have a
16 chance, please take the survey so we can get the
17 feedback. And that is it.

18 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you, Joanne.

19 Next we'll have Rob Ballenger, who's
20 leading the team from Community Legal Services
21 to represent customers before the Board.

22 MR. BALLENGER: Thank you, Madam Hearing
23 Officer.

24 Good morning. My name is Robert

1 Ballenger. I'm an attorney at CLS, Community
2 Legal Services. We serve as the public advocate
3 in this case, so we represent the interests of
4 all residential and small-user customers in the
5 case.

6 We've prepared a flyer. Some of you may
7 have received it. I have more. It looks like
8 this. (Indicating.) If you need one, please
9 come see me or a member of my team, and I can
10 give you one.

11 We really want to encourage everyone to
12 speak up that's here today from -- from the
13 public, to talk about this proposed rate
14 increase and any issues you think the Rate Board
15 should hear about. The Water Board will make
16 the decision in this case.

17 The Water Department is asking for \$116
18 million more in rates, which they propose to
19 phase in over three years. Joanne showed you
20 sort of the timeline from the Department's
21 perspective, which assumes that rates will go
22 up, and I think that's a big assumption. The
23 Board gets to make that decision. To the extent
24 the Board approves any rates, any increase in

1 rates and charges, the Board will tell us how
2 those will be implemented in the future.

3 If approved, the Department's request
4 would result in an additional \$87 to \$95 more
5 per year from typical customers, and this is an
6 11 percent increase. So, one of the questions,
7 of course, we have is: How many members of the
8 public can expect their disposable income to go
9 up by 11 percent over the same period of time?

10 In this case the rates increase should not
11 be granted unless it can be shown that the
12 increase meets the Constitutionally-based legal
13 requirement of just and reasonable rates.

14 So, what are we doing as public advocate?
15 We're working with a team of experts to examine
16 the financial assumptions underlying the request
17 and reviewing all the thousands of pages of
18 figures that are entailed in that process, and
19 we're also examining several large policy issues
20 in this case and I'd just like to go quickly
21 through those. They're also discussed a little
22 bit on the flyer.

23 But one of them is the Department wants
24 customers to start paying approximately \$8

1 million more per year for water use by the fire
2 department. That's historically been paid out
3 of tax dollars, because fighting fires is a
4 public good, it's not a service provided to you
5 when you turn on your water at the tap. It's
6 also not determined by the amount of water you
7 use at your home, so that figure is coming from
8 somewhere else. It's not coming from you as the
9 user of the system.

10 The Department also wants an additional
11 \$12 million per year to finance construction
12 projects, and those projects are supposed to
13 benefit customers for decades, but the request
14 is that you pay for them now. So, we think that
15 needs to be carefully examined.

16 The Water Department wants you to pay an
17 additional \$10 million on top of the \$15 million
18 already in rates for grants to commercial
19 customers and developers who construct green
20 stormwater infrastructure, and that helps keep
21 stormwater out of the City sewers. That is a
22 big increase and we have concerns about whether
23 customers should have to shoulder an increase of
24 that magnitude all at once.

1 At the same time, as Ms. Dahme mentioned,
2 there is a new low-income program called the
3 Tiered Assistance Program, and it began in July
4 2017. If you're in need of assistance for
5 paying your water bills, but have not been able
6 to access that program, this is an opportunity
7 for you to let the Board know how the program is
8 not meeting your needs yet. And if you faced
9 other barriers trying to get affordable water
10 bills, please come forward and speak up, because
11 the Board needs to hear from you.

12 We have concerns about the general way in
13 which rates and charges are structured. The
14 projections are always very conservative and so
15 the Water Department consistently ends up with
16 additional cash that it said it wouldn't have.
17 So, for example, in the last rate case, the
18 Department said with \$89 and a half million more
19 in rates, it would close out fiscal '18 with
20 \$111 million in its rate stabilization fund. Lo
21 and behold, now we project the Department to
22 have \$201 million in that same cash fund.

23 In other words, rates went up by \$89 and a
24 half million dollars and the Department has \$90

1 million more in cash. We expect to share some
2 of our concerns about that fact.

3 So, the Board is obligated to balance your
4 interests against those of the Water Department
5 in determining what rates will be just and
6 reasonable under the Constitutionally-based
7 standard. As public advocate, we represent the
8 interests of all residential and small-user
9 customers, we don't represent individuals in
10 this case, which, again, is why it's so
11 important for individuals to come up here and
12 speak about your issues and what your concerns
13 are.

14 We also believe this is an appropriate
15 forum for you to raise other concerns about the
16 Water Department and Water Revenue Bureau based
17 on your experience. The City may not share our
18 views about what the Water Rate Board can do to
19 address those issues, but we believe you're
20 entitled by law, nonetheless, to participate in
21 an open and transparent forum to put those
22 concerns out to the public, and this is your
23 opportunity to do so.

24 So, if you feel the customer service that

1 you've been provided needs improvement, we
2 believe you should say so. If you believe the
3 Water Department has not been responsive or
4 available when you've had issues, we believe you
5 should say so. If you believe the Water
6 Department does a great job at some things and
7 maybe not a great job at other things, we also
8 believe you should say so.

9 So, please come forward and provide your
10 input and share your experiences. It's
11 important the Hearing Officer and the Board hear
12 from you. And there are many more public input
13 hearings to come, so if you're not comfortable
14 sharing today, you can certainly come to another
15 hearing. If you are not comfortable sharing by
16 speaking out in this way, you can certainly
17 write in to the Board, and information on how to
18 do that is available through our flyer and on
19 our website at CLSPhilly.org. And I have a team
20 with me here today who is available to answer
21 any questions members of the public may have;
22 Jolene Price is with me today, I have a student
23 from Northeastern Law, Ms. Bonnie Smith, who
24 would be interested in talking with any of you

1 about affordability concerns; and, of course,
2 Caitlin is here, Caitlin Brown from CLS, who is
3 our development -- I'm sorry, our communications
4 director, and she can also be of help in getting
5 out some of these pictures of these great flyers
6 -- or these great posters that you have. Thank
7 you.

8 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you, Rob.

9 So, I just want to emphasize something
10 that both of the folks have talked about. In
11 addition to these public hearings, the Board
12 takes comments. Last time, most of the public
13 comment was by e-mail and it was very extensive,
14 and one of my jobs is to summarize all the
15 public comment, including these meetings, but
16 also what was filed. The Board, of course, will
17 also take things by regular mail. I don't think
18 we're set up to do things just by telephone.

19 And you can find out more about the Board.
20 If you go to the Water Department's website, up
21 in the top right side it's going to say "Water
22 Board" or maybe "Water Rate Board." I can't
23 remember exactly. So, you can get more
24 information about the Board there.

1 What I'm going to do now is I'm going to
2 go through the list, because we've had the
3 confusion about whether or not people were going
4 to sign in. What I'd like to do is I'll
5 definitely call on the people that have been
6 identified as wanting to talk, but I'm going to
7 go through the whole list. So, unless you don't
8 want me to say your name. How do I do that?

9 So, I'm just going to recite your name,
10 and if you do want to speak, please do. But if
11 you don't, you don't have to say anything.

12 MR. HAVER: Perhaps we could just raise
13 our hand if we want to speak.

14 MS. BROCKWAY: We have a list. We can go
15 through the list.

16 MR. HAVER: Okay.

17 MS. SWENSON: I like that system.

18 MS. BROCKWAY: Which system?

19 MS. SWENSON: Raising your hand and being
20 identified.

21 MS. BROCKWAY: The problem with that
22 system is that we don't know, among the people
23 who are here, who are customers, who are
24 lawyers, who are advocates. We don't know

1 anything. We know some of the people who are
2 from the Department and from the parties that
3 argued in front of us, but we don't know the
4 other people and we want to hear from everybody.

5 If you signed in at the beginning outside,
6 I will call your name, and raise your hand if
7 you do want to speak, don't raise if you don't.
8 And if I've missed anybody, I will ask for
9 additional people at the very end, so that
10 anybody that I have not -- who didn't sign in,
11 that I overlooked, will have a chance.

12 So let's get to it. The first name is
13 John Durso.

14 Okay. Alicia Lee Scott. Please, ma'am.

15 MS. SCOTT: Do you want me to start?

16 MS. BROCKWAY: Yes, this is your turn.

17 MS. SCOTT: All right.

18 MS. BROCKWAY: You don't have to come up
19 to the microphone, but, of course, it makes it
20 easier for everybody to hear if you want to do
21 that.

22 MS. SCOTT: Good morning, everyone. As
23 she said, my name is Alicia Lee Scott. I'm here
24 to speak today on behalf of the Philadelphia

1 Workers Benefit Council, which is a delegate
2 body of members representing other members in
3 their community.

4 I am a 71-year-old retired elementary
5 school teacher from the School District of
6 Philadelphia. I have lived in Philadelphia
7 since 1971.

8 I am greatly disturbed to hear about this
9 rate hike. As someone who has taught in the
10 Philadelphia School District, I am acutely aware
11 of the fact that there are teachers who are
12 leaving the profession because they simply can't
13 afford to raise a family on the salary that has
14 not kept up with the increased cost of living.
15 I am on Social Security, and that has not gone
16 up much over the last six years either. My
17 property taxes, on the other hand, have
18 continued to rise.

19 Water -- the Water Department approved a
20 rate hike two years ago and the water bill
21 increased by almost 10 percent in the last two
22 years. In December 2015, the PUC approved a
23 rate hike for PECO, and the electric rates have
24 gone up 4 percent.

1 I own and live in a triplex where I supply
2 the cold water for all three units. Because I
3 don't fall within the poverty guidelines, a rate
4 increase would be very difficult.

5 I'm also speaking on behalf of the other
6 members of the Philadelphia Workers Benefit
7 Council. We understand that the Water
8 Department claims that the proposed rate hike is
9 needed, as it's based upon the expectation that
10 the Water Department will lose revenue as more
11 people sign up for the Tiered Assistance
12 Program, known as the TAP program. This is a
13 faulty expectation. If the Water Department
14 does not shut off customers who would otherwise
15 be getting behind on bills and allow them to
16 remain water users, the Water Department will
17 get more revenue, not less.

18 Even if your rationale was correct, it is
19 based on the assumption that you get to pass on
20 your added cost to us. But we don't get to pass
21 on our cost to anyone, do we? If we don't have
22 the means to pay our bills, we get our utilities
23 shut off. And even if our incomes are below 150
24 percent of the poverty line, the Water

1 Department is not obligated by law to turn us
2 back on. That is a double standard.

3 The United Nations General Assembly in
4 July 2010 recognized the human right to water
5 and sanitation. The U.S. recognized the right
6 of every human being to have access to
7 sufficient water for personal and domestic
8 needs, uses, which must be safe, accessible and
9 affordable. Water costs should not exceed 3
10 percent of household income, and it should be
11 physically accessible.

12 In September 2015, all 193 member nations
13 of the United Nations, including the United
14 States, agreed to endorse 2030 sustainable
15 development goals, goal 6 states, "Ensure
16 availability and sustainable management of water
17 and sanitation for all."

18 In other words, almost every government on
19 the planet endorses a right to water, and yet in
20 the wealthiest and most advanced industrial
21 nation in the world poor people are denied this
22 most basic human necessity due to a barbaric
23 practice of shutting off water service to those
24 who are behind in their bills.

1 The City of Philadelphia is supposed to be
2 operated to serve the people of Philadelphia.
3 The City of Philadelphia is not ensuring access
4 to water when in the last 36 months alone the
5 Water Department shut off 89,416 households in
6 Philadelphia.

7 According to the Philadelphia Water
8 Department --

9 MS. BROCKWAY: I'm sorry, what was the
10 period over which that was done?

11 MS. SCOTT: 36 months.

12 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you.

13 MS. SCOTT: According to the Philadelphia
14 Water Department, the cost of shutting off water
15 to a single customer is \$50. That means that
16 the City spent \$4,470,800 turning off water in
17 the last three years. With that much money, the
18 City could simply have paid the water bills so
19 that no citizen would lose access to water.

20 The Water Department's ongoing rate
21 increases undermine the human right to water for
22 our lowest paid workers and their families, and
23 that's a crime in a nation that claims to be the
24 greatest on earth.

1 The number of people who actually need TAP
2 is much higher than the number currently signed
3 up, because the eligibility level excludes many
4 in need. The reality --

5 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Truly.

6 MS. SCOTT: Mm-hmm. The reality is that
7 as long as the health and the safety of the
8 ratepayers and their inability to pay the
9 ever-increasing water rates is not being
10 considered by this Board, then we must fight for
11 it and demand the City do its job and look out
12 for the public interest.

13 The Workers Benefit Council demands the
14 Water Board reject the water rate hike.

15 The Workers Benefit Council demands the
16 Water Board impose a year-round moratorium on
17 water shutoffs for any household at or below 300
18 percent of the Federal poverty level.

19 The Workers Benefit Council demands the
20 Department reconnect any household at or below
21 300 percent of the Federal poverty level which
22 has been disconnected, establish a reasonable
23 payment plan and charge no reconnection fee.

24 The Workers Benefit Council demands the

1 City of Philadelphia end any practice of seizure
2 or foreclosure of residences as a means to force
3 payment of arrears on water bills.

4 The Workers Benefit Council demands a
5 change to the eligibility guidelines for TAP to
6 300 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines,
7 making it possible for all people to pay their
8 bill.

9 Thank you. And good day.

10 MS. BROCKWAY: The next person on the list
11 is Christine Willard.

12 We've already heard from Mr. Ballenger.

13 Mr. Haver.

14 MR. HAVER: Thank you very much. My name
15 is Lawrence Haver. I'm the Director of City
16 Engagement for Philadelphia's City Council.

17 I have a number of questions I would like
18 to ask, and I will be submitting final testimony
19 in written form.

20 I'd like to start out by asking about the
21 actual proposal. While I saw what the rate
22 increase would total and I saw what the
23 percentages were, I didn't see a breakdown of
24 how much was on the actual usage and how much

1 was on the service section, service portion of
2 the bill, so that would be my first question, if
3 I could get an answer to that: What's the rate
4 increase on usage, and what's the rate increase
5 on service charges?

6 MS. BROCKWAY: Let's do that this way:
7 These public hearings are for people to give
8 their comments to us. But any questions that
9 you have I would ask the Department to take down
10 and to submit answers in writing. And
11 presumably -- and we have your e-mail address,
12 so we'll make sure you get them personally, but
13 everybody else can find them on the website.

14 MR. HAVER: Thank you very much. I left
15 my card, so I won't belabor the point, but I
16 would like to point out it would change most
17 people's testimony if they found out that
18 there's absolutely nothing they can do to avoid
19 the rate increase. Using less won't change how
20 much the bills go up. Conversely, if most of
21 the rate increase is on usage, maybe people
22 would feel differently. So, I'm not sure how
23 the presentation really helps people provide
24 testimony about their own lives.

1 With that being said, my question is: On
2 March 21st of this year the Philadelphia
3 Inquirer published a story about what they
4 called cross connections of laterals. The story
5 quoted the Water Department as saying generally
6 the cross connection's outside the home, the
7 City will contact the plumber and pick up the
8 cost. Homeowners are responsible if the bad
9 connection is inside.

10 I couldn't find any written documentation
11 which states that in the Water Department's
12 rules, regulations or statements. I'm wondering
13 if there is such a written code, and I'd ask
14 that it be provided so that I can look at it.

15 MS. BROCKWAY: Is it clear to the
16 Department what's being asked for?

17 MS. McCARTY: Yes.

18 MS. BROCKWAY: Okay.

19 MR. HAVER: Third, we heard that the Water
20 Department's going to be replacing its meters
21 with smart meters. I also know that PGW is
22 having the same discussion now. I wanted to
23 know how much savings it would be if PGW and the
24 Water Department combined the meter

1 replacements. I'd like to have any internal
2 documents that show how the Water Department has
3 contacted PGW or PGW has contacted the Water
4 Department to try to find a unified system.

5 And I would just point out that for most
6 of us who live in row homes in the city, our gas
7 meter and water meter are approximately 20 feet
8 apart. There's no reason to drive two cars down
9 my road, there's no reason to have two people
10 come to my home, and it would save, I believe, a
11 significant amount of money if we combined it.
12 So, I'd like to see what the Water Department is
13 doing to keep those costs down.

14 My third (sic) question is: How much is
15 -- is it correct that currently in the water
16 rate stabilization fund there is \$220 million --
17 I'm sorry, \$201.7 million? Is that a correct
18 number?

19 And then --

20 MS. BROCKWAY: That we can take in nod of
21 heads.

22 MR. DASENT: As of when?

23 MS. BROCKWAY: As of?

24 THE WITNESS: As of 2017, the audited

1 amount for last year.

2 MR. DASENT: I can certainly provide that
3 to you.

4 MR. HAVER: Okay. If you know what it is
5 now, that's fine.

6 MS. BROCKWAY: I just thought that was a
7 quick question. But I apologize, it seems to be
8 interrupting things.

9 By the way, for the record, that was Andre
10 Dasent, the attorney for the Department.

11 MR. HAVER: I won't take much more of your
12 time. I know other people would like to speak.

13 And I don't want to belabor the point,
14 but, again, I'd like to know if I'm correct that
15 the rate stabilization fund represents a
16 surplus, that's money that's collected that's
17 not spent on anything else, sits there, somehow
18 it's invested.

19 I'd like to know where the money is, what
20 bank it is, what management company it is, who
21 manage -- who manages the fund, whether it's
22 contracted per an individual who manages the
23 fund or whether someone at the Water Department
24 manages the fund or someone at the Revenue

1 Department manages the fund or someone in the
2 City's treasury department manages the fund.

3 How much is it, where is it and who
4 manages it?

5 The Water Department says that it hopes to
6 maintain an annual balance of \$111 million in
7 the rate stabilization fund, and this comes from
8 a 2017 report. I'd like to know if that's still
9 accurate. Is the goal of the Water Department
10 to have \$111 million, meaning that it's slightly
11 over -- it's slightly more than \$90 million more
12 than what it wants to have?

13 In 2015 the Water Department projected
14 that by 2018, this coming fiscal year, the rate
15 stabilization fund would have \$111 million.
16 Now, I'm going to leave a copy of that with the
17 Hearing Examiner. Forgive me, sir, I didn't
18 bring quite enough copies.

19 MS. BROCKWAY: We'll make sure that the
20 entire Board gets a copy.

21 MR. HAVER: So, I'd like the Water
22 Department to explain why they are seeking rate
23 increases when they have \$90 million more than
24 what they projected they would have in 2018.

1 And, finally, I'd like to know how much of
2 this rate increase is being driven by the Water
3 Department's fear of having its bonds ratings
4 lowered. And if that's the case, has the Water
5 Department taken a position on having a public
6 bank that would alleviate the need for us to
7 continue to bow? Like the public bank in North
8 Dakota, there's a public bank in North Dakota
9 which funds its infrastructure, which funds its
10 city, which means that we don't have to raise
11 rates, because the bond council or the bond
12 raters or the bondholders made those demands.
13 So, I'd like to see any internal documents the
14 Water Department has about evaluating the
15 benefit to ratepayers for a public bank.

16 With that, I'll thank you. My
17 understanding is the record's going to stay open
18 until May 25th; is that correct?

19 MS. BROCKWAY: I don't know the exact
20 date, but -- yes.

21 Mr. HAVER: So, I'll be able to submit
22 everything in writing. And I won't belabor the
23 point. You have enough people to hear from.

24 Thank you.

1 MS. BROCKWAY: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. DASENT: I'd like to contact Mr. Haver
3 independently, so we can get a list of the
4 questions, so we can get on it more quickly than
5 the transcript, which may lag a couple days.

6 MS. BROCKWAY: Certainly.

7 MR. HAVER: Want to give me your card or
8 just --

9 MS. BROCKWAY: Let's do that outside the
10 proceedings.

11 Okay. I have an O.J. Spivey, but that's
12 from Water Revenue, and I presume that Water
13 Revenue works with the Department, so they won't
14 be wanting to testify at a public hearing.

15 The next one I can't read, something
16 D'Lisa or Delacroix -- okay. That person didn't
17 want to testify, anyway.

18 Carrie Vardy?

19 The next person, Angela Foster.

20 Ms. Foster, do you want to speak from there or
21 do you want to go up to the podium?

22 MS. FOSTER: (Inaudible.)

23 MS. BROCKWAY: I'm sorry?

24 MS. FOSTER: (Inaudible.)

1 MS. McCARTY: I think she said right
2 there. You might want to stay.

3 MS. FOSTER: Oh, that's fine.

4 (Pause.)

5 Good morning.

6 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Good morning.

7 MS. FOSTER: So, I did write something
8 down, but I'm going to wing it a little bit here
9 as well, because this matter really concerns me
10 from a personal standpoint and then I'm thinking
11 also about all the individuals and families who
12 have special-needs children, like myself, and
13 special-needs family members, like myself,
14 because I'm a special-needs person who has just
15 overcame her 12th neurosurgery, through the
16 grace of God, and -- so, it really upsets me
17 that I'm back and meeting like this with
18 everyone about rate hikes.

19 My -- my income is Social Security
20 disability, and I actually have been on Social
21 Security disability since I was 28, and I'm 51.
22 And I've been going through this for a long
23 time, actually, 42 years.

24 So, with that, again, good morning. My

1 name is Angela Christine Foster. I'm speaking
2 on behalf of myself and families with special
3 needs, adults and children, which has immensely
4 grown in the surrounding Philadelphia area, as
5 well as the counties. Right now I would say
6 it's like about 50,000 children in Philly that
7 have some type of special needs. My son, he's
8 autistic with other development delays.

9 I'm also speaking on behalf of myself and
10 families -- I'm sorry, I'm also -- I also
11 endorse the position of the Philadelphia Workers
12 Benefit Council. I also -- I also volunteer for
13 ESWA, Eastern Service Workers Association, who
14 has helped me a countless amount of times with
15 various topics like this, concerning utilities,
16 utility bills.

17 So, with the Water Revenue Bureau, it's
18 wonderful. It's wonderful that you're trying to
19 aim towards securing the public safety in
20 regards to water consumption and in regards to
21 water safety. That's great. But what they're
22 forgetting, unfortunately, that with this
23 increase they -- that they are proposing today
24 in front of the panel, that many individuals and

1 families like myself are on a very, very tight
2 fixed income, for instance, Social Security or
3 retirement annuity, which is almost poverty
4 level -- which is poverty level, going by
5 today's income -- that this income remains the
6 same, there's no increase, there is no increase
7 with their cost of living.

8 My experience in the past -- so, my
9 experience in the past with the Water Revenue
10 Bureau, when it came down to applying for TAP,
11 was not good. It wasn't good at all to a point
12 that -- I normally go to Community Legal
13 Services, and I've gone there in the past. I
14 just had my neurosurgery. So, I've gone there
15 in the past four years to -- for assistance.

16 Because when I went to apply for TAP, the
17 representative there gave me a very hard time.
18 Even though I supplied all the information, I
19 gave them all the information I usually supply
20 for all the utilities, but the woman, the older
21 woman, she gave me a lot of -- a lot of -- she
22 gave me, it was like an obstacle course. You
23 know, it was -- it was absolutely crazy. And
24 even though I had everything that was required,

1 she wanted more, "Well, you have to" -- "you
2 have to go to this agency and give me this
3 particular document with this letterhead, and
4 other than that, it will not be accepted." But
5 it's -- this same document, which is a ward
6 letter, was accepted by the other utilities, but
7 she didn't care. I was like, okay.

8 Then the thing was about copies, "Well, we
9 can't do this. You know, we can't make copies.
10 You know, that's -- that's not our job. It's
11 your job to make the copies," and so forth.
12 Okay, I understand that.

13 It was just very, very difficult for me to
14 get through. And then there were times where I
15 kept going there, I kept going there filling out
16 the application, there was like four times I
17 kept filling out the application, and they would
18 lose it. Water Revenue Bureau would lose it. I
19 would put it in their dropbox, which is
20 terrible. So, I'm thinking all of my
21 confidential information is out and about, and
22 that highly upset me.

23 So, I don't like to talk (inaudible), so
24 what I do is I rather just speak to the person.

1 Speak to the person -- speak to the person face
2 to face, and that still didn't get me anywhere.
3 So, I said you know what, I can't -- I'm not
4 allowing this to stress me out, so I went to
5 Community Legal Services.

6 I spoke to a law student, Mr. Bennett,
7 some young man, and he helped me tremendously.
8 And when we went, he couldn't believe the woman
9 who actually -- she -- I went -- she was the
10 same person that took all my information and I
11 even made copies, I made copies of what she did
12 and everything, but when I went back to find out
13 what's going on with my application, the status
14 of my application, they said that it wasn't even
15 in the system. I'm like, how can that be? It
16 has to be in the system. And so, in other
17 words, you're calling me a liar. I know it was
18 in the system.

19 And then lo and behold, when Mr. Bennett
20 and I came, because I make -- I kept copies,
21 this was through the grace of God, it was that
22 same woman that waited on us, and she was like,
23 "Oh, yes, this is my signature," you know. But
24 you didn't put me in the system the year before,

1 which was totally, totally absurd.

2 So, I give people the benefit of the doubt
3 until you show me different, and my thoughts
4 with the Water Revenue Bureau right now is not
5 very high, because of the many changes that you
6 put individuals through, especially if they're
7 special needs and special-needs adults who --
8 and I'm 51, but I will be a senior eventually,
9 so it's very disturbing to me that I have to go
10 through so much in order to make ends meet.

11 And, like I said, my income is remaining
12 the same. I have Social Security disability
13 income and then I have a very small retirement
14 annuity, so every -- but that remains the same,
15 you know. It basically pretty much remains the
16 same. There's the cost of living, which is like
17 1.2 or 2.1, which is not much compared to the
18 economy that's going up more and more and more,
19 you know, as far as food, as far as clothing, as
20 far as utilities. Everything's going up except
21 for my income. So, I'm trying to make ends meet
22 on my income and it's very, very difficult.

23 And then on top of that, I got behind with
24 my utilities, because I was in the hospital.

1 You know, and I was in the hospital, I had my
2 12th neurosurgery and I got behind, and the next
3 thing you know, I got a shutoff, you know, which
4 -- and I've just been trying to make ends meet,
5 but it's just really, really difficult for
6 individuals like myself.

7 And I'm not the only one, because there
8 are so many families that I know, because I used
9 to advocate for special-needs families and
10 children in public, but then I got sick. Four
11 years ago I got sick with the same thing, and
12 now four years later I got sick again. And the
13 stories is heartbreaking, because these children
14 need these utilities. Whether it's water, PECO,
15 PGW, they need this, and they're not -- you
16 know, the Water Revenue Bureau and so forth,
17 they're not taking accountability of these
18 families that for medical reasons they need
19 this. You know, and if they don't, something
20 could happen to them.

21 And it's very, very heartbreaking to know
22 this, that these children who don't have a
23 voice, many of them can't speak like I am right
24 now, you know, many of them can't walk, many of

1 them can't see, many of them can't hear. I deal
2 with these children all the time, because they
3 are children of my friends. You know, deaf,
4 blind. My cousin, she's like Helen Keller,
5 deaf, blind, autistic. Okay. And, you know, at
6 one point you just get tired of fighting. You
7 just get really tired of fighting, but you look
8 at your child, you're like, you know what, I'm
9 going to keep on fighting. I'm going to keep on
10 fighting for my child and give them a better --
11 better opportunities than I had in the past.

12 So, and that's -- I guess that's pretty
13 much -- so it looks like I'm going to need
14 Community Legal Services again, because of my
15 shutoff with water, which I'm trying to budget
16 as best as possible. It's just really difficult
17 with my income now. Four years ago I lost
18 \$1,000 of income, because I was terminated from
19 my position and -- because of my medical, and I
20 also lost child support. So, that was like
21 \$1,000. So, I'm trying to play catchup in these
22 four years, you know, which is kind of hard.
23 But I know God backs me, so I'll be okay.

24 But I'm hoping and praying that the Water

1 Revenue Bureau will step back and take a look at
2 what's going on in the city. There's a lot of
3 revitalization going on, which is wonderful, but
4 you still have a lot of inner-city families that
5 are struggling, they are trying to make ends
6 meet, and this is just going to make it worse.
7 You know, you're going to have more shutoff
8 notices, you're going to have a lot more
9 problems than what's going on now. It's going
10 to get worse. It's not going to get better.

11 So, I'm asking the Water Revenue Bureau to
12 find another outlet, find another way to assist
13 -- to assist your clients, help them in some way
14 that will be beneficial to them as well as you.
15 Everybody wins in the end. But this way,
16 continuing with these fare hikes, I can tell you
17 right now, I can't afford it. And by two
18 thousand and -- I know my income's not going to
19 go up. So, I can tell you right now, there is
20 no way I can afford that.

21 So, with that, thank you so much and
22 everyone have a blessed day.

23 MS. BROCKWAY: Ms. Foster, were you able
24 to get on TAP eventually?

1 THE WITNESS: Yes, but if it wasn't for
2 Community Legal Services, I wouldn't have got on
3 there.

4 MS. BROCKWAY: Okay.

5 MS. FOSTER: So, I really -- I love them.

6 MS. BROCKWAY: Just wanted to make sure.

7 Antonia Batts.

8 MS. BATTIS: Good morning, everybody. My
9 name is Antonia Batts.

10 MR. POPOWSKY: Would you like to come up?

11 MS. BATTIS: Thank you. Good morning,
12 everyone. My name is Antonia Batts. Good
13 morning. And I was born here in Philadelphia
14 years ago, of course, and I would like to say,
15 as a military veteran, I have come back,
16 hopefully. After having been gone for quite a
17 time in various places, mostly in the
18 southeastern portion of the United States, I
19 notice that -- of course, the cost of living,
20 for example, in one of the states, South
21 Carolina, where I had resided, it was,
22 obviously, affordable compared to what we have
23 going on here in Philadelphia. But then again,
24 this is a metropolitan city, and I'm familiar

1 with a bigger city comes bigger cost-of-living
2 requirements. There is a population that has
3 more demands.

4 And I'm not familiar with the stats that
5 come -- or the rates that come along with the
6 cost of water. I am not a customer, but I would
7 hope that, if God's willing, that I get the
8 opportunity. Like, I've heard from some of my
9 other fellow veterans who have been pretty much
10 wading through the waters of obtaining maybe a
11 modest living, hopefully some of them had
12 justifiably earned, it has been a struggle.

13 We can -- you know, also in our community
14 of not only just, you know, veterans only, but
15 human beings who feel as though by merit we have
16 earned the ability to live and not have to be
17 concerned about whether we could deal with the
18 issue of the rate of increases in various
19 utilities, in this particular case water being
20 one of them, and that's a concern of you all who
21 understand that we respect the fact that you do
22 have to have a budget increase for various
23 reasons.

24 I know that everyone is not familiar with

1 budgetary involvement, but if they can
2 understand that for those of us who do respect
3 the fact that everyone has to have a certain
4 standard of living, even the people who
5 higher-up understand where we're coming from as
6 people who served our country, we would
7 appreciate if you can still deal with the modest
8 cost of living concern that we would have.

9 We know that it's not easy to pull, as the
10 saying used to go, a -- what is it, a turnip out
11 of the ground or a carrot -- well, in other
12 words, it is not easy to just pull money out of
13 just any and every anticipated source that we
14 may assume that's available, but, you know,
15 through the Federal government, I know they
16 finagle with a lot of numbers, and if you can
17 understand that we, as some of us as veterans,
18 we will support you on addressing what we may,
19 you know, need to do to let you understand that
20 not only does it affect us, but people who love
21 to be able to get a modest home or something of
22 the other, and, of course, in this region, here
23 in Philadelphia. I'd hate to have to return to
24 a place that I was not raised in. But I've been

1 gone long enough. I can make that adjustment
2 only if I have to.

3 But out of respect for the fact that there
4 are so many things that I have pretty much got
5 involved with when I was a kid years and years
6 and years ago, but that's all right, I don't
7 mind saying that, I'd like you to understand
8 that it won't only affect me, but people who
9 have millions of reasons as to why they need to
10 have consideration for someone to even maybe go
11 to Washington and address the persons in
12 Congress about what we go through here just to
13 be able to live like human beings, and we'd
14 really appreciate that.

15 It's not only veterans, as I said, but it
16 is just overall a concern, you know, considering
17 that in the United Nations, if I'm not mistaken,
18 in the year 2010 there was a need for the Free
19 Water Act to be enforced. We understand they're
20 services, you definitely have to pay for them,
21 but maybe -- I'd hate to see some jobs not be
22 acquired, because we don't have enough staff
23 members to cover any and everything. But if you
24 go back to the table and introduce the idea of

1 how you would like to deal with the whole
2 matter, you know, I would make myself available.

3 I actually have, for the past five years,
4 since I've been back to Philadelphia -- been
5 doing it longer than that, of course -- had a
6 talk radio show. One of my issues that I
7 discussed, just coincidentally, on our talk
8 radio for the past five years of being under the
9 umbrella of Peripheral Visions by Antonia Batts,
10 not trying to insist that you sign on, but one
11 of the issues was Earth Day in the year 2018.
12 Having had worked with little children off and
13 on in between and betwixt a little schooling,
14 definitely through just having certain
15 occupations and things that I think involve the
16 understanding why children even need to be
17 introduced to the respect of not only just Earth
18 Day, but the minerals that are available, we can
19 definitely learn how to work together and keep
20 an understanding of how we need to respect the
21 environment and what it costs and how inflation
22 increases affect us all, but especially in this
23 particular case the water and the rates that you
24 offer.

1 Hopefully, there will be lower submissions
2 of rates for those of us who struggle. Thank
3 you very much for the TAP program. I have to
4 admit that's something that I may introduce on
5 my show just briefly, you know, because, after
6 all, it is an issue of gratitude to let people
7 understand there are people out there who do try
8 to work with us.

9 So, with that being said, sorry for being
10 a little longwinded, but thank you very much.
11 Have a good evening.

12 Oh, Eastern Service group, we are
13 definitely very active in, I have been active
14 with them for more than a decade, because I
15 believe in how they advocate greatly for
16 low-income people and people who struggle.
17 Thank you.

18 MS. BROCKWAY: All right. The last person
19 who signed up, we have Sandra Swenson.

20 MS. SWENSON: Right here. And I'll stand
21 here. If you can't hear me, raise your hand,
22 please.

23 My name is Sandra Swenson. I'm a retired
24 attorney as of last week and --

1 MULTIPLE AUDIENCE MEMBERS:

2 Congratulations.

3 MS. SWENSON: I'm here today because I am
4 opposed to the rate increase. I've lived in the
5 Spring Garden neighborhood for 40 years and I've
6 seen a lot of changes.

7 This is the first time that I'm coming to
8 a public hearing, and I appreciate the fact that
9 you're making yourself -- yourselves available.
10 My -- I'm not going to review the facts that
11 have been presented. I endorse each and every
12 one of you for what you have already said. I am
13 emotionally going to address an issue. When we
14 were children, we always talked about going back
15 to the well, and it was something you're not
16 supposed to do when it comes to money. You
17 don't keep going back to mom and dad and saying
18 I need some more money.

19 I can't believe that there was a rate
20 increase two years ago and you're coming back
21 again and saying you need more money. I just
22 find that hard to believe in this very
23 sophisticated economy, but I'm sure there will
24 be reasons given to me. But, more importantly,

1 the literature that I have here -- which I will
2 study and I'd like a copy of the advocate's
3 flyer -- you're talking about a rate increase
4 for the future. You're talking about money
5 that's going to be sent -- spent on brick and
6 mortar. You're talking about huge pipes and
7 reservoirs and plants. This is money that
8 should be coming from other sources, not from
9 taxpayers. We're paying -- we're charged with
10 the job of paying for our usage and the service.
11 There are other agencies, other entities that
12 are responsible for supplying the big bucks for
13 the infrastructure, and I don't understand why a
14 bond hasn't been brought up to float some of
15 this expense.

16 So, those are my questions. I had others
17 but many of them have already been presented
18 much better than I could have done. So thank
19 you very much, and I look forward to hearing
20 from you.

21 MS. BROCKWAY: We've come to the end of
22 the people that we understand have signed up,
23 but certainly if there's anyone that I missed or
24 who would like to speak at this time, please let

1 me know.

2 Anybody? All right.

3 MS. FOSTER: I just wanted to say that,
4 unfortunately, a majority of the people that I
5 know, parents of special needs, special-needs
6 individuals, or parents that -- special-needs
7 individuals or parents of special-needs
8 children, they have no idea about this meeting.
9 None.

10 I'm finding out, each time there's some
11 type of public hearing concerning the utilities,
12 the majority of Philadelphia residents do not
13 know about it. That's evident right here. I'm
14 thinking that people would definitely come to an
15 event like this if they knew, if there was some
16 type of promotion or something, something
17 stating, okay, this is what's going on. People
18 don't realize, hey, their rates have gone up
19 until they see their bill. They're not even
20 aware of it.

21 I can tell you right now, when I leave
22 this building and I let people know, oh, wow,
23 she's at the Philadelphia library, main library,
24 and Water Revenue Bureau within a three-year

1 span is going to raise the fare hikes -- the
2 rates, the water rates, they're going to "What?"
3 They're going to be totally -- they're going to
4 be astounded to the fact that this is happening,
5 because they weren't aware of it at all.

6 MS. McCARTY: May I ask --

7 MS. BROCKWAY: Actually, no.

8 Ms. McCARTY: -- how you found out about
9 it, and how to get the word out better?

10 MS. BROCKWAY: Debra, please.

11 MS. McCARTY: That's one of the things we
12 try to do all the time.

13 MS. BROCKWAY: I understand this is an
14 important issue, but this is a hearing to hear
15 from the people, and I was going to suggest that
16 you guys talk together, and I'm sure the Board
17 will take this back and will also look at the
18 publications and see if we can do anything for
19 that.

20 Is there anything else?

21 MR. DASENT: Madam Hearing Officer, the
22 record should show that we did advertise these
23 hearings and that there are at least five more
24 coming and there will be more public access.

1 MS. BROCKWAY: Andre, yes, understood.

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Where are they
3 advertised?

4 MR. DASENT: The Inquirer, the Tribune,
5 and other papers of mass circulation. So, we
6 tried to get the word out and we'll do better.

7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: People who can't pay for
8 utilities can't pay for a paper.

9 MS. BROCKWAY: It might be useful -- it
10 might be useful to have a discussion with those
11 people who want to stay after for a little bit
12 to give us some ideas about where we could
13 better advertise these hearings. As the
14 attorney for the Department says, there will be
15 more. And as the Commissioner indicates, the
16 Department is also very interested in improving
17 that.

18 MR. POPOWSKY: If I could just say, as the
19 chairman of the Board, I wanted to thank
20 everyone for coming out this morning. It was a
21 very nasty day, and we really appreciate the
22 fact that several of you got up and testified,
23 also the fact that many others came here and let
24 us know what you think by your presence. So, I

1 really appreciate the fact that so many people
2 did come out today on a very nasty morning. So,
3 thank you. And we will have at least six more
4 hearings.

5 MS. BROCKWAY: Without more, this hearing
6 is closed. Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, the hearing concluded at
8 approximately 11:28 a.m.)

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

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I, Krista L. Schultz, hereby certify
that the foregoing is a true and correct
transcript of the proceedings held in this
matter, as transcribed from the stenographic
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KRISTA L. SCHULTZ
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