

Philadelphia Water Department Rate Board Hearing
March 2, 2016

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PHILADELPHIA WATER DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION
RATE BOARD HEARING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2016
6:11 P.M. - 7:26 P.M.
MINUTES OF FORMAL MEETING

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LOCATION: Roxborough Memorial Hospital
5800 Ridge Avenue
Wolcoff Auditorium
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

REPORTED BY: SUSAN A. HURREY, RPR

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HELD BEFORE:

NANCY BROCKWAY - HEARING OFFICER
BERNARD BRUNWASSER - CHAIR
MICHAEL CHAPMAN - BOARD MEMBER
SONNY POPOWSKY - BOARD MEMBER

ALSO PRESENT:

JOANNE DAHME
DEBRA A. McCARTY - PWD COMMISSIONER
MELISSA LaBUDA - PWD DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
ANDRE DASENT - Counsel for PWD

JOSIE B.H. PICKENS, ESQUIRE

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1 MS. BROCKWAY: Good evening. My
2 name is Nancy Brockway. I'm the Hearing
3 Officer hired by the Philadelphia Water & Sewer
4 Rate Board to conduct hearings in their process
5 to review the proposed rate increase that was
6 filed earlier this year by the Philadelphia
7 Water Department. We're having public hearings
8 around the City and seeking public comment.

9 Before we start, I just want to do
10 a couple of housekeeping things. There are
11 facilities right in the back. There are
12 sign-up sheets and if you want to come up and
13 speak during the process, it would be great if
14 you could sign up. If you feel uncomfortable
15 doing that, come and see me or the Hearing
16 Officer, we'll figure something out. Me, I am
17 the Hearing Officer, or the court reporter you
18 can give your name.

19 We do have a court reporter because
20 the Board wants to be able to review what
21 people have said when they come about doing
22 their decision. They plan to make their
23 decision in June. After these hearings, there
24 are going to be technical hearings with

1 economists and such before the Board, and then
2 everybody who is participating actively is
3 going to put their position to the Board, I
4 will summarize all of them and the Board will
5 decide what to do.

6 What we're doing at these public
7 hearings is, the Philadelphia Water Department
8 presents its argument for why it wants its rate
9 increase, and then we have a representative of
10 the public advocate who is appointed to
11 represent small users, including residential,
12 and she will give her side of the story. And
13 then we'll proceed with the comments.

14 I should say that with me are Board
15 member Mike Chapman and Board member Sonny
16 Popowsky. We may be joined later by another
17 Board member, but I'm not sure.

18 Okay. I think we're ready to go.
19 Can everybody see the overhead?

20 MS. DAHME: Can you see that?

21 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you.

22 MS. DAHME: Good evening,
23 everybody. My name is Joanne Dahme. I'm the
24 public affairs manager with the Water

1 Department. I'm going to go through a very
2 quick overview about the Department's need for
3 the proposed rate increase. A little bit of
4 background and some -- can you hear me if I
5 talk without this? I think it will be a little
6 bit better. And talk about some of the major
7 reasons for the increase.

8 So sort of a brief overview. As
9 Nancy -- as the Hearing Officer talked about,
10 we do have a new rates process. So in the past
11 we had a public process. There was evidence
12 that was supplied for why we needed a rate
13 increase, a financial plan based on our cost of
14 service. But in the past we went through
15 public hearings and then technical hearings.
16 But at the very end, the Hearing Officer
17 provided a report recommendation to the Board
18 commissioner who signed off on that report who
19 either, approved, changed, or modified that a
20 bit. The difference is, we now have a Rate
21 Hearing Board and the voters have voted them in
22 in 2012. So it's a new process as to the
23 decision-making body, but we're going through
24 today for the technical components, the public

1 components. All the financial records that we
2 need to display has not changed. Very fact
3 based. Also, we're looking to finish up this
4 process by the end of June.

5 So the increase that we're talking
6 about is in fiscal year '17, fiscal year '18.
7 There's always been a public advocate, which is
8 the Community Legal Services, Josie is here
9 today. So there's been always a public
10 advocate as part of that process also. But the
11 public's role is very important, so we
12 appreciate the time you take coming out to hear
13 the presentation, to give us your feedback, to
14 give us your thoughts. There's many ways for
15 the public to do that, so being here today and
16 providing testimony, but you can also send a
17 letter to the Rate Hearing Board with the
18 addresses in the bottom of this PowerPoint.
19 You can also file a notice if you want to
20 participate in the more technical hearing. So
21 lots of opportunities for us to hear from you.
22 It's very important for us because it's an
23 opportunity for the Water Department and all of
24 our partners to really get some good feedback

1 about what your opinions are about the value of
2 your dollar and what you say.

3 So what does the Water Department
4 do? So we always aim to explain. We're
5 multifaceted. We're a water, wastewater,
6 stormwater utility. We start from the very
7 basics. We pull water from the Delaware and
8 the Schuylkill Rivers. They're our drinking
9 water sources. We pump that through pipes to
10 one of our three water treatment plants.
11 There, the water is treated because you can't
12 drink water directly from the river. We make
13 that safe, healthy, clean, top quality water,
14 which is then delivered through a delivery
15 system, a 3,000-mile water main system to
16 customers' homes and businesses. After you use
17 that water, goes down the drain, goes through
18 our sewer system. We also have a 3,000-mile
19 sewer system which takes it to one of our three
20 wastewater treatment plants, where we have to
21 clean that water, remove the majority of the
22 pollutants so it's discharged to the Delaware
23 River in a quality that is cleaner than how we
24 withdrew that from the river.

1 We also manage stormwater. So when
2 it rains, we manage the water that hits the
3 street to the inlet system that's on the
4 street, but we also manage what hits
5 properties. And then the stormwater component
6 also contains some laws and regulations, the
7 programs and plans that we have in place in
8 order to ensure that we manage the water well,
9 minimize flooding to the best of our ability,
10 but also ensure that we meet the regulations
11 under the Clean Water Act, again protecting our
12 water waste.

13 With a large system like that, six
14 major facilities, over 6,000 miles of mains and
15 sewers, lots of components to that. So we're
16 an older city. We have an older system. So
17 those systems need to be replaced and rehabbed
18 periodically in order to make sure that we're
19 working efficiently, cost effectively and
20 safely.

21 So the major reasons, why do we
22 need a rate increase? These are the five major
23 factors. Again, reinvestment in the aging
24 infrastructure. So the average age of our

1 infrastructure is about 70 years old. So we're
2 working on a system that has been in good
3 repair for a long time, but as every system
4 ages it needs to be replaced. We averaged
5 about 900 water main breaks in our last fiscal
6 year. A lot of that is weather dependent, but
7 it also can be impacted by the age and material
8 of our water main system. And then the
9 facilities that we are using to treat drinking
10 water and treat wastewater and all the
11 components, pumps, tanks, all the components
12 are also aging. So they need to be replaced in
13 order to make sure that we continue to provide
14 top quality service.

15 Environmental regulations. So we
16 have regulations of the Safe Drinking Water
17 Act, which is in regard to the water delivered
18 to you for drinking. And the Clean Water Act
19 is all about ensuring that we keep sewage out
20 of our streams and out of our rivers. I'll go
21 into that requirement in the next slide.

22 Changing water use and reduced
23 consumption. So we have seen reduced
24 consumption in the sense more people are buying

1 bottled water. Less people are drinking tap
2 water. We're always pushing -- tap water is
3 better regulated, better for you, so we hate to
4 see the bottled water use. But we also see a
5 reduction in consumption because the appliances
6 you use today, dishwashers, shower heads, you
7 know, you have all kinds of water conservation
8 devices on those because people are looking to
9 reduce their water consumption, which is a good
10 thing. It's good for the environment. But we
11 also see a reduction in the usage of our
12 customers. And our system was built for a
13 population of over two million years ago. So
14 we have a system that can provide a lot more,
15 the system is in place, but we're providing
16 less water. So we have to spread the cost out
17 for that.

18 We also have recently lost a
19 wholesale customer. Because we have extra
20 capacity, we sell to water authorities, to
21 municipalities that are our neighbors. We lost
22 one of those, what we call, wholesale
23 contracts, and it's good for us to have those
24 contracts because that helps spread the cost.

1 We're able to sell to municipalities. It
2 provides an ability for us to share that cost.

3 Customer assistance programs. So
4 we have a number of discount programs. I have
5 another slide which goes into a little more
6 detail about that. And then just general
7 inflation. So I think each of us, you know,
8 you have a home, you have a business. When you
9 provide services for that home and you buy
10 products for that home or business, those costs
11 continue to rise. And every utility, every
12 business sees that and that's sort of a
13 continuing trend. So we have to build the cost
14 of that inflation into our projected costs of
15 service. So aging infrastructure and that
16 really is one of the major components of this.
17 And we're not the only city that is seeing
18 this. Every city across the country, older
19 cities are faced with how to replace a system
20 in a way that you reduce the amount of breaks,
21 that you reduce the inefficiencies of the
22 system, but at the same time you continue to
23 make that system affordable.

24 The EPA has projected, you know,

1 looking across the country, that over four
2 trillion dollars is needed over the next 20
3 years for water utilities and wastewater
4 utilities to replace its aging infrastructure.
5 So the challenges for us to do, that is you
6 look in the slide, our infrastructure is
7 underground, so people aren't aware of it.
8 They don't know how it's functioning. They
9 don't think about it until we have a break or
10 until we have a street collapse where it become
11 very apparent that there's a problem with the
12 infrastructure. So our goal is to really ramp
13 that program up, replace more miles of water
14 mains per year. We were averaging about 22
15 miles in the past. We're ramping that up to 28
16 miles per year. But that's an additional cost
17 to doing that, about 44 million in our capital
18 program to do that. But we're also weighing
19 that so we want to continue to make that
20 affordable. But we need to replace those mains
21 so that they continue to provide safe water and
22 we ensure the reliability of that service.
23 Our environmental regulations. So
24 I mentioned under the drinking water component,

1 the Safe Drinking Water Act. Really important.
2 So we take that water from our rivers and, of
3 course, there's lots of pollutants in those
4 rivers. We are monitoring over a hundred
5 regulated contaminants. We have to ensure that
6 our water treatment process removes that. Very
7 stringent regulations. We all want stringent
8 regulations. We expect to have that. There's
9 always new regulations on the horizon. Our
10 goals and our public mission is to provide safe
11 drinking water. So those regulations that are
12 in place by the EPA and by the state are there
13 to ensure that. But there's always a cost in
14 that ever-changing regulation.

15 Under the Clean Water Act and our
16 Green City, Clean Waters Program is one of the
17 largest programs under that. That is really
18 all about reducing what we call the combined
19 sewer overflows or stormwater that is polluted
20 from contaminating our streams. Here, we have
21 the Wissahickon and the Schuylkill on the other
22 side. Want to ensure they're clean.
23 Protecting those waterways. Keeping sewage
24 out. Keeping pollutants out. Under our Green

1 City, Clean Waters Program, it's a
2 2.4-billion-dollar program that's looking over
3 the next 25 years. Actually, we're into year
4 four, so we have about 21 years left of that
5 program to meet very stringent requirements to
6 ensure that those waterways are protected.
7 Many components to that, some traditional
8 infrastructure, but some new infrastructure
9 that we call the Green Stormwater
10 Infrastructure, rain gardens, green roofs, the
11 types of things that are capturing the rain
12 waters so it provides additional capacity in
13 our sewer system. An expensive program but an
14 important program, because I think everyone
15 knows that we need to have a protected clean
16 environment.

17 We have many assistance programs.
18 So we recognize that water service is vital.
19 Everyone deserves to have good water service.
20 But we understand, also, that we're always
21 measuring or trying to balance the
22 affordability of what we're doing with the cost
23 of service of what we're providing. So we have
24 a senior citizen discount program for eligible

1 seniors. We provide 25 percent discounts to
2 charitable organizations, nonprofits. The
3 Water Revenue Bureau has an assistance program
4 for loan customers who need grants, who need
5 some additional financial assistance so that
6 they can meet their monthly payments. We also
7 have a number of other programs that help
8 customers replace broken sewer laterals or
9 leaking water services. So we provide zero
10 interest loans. And we have been working with
11 Councilwoman Sanchez and Community Legal
12 Services on a new program called an Affordable
13 Rates Program that is a component of this
14 projected rate increase and that's a program
15 that's a lot more proactive. Looking to assist
16 low income customers before they become
17 delinquent to provide them with a monthly bill
18 that they can afford just based on their
19 income. So we believe it's a better program.
20 It's built into our projected rate increase.

21 So I know the question is always,
22 how will this impact your bill. So up there
23 you'll see what is a typical residential bill.
24 That's based on you using 600 cubic feet of

1 water on a monthly basis. So the increase is a
2 two-year increase. The first one is fiscal
3 year '17. It's a 6.2 percent increase that
4 will begin July 1 and how that would impact
5 your typical bill. So the typical customer
6 paying \$67.40. You'll see an increase of about
7 \$4.20 beginning July if this proposed rate
8 increase is passed as proposed. The following
9 year is our fiscal year '18. On July 1, 2017,
10 you would see a 5.5 percent increase, which
11 would add an additional \$3.90 to that bill. So
12 all together, over that two-year period, that's
13 11.7 percent increase and you would see an
14 \$8.00 increase over that two years. For
15 seniors, you're eligible. You would have that
16 25 percent discount. That would be added to
17 that. So the percent increase remains the
18 same, but the discounted amount July 1, 2016
19 would be like \$3.10, and then July 1, 2017
20 would be \$3.00. So an additional \$6.00 for
21 eligible seniors over that two-year period.

22 We believe -- I shouldn't say we
23 believe. We have seen that Philadelphia
24 compares regionally very well and also

1 nationally shows very well. We looked at what
2 are the utilities, and authorities in the
3 region who are providing water services
4 charging their customer. You'll see we're the
5 dark blue bar, and that little green on the top
6 will show where that increase will be. We feel
7 we compare favorably even after the increase is
8 put into place. So we're sort of somewhat in
9 the middle there. When you look on the sewer
10 side, we're on the lower end of the utilities
11 surrounding us that provide sewer services. We
12 are a public utility. We're not a
13 for-profit-making utility. So we don't have
14 that pressure, but we do have the pressure of
15 having to collect the amount we need in order
16 to operate and meet our revenue requirements.
17 Nationally, you'll see we're sort of somewhat
18 towards the lower end. But all the cities that
19 are reflected in this chart are dealing with
20 the same issues that Philadelphia is. Aging
21 infrastructure, they need to replace that.
22 Very stringent, costly federal regulations in
23 order to make sure that we clean up our
24 waterways and provide safe drinking water. So

1 this is sort of a snapshot in time. Those
2 numbers can change based on what these other
3 utilities and cities are going through as they
4 go through their own process.

5 So what you typically pay for your
6 bill -- I know you all receive a monthly bill.
7 I don't know if you take a good look at it to
8 understand what you're paying for on that bill,
9 but about \$25.00 of that is for the water
10 service, water usage component. So that's
11 taking the water from the river, getting it to
12 the plant, treating it, providing it to you in
13 the amount that you use in your home that's
14 measured by your water meter.

15 On the sewer side, the same thing.
16 So you're paying about \$18.60 on the sewer
17 side. That's for all that water to go back
18 down the drain after you use that, taking it to
19 one of our wastewater treatment plants, and
20 deliver back to the river so it's clean.

21 The stormwater fee, \$14.17. So
22 that's the fee that every residential customer
23 is paying, a flat fee based on the cost of
24 providing stormwater services to the property,

1 but also a larger cost, a public cost for how
2 we also manage the stormwater on the street.

3 And then the final component, the
4 \$13.84, the service charge, that's involved
5 with the metering, the billing, and the
6 collection factor. So that's what you pay on
7 your monthly bill.

8 In the end, when we take a look at
9 what you're using on a daily basis, you're
10 using about 150 gallons per day. That's the
11 sort of typical residential customer. If you
12 take that monthly bill and you divide that by
13 30, you're paying about \$2.40 a day for all
14 those factors. So it's for the water
15 treatment, for the wastewater treatment, for
16 the stormwater management. So we hope you feel
17 that you get a good value for that \$2.40. When
18 you look at how you might spend that \$2.40
19 otherwise. It could be a cup of coffee, it
20 could be on a newspaper. So we feel as if
21 water is a vital service, so we're hoping that
22 people feel that there's a really good value
23 when you think about what you're paying on a
24 daily basis for that 150 gallons.

1 So that is it. So I think I'm
2 turning it over to Josie.

3 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you very much.
4 Now we're going to hear from Josie Pickens who
5 represents the Office of the Public Advocate.

6 MS. PICKENS: Good evening,
7 everyone. My name is Josie Pickens. I'm one
8 on the attorneys at Community Legal Services.
9 I practice in our energy unit and I work with a
10 team of other attorneys. We have been retained
11 as the public advocate in this proceeding. We
12 have hired a team of experts who are reviewing
13 the department's filing to determine whether a
14 rate increase is necessary and whether there
15 are existing funds to cover the costs that the
16 City maintains.

17 Particularly, we're looking at the
18 more than 200 million dollars that currently
19 exist in the Department's Rate Stabilization
20 Fund. We're very interested in your testimony.
21 We at Community Legal Services see only a small
22 amount of the issues that people have in the
23 City. We want to know how the rate increase is
24 going to impact you and your household budget.

1 We know that for some people, a 12 percent
2 increase is really going to have significant
3 consequences on your household budget. We're
4 also interested in your experiences with the
5 Water Department. As a condition of the last
6 break case, the Department agreed to make
7 substantial improvements to its customer
8 service and we question whether those
9 improvements have taken place.

10 We'd like to hear from you what
11 your experiences have been. Your testimony
12 becomes a part of the record of this
13 proceeding, and when our experts are writing
14 their position papers and when we're drafting
15 our briefs, we're going to look at your
16 testimony to help us shape the issues. I want
17 you to know there's a public advocate
18 representing the interest of the residential
19 customers and small users and that we are
20 interested in your concerns. I have some cards
21 and I'm happy to talk to anyone who wants to
22 talk to me. And I would encourage you to speak
23 up tonight and speak clearly so that we have a
24 good record to review when this all done.

1 Thank you.

2 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. Now
3 we're ready for the public hearing part. I do
4 have a couple of other housekeeping things that
5 I need to cover. One, is there still are some
6 cookies and sandwiches over there which have
7 been made available by the Department for
8 anyone attending. There's some drinks, water.
9 Also, at these hearings, some people have
10 questions. The Board can't really answer
11 questions at this point. We're taking it all
12 in and the Board will make its decision. But
13 we do have with us the commissioner of the
14 Water Department and some of her staff. And so
15 if you have a question that the Department
16 needs to answer, she can do that or her staff.

17 I'd first like to ask if there are
18 any elected or appointed officials that wanted
19 to talk? This is going to be all the people
20 all the time tonight. I'm just going through
21 the list as they happen to be here. The first
22 names we have are John and Mercedes Gray. Come
23 on up. What are we going to do? You can try
24 to --

1 MR. CHAPMAN: They can try and
2 speak from where they are so that everybody can
3 hear.

4 MS. BROCKWAY: I'm being told that
5 you should try to speak from where you are and
6 we'll see if we can hear you.

7 MS. GRAY: I didn't realize we were
8 going to speak. It's okay. I do have a
9 question. It's not about the rate increase,
10 but culverts. If they are -- if there's debris
11 around them, do we call the Philadelphia Water
12 Department to clear it?

13 MR. CHAPMAN: This is Debra
14 McCarty.

15 MS. MCCARTY: Yeah, I'm sorry.
16 Debra McCarty. I'm the commissioner of the
17 Water Department. It's good to see you all and
18 glad to have you come out tonight and I do
19 appreciate your time.

20 So culvert, you mean like a
21 stormwater inlet? Because what I refer to as a
22 culvert is maybe something along the street and
23 that would be typically the Streets
24 Department's responsibility. But if you're

1 talking about an inlet where -- that's in the
2 sidewalk maybe or the graded inlet in the
3 street? Is that what you're referring to? So
4 storm drain. Yes, so that's the Water
5 Department. You can call 215-685-6300. And
6 that number is answered 24 hours a day. In the
7 off hours it's -- right now it's only one
8 person. But, you know -- and if you want to
9 give me the address, if there's a particular
10 inlet right now, I can make sure that gets
11 addressed.

12 MS. GRAY: No. No.

13 MS. MCCARTY: Thank you.

14 MR. GRAY: Oh, yeah. I had one
15 question concerning the additional costs that
16 were put on our rate several years ago about
17 the runoff. Was that due because of the Clean
18 Water Act or whatever it is that that act came
19 through? Why was that added to our bill? What
20 was the reason?

21 MS. BROCKWAY: I'll let the
22 commissioner answer that. And while she's
23 getting ready for that, I want to introduce our
24 chair, Bernard Brunwasser, who was able to

1 come.

2 MS. MCCARTY: So a few years ago,
3 we changed how your bill looks and previously
4 -- we have charged for stormwater for years and
5 years and years. It's been in your bills. But
6 it was covered in the service charge. So if
7 you notice, the change a few years ago, your
8 service charge actually went down, and then
9 there was a new line that said stormwater
10 charge. So that clearly identifies. It's
11 \$14.15 right now. So that's what the
12 residential charge for stormwater is. Is that
13 answering your question? So it's part of our
14 compliance with the Clean Water Act and some of
15 the things that Joanne spoke of in her
16 presentation.

17 MR. GRAY: All right. So that's
18 not in addition. It's just part of the cost of
19 the --

20 MS. MCCARTY: Right. It's not a
21 new charge. What we did do is redistribute how
22 commercial properties are billed. Because
23 previously they were billed based upon the size
24 of the meter. So you could have a little

1 building with a six-inch meter, six-inch
2 service coming in and so you were billed
3 because that -- that's a big size, right?
4 Whereas -- and you have very little runoff in
5 contribution to the system, but you could be a
6 huge parking lot and not even have a water
7 connection or maybe just have a toilet. So
8 that would be just like a residential
9 connection, three-quarter inch, and pay very
10 little, but you are a huge contributor. So we
11 corrected that and made it hopefully -- the
12 intent was to make it fairer for all. And so
13 that's -- that was -- but for commercial
14 properties.

15 MR. GRAY: Oh, okay. All right.
16 That's fine.

17 MS. MCCARTY: Okay.

18 MR. GRAY: Okay.

19 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. I'm
20 going to go through the list. But obviously if
21 you didn't want to testify or speak, not to
22 worry, just let me know and we'll keep going.

23 So the next name I have is Francis
24 Miller. Mr. Miller.

1 MR. MILLER: First of all, I would
2 like to -- we're all here about money because
3 we all have got to pay our bills. When was the
4 senior citizen's discount figure put into
5 effect, \$31,500?

6 MS. BROCKWAY: Again, that's for
7 the Department.

8 MS. MCCARTY: It's been there in
9 every rate case that I have -- this is, I
10 think, my fourth rate case. So the senior
11 citizen discount has existed for many, many
12 years.

13 MR. MILLER: The reason why I ask
14 that is, don't you think that number should be
15 raised so people that are 65 now and older have
16 a chance to apply for senior citizen discounts?
17 We've all had increases in gas bills, water
18 bills, electric bills, you name it. Increases
19 in mortgages and stuff, but yet, no one has
20 ever raised that number where the senior
21 citizens can get the discount.

22 MR. CHAPMAN: I think there's an
23 income level that they have to meet.

24 MS. BROCKWAY: Let's not have

1 everybody talking at once.

2 MS. MCCARTY: Melissa Laboda is our
3 chief financial officer, so she can address
4 that better than I.

5 MS. LABODA: Mr. Miller, if I may.
6 My name is Melissa Laboda. There is an
7 adjustment to the cap every rate proceeding.
8 And that thirty-one five was based on
9 inflation. The next time we go into the rate
10 proceeding, we'll again do a mathematical
11 calculation tied to CTI indices, which will
12 then give us the output of that answer. But I
13 think also to address your broader question,
14 which is you may not qualify based on that
15 income threshold. I think the other option
16 would be to look at the new Affordability
17 Program. You may be able to get a discount
18 under that program.

19 MR. MILLER: Well, you still
20 haven't answered my question as far as when was
21 that figure instituted.

22 MS. MCCARTY: Thirty-one five?

23 MR. MILLER: Pardon?

24 MS. MCCARTY: You mean the \$31,500?

1 MR. MILLER: \$31,500. When did that
2 start and who put it on?

3 MS. LABODA: I'm going to have our
4 general counsel come up and he's going to give
5 us a history. It's a really old discount.
6 It's been in place a long time.

7 MR. MILLER: Because I don't
8 believe it's very fair to a lot of the people,
9 especially in the community and in this room,
10 that hasn't been raised for some so many years,
11 but yet everything else is going up and we're
12 not given an opportunity to get the senior
13 citizen discount because of that reason.

14 MR. SCHWARTZ: My name is Scott
15 Schwartz. I work for the Law Department. The
16 senior discount was enacted by an ordinance in
17 the 1970s, and every year it's suggested based
18 on -- every rate case is adjusted based on
19 inflation. So it was enacted by City Council.
20 The rate was set by City Council and the
21 adjustment is set by City Council. The
22 original was about \$14,000. So it's increased
23 --

24 MR. MILLER: That's 50 years ago.

1 MR. SCHWARTZ: It was a long time
2 ago, 1970s. To answer your question, the rate
3 is set by City Council. The Board actually has
4 no authority to change that. It would need to
5 be a City Council ordinance.

6 MR. MILLER: Maybe they should
7 introduce it to City Council to try to give
8 senior citizens a break. I mean, I don't know
9 anybody else here, but I'm not very far away
10 from getting that discount. I'm just over that
11 limit. But in the last 50 years, I have put up
12 -- I have put out a lot more money in all the
13 increases that they have had and it just
14 doesn't add up. The figure doesn't add up. It
15 doesn't help us in any way at all.

16 MR. SCHWARTZ: The one decision the
17 Board makes is whether to offer it or not offer
18 it. And that is a decision the Board has to
19 make. But it's been offered since the 1970s,
20 but the actual rate, the income level is set by
21 City Council and the Board decides, are we
22 going to offer it or not offer it.

23 MR. MILLER: May I suggest to the
24 Board here that they present it to City Council

1 and see what they can do about it?

2 MR. SCHWARTZ: Thank you.

3 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you for your
4 suggestion.

5 MR. MILLER: And the other thing
6 is, who would I contact for stormwater runoff?
7 Do you have a telephone number?

8 MS. MCCARTY: What's the issue? Is
9 it coming from somebody else's property onto
10 your property?

11 MR. MILLER: Oh, yes. Definitely.

12 MS. MCCARTY: So that's the issue?

13 MR. MILLER: I have got a petition
14 going around trying to get this fixed for a
15 year now and I have been, we'll say, run around
16 the block and I can't get any answers. I'm
17 hoping to try and get something in the near
18 future. But this last storm damaged -- did a
19 the whole lot of damage to my property. And
20 it's all because of a parking lot that has no
21 drain, water drain, and the parking lot was put
22 in illegally and they paved it with asphalt
23 from property line to property line without a
24 drain and it's draining right into my next door

1 neighbor's yard, which is 15 feet away from the
2 wall that it's knocking down in my property.

3 And then the water comes over that like a
4 waterfall, especially on this last storm.

5 MS. MCCARTY: Right. It was a
6 horrible storm.

7 MR. MILLER: And it's just
8 destroying everything. I have been to L&I, two
9 people at L&I. I've been to Curtis Jones'
10 office. I've been to Curtis Jones'
11 representative which is --

12 MR. COHEN: Right here.

13 MS. MCCARTY: That's Josh Cohen.

14 MR. MILLER: Oh, I know him very
15 well. He knows me.

16 MS. MCCARTY: So what's the
17 address?

18 MR. MILLER: My address is 495
19 Ripka Street.

20 MS. MCCARTY: I'm sorry, Ripka?

21 MR. MILLER: Ripka Street.

22 R-i-p-k-a Street.

23 MS. MCCARTY: And the property --

24 do you know the address --

1 MR. MILLER: 6212 "A" and "B", and
2 6214 Ridge Avenue.

3 MS. MCCARTY: Okay. So either
4 publicly or offline, you want me to -- want to
5 give me your contact information?

6 MR. MILLER: I can't hear you.

7 MS. MCCARTY: I'm sorry. Either
8 offline or right now, can you give me your
9 contact information, your phone number?

10 MR. MILLER: You want my phone
11 number?

12 MR. DASENT: Could we go off the
13 record one moment?

14 MS. BROCKWAY: Off the record.

15 (Discussion held off the record.)

16 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you for your
17 comments. The next name I have is a Jay Cohen.

18 MR. COHEN: My writing is not good.

19 MS. BROCKWAY: Did you want to --

20 MR. COHEN: I'll be happy to speak
21 very briefly. I'm Josh Cohen on behalf of
22 Councilman Jones who is the district council
23 person for Roxborough, Manayunk, East Falls and
24 most of West Philadelphia.

1 First of all, I want to thank the
2 Water Department and the Rate Board for having
3 a public hearing here in Roxborough. I don't
4 have too much more to add, other than if
5 anybody has any questions after this hearing is
6 over, you can always come to our office or
7 contact us in City Hall, and we'll be happy to
8 get in contact with the Water Department with
9 any additional questions.

10 And to Mr. Miller's first point
11 about the rate -- the senior citizen discount
12 rate, that's an excellent point and I'll be
13 happy to bring it to Councilman Jones to look
14 at and see if it's worth introducing a change
15 in that. And I certainly know about your
16 second point and we'll be happy to talk about
17 that further. But if anyone has any questions,
18 I'll be here for the remainder of the hearing.
19 Thank you.

20 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. The next
21 name I have is a W. Brown.

22 MR. BROWN: Yes, I didn't expect to
23 speak. I thought it was an attendance sheet,
24 but I actually did come prepared with a

1 question about the stormwater runoff. Trying
2 to figure out how -- let me rephrase that. I
3 understand how the rate was set and the kind of
4 proration that was done across private
5 residences across the commercial. But I look
6 at the rate that's set, realize it's a uniform
7 rate for a residential setting. So I wonder
8 how much -- if you adjusted that rate to
9 reflect the actual square footage of an
10 impervious surface, how much would the Water
11 Department need to actually increase their
12 monthly rate if the stormwater rates were
13 actually equitably distributed?

14 For example, I'm paying my \$14.00 a
15 month. I have a thousand square feet of roof
16 area. Actually less than that, but that's a
17 separate issue. I have a thousand square feet
18 of impervious area based on the Water
19 Department's citing. My nextdoor neighbor who
20 is 25 feet away has 2000 square foot of
21 impervious surface. He put an addition on his
22 house. He is paying seven cents per square
23 foot for stormwater runoff, while I'm paying 14
24 cents per square foot for stormwater runoff.

1 So I'm paying and I'm not objecting to paying
2 my share. It's just a matter of, I'm paying
3 twice as much as somebody who has -- I don't
4 know how feasible it is, but when I look at the
5 City's -- when I look at the Water Department's
6 maps, which is what I was doing before I got
7 here, and I'm looking at the square footages
8 that are there that everybody is paying the
9 same, I can see a slightly more equitable way
10 to do that that may or may not actually impact
11 the overall rate increase the Water Department
12 is asking for. That was my question.

13 MS. MCCARTY: It's an excellent
14 question. It's something that we have
15 struggled with because to manage -- right now
16 we're managing 15,000 -- how many commercial
17 properties? 80 to 90,000 properties out of,
18 you know, close to 500,000 accounts. And
19 that's a big job because they all vary in size.
20 And it was looking -- trying to figure out how
21 to manage all of our customers and look at
22 every single parcel is -- I think you started
23 -- kind of noted in your question by asking how
24 much would it cost. Right now, I don't know

1 that it's even feasible, and it is my belief it
2 would be -- it would drive up the rate increase
3 even further than it is if we were to try to
4 implement something like that. To manage a
5 program like that is very expensive.

6 MR. BROWN: It may be something to
7 take up with the City's IT guru, whoever that
8 is now. If only, because if your maps have the
9 impervious surface square footage, as they do,
10 then you have got a data set that's available
11 to you to apply to your stormwater rate. I'm
12 just saying, you have the data.

13 MS. MCCARTY: If it was only that
14 simple. But --

15 MR. BROWN: No. No. No. I
16 understand the City's IT challenges. I have
17 done some consulting work with them on that.
18 But looking at it, if the data set is there, it
19 opens the door to look at it in just that way
20 so the person who has the 5,000-square-foot
21 house in Philadelphia is not paying \$14.00 a
22 month in stormwater runoff, but are, in fact,
23 paying what would be an equitable rate. I'm
24 not trying -- I'm not challenging my neighbor.

1 I'm not looking for any rate -- I'm not --
2 again, I'm not fighting my bill.

3 MRS. BROWN: Isn't that a goal? I
4 thought that was a goal of the EPA and the City
5 of Philadelphia.

6 MS. BROCKWAY: Ma'am, could you
7 give us your name.

8 MRS. BROWN: Mrs. Brown. We're
9 both paying. But I thought that was the goal,
10 was to encourage and incentivize that people
11 start looking at their stormwater runoff, and
12 find ways to manage that so it doesn't just go
13 off into the sewer.

14 MS. MCCARTY: Right. I mean,
15 that's -- that, you know -- anything -- I like
16 to tell folks, if you can keep it out of the
17 pipe, that's always better. In separately
18 sewerred areas, like this area where it goes --
19 it runs off into a storm pipe and goes to a
20 waterway near you, that might sound like it's a
21 good deal, but it's not always the best for the
22 environment because the street runoff is going
23 there and things like that. In combined sewer
24 areas, the wastewater hopefully, ultimately

1 gets to a wastewater plant. But some of it --
2 especially that storm the other day that Mr.
3 Miller referenced, a lot of wastewater. So
4 stormwater and sewage gets to our waterways and
5 that's what we have to reduce. But any time
6 anywhere in the City where you're a combined
7 sewer section or a separately sewer section,
8 like this area, if you can keep it out of the
9 pipe, that's always better for the environment.

10 MR. BROWN: I'm going to come back
11 to my same question. If the Water Department
12 has the data set for the square footage of
13 impervious surfaces for each residential
14 property, I'm not going to get into higher math
15 or the algorithm to be able to take that data
16 to look at your overall cost, because you have
17 already done that or you wouldn't have been
18 able to arrive at a prorated rate for a
19 residential property. Having arrived at a
20 prorated amount using a data set that exists,
21 you ought to be able to put the little line
22 item in the bill that says stormwater discharge
23 -- and it may only be a \$3.00 difference on my
24 bill. It may cost me a dollar more, I don't

1 know. It's just a matter of -- I get slightly
2 resentful when my bill is identical to
3 somebody's bill, and I don't mean my neighbor,
4 but Chestnut Hill houses that are paying the
5 same rate or Upper Roxborough.

6 MS. MCCARTY: I think you said you
7 have a twin?

8 MR. BROWN: No, we're a single
9 home.

10 MS. MCCARTY: So the folks in a row
11 home, you know, in South Philly are paying the
12 same as you are, as I am.

13 MR. BROWN: And I think they're
14 being overcharged. I am an altruist.

15 MR. BROCKWAY: One at a time.

16 MS. MCCARTY: So if you let me
17 speak. We looked at this and for residential
18 we took the average across the City. But Erin
19 Williams, who is in charge of our billing and
20 incentives program for stormwater, can probably
21 better answer your question than I have been
22 attempting to.

23 MS. WILLIAMS: Erin Williams. I
24 manage the stormwater program. So definitely,

1 I understand your concern. And, you know, in a
2 perfect world it definitely makes sense. I
3 think our biggest challenge with adopting our
4 same billing principals for our non-residential
5 customers to our residential customers is a
6 matter of administration. Right now we have a
7 staff of eight, including myself, maybe nine
8 actually, to manage all the stormwater charges
9 for 550,000 accounts. Most of our time is
10 spent with our 90,000 non-residential accounts.
11 And to date, just dealing with the
12 appeals-related issues to non-residential
13 customers is like -- we're at, like, 5,000
14 appeals to date. We receive hundreds and
15 hundreds of appeals every year. So if we were
16 to increase that population of accounts that we
17 had to work with for this very specific
18 mathematical formula and math, I think, if
19 anything, it's really an administrative
20 challenge. We would have to really beef up our
21 staff. Take a lot more time. Which kind of
22 Debbie alluded to earlier, would mean higher
23 cost of service on our part. So I think we're
24 trying to balance this and say we can have this

1 very specific charge for commercial customers.
2 I think we have looked at alternatives for our
3 residential program looking at tiers of
4 customers from single to twins to row homes.
5 That's something that we have explored. I
6 think right now our biggest challenge is really
7 the administration of a program when you're
8 looking at specific gross areas, specific
9 impervious areas for about 550,000 accounts.
10 It's a lot. Like on the water side, just for
11 billing for water service, our staff for that
12 alone, the metering guys and everything, all
13 the money we're spending to individually
14 account for water service is huge. So you
15 would be basically mirroring that for the
16 stormwater side. It would be a huge increase
17 in the cost. So that's our thing. I
18 definitely -- what you say does make sense
19 logically, of course. I think we're really
20 trying to strike a good middle ground with
21 being fair and equitable with our charges, and
22 at the same time being fair with your costs
23 that we're passing on.

24 MR. BROWN: Well, okay. I'm not

1 trying to be contentious, because clearly
2 you're being fair to your commercial
3 buildings --

4 MS. MCCARTY: Some of them don't
5 think so.

6 MR. BROWN: But they only have --
7 combining it all -- I understand why you did
8 the adjustment you did for commercial
9 properties. Makes absolute sense. And that's
10 a very, very nice adjustment. So I guess I'm
11 asking for the same consideration for
12 residential properties. You have got more of
13 them. I'm thinking of Mr. Miller who is
14 currently paying \$14.00 a month for stormwater
15 runoff.

16 Are you in a twin or a row home,
17 sir?

18 MR. MILLER: I'm in a single home.

19 MR. BROWN: I'm paying \$14.00 a
20 month. I don't know what your impervious
21 surface is but it's the same -- and people in
22 row homes would pay less, assuming they have
23 got a smaller surface area. Again, it's -- it
24 was just trying to find some balance and some

1 equity in that, and somehow those of us living
2 in the smallest homes seem to be holding a lot
3 more of that burden than we should.

4 ERIN WILLIAMS: Understood.

5 MS. MCCARTY: Understood. Thank
6 you.

7 MRS. BROWN: Consideration is
8 certainly for the future.

9 MS. MCCARTY: It's not come off our
10 radar. I don't know if I mentioned it earlier,
11 I mean, Joanne and I were talking about it
12 earlier this afternoon it came up again and how
13 to do this. I mean, administratively it's
14 huge. And you, know, we're responsible for
15 weighing the cost benefit of it and trying, as
16 Erin mentioned, to make sure our rates are as
17 low as possible, but still equitable. So it's
18 that balance we always strive for. So yes, you
19 know, I think I said something like, you know,
20 hopefully one day there will be this program
21 that will be able to look at the parcel and
22 feed the building system and, you know, we
23 won't even have to think about it. But the
24 appeals will come in. So we would not, you

1 know, need -- make sure we had the staff to
2 support that.

3 MRS. BROWN: Google Earth to be
4 your data set.

5 MS. MCCARTY: Well, you know, it's
6 dealing with the parcels. So that's not our
7 database. This effort, our team helped inform
8 and improve the BRT, OPA data set.

9 MR. BROWN: Google is better.

10 MS. MCCARTY: So it was a huge lift
11 for us and, you know, I think the team did a
12 great job and we're continuing to improve.
13 But, yeah, it's on the horizon, but I don't
14 know how near that horizon is.

15 MS. BROCKWAY: I should let folks
16 know that Mr. Chapman was appointed by the
17 mayor as the person with personal experience in
18 stormwater bills that he pays.

19 MR. CHAPMAN: I can assure you that
20 they are very accurate in their calculation for
21 the impervious coverage of an automobile
22 dealership.

23 MS. BROCKWAY: Okay. We have got a
24 lot of names of people who signed in, but

1 clearly there was some confusion about it. So
2 I think what I would like to do instead of
3 going in order by these names is to ask for a
4 show of hands. Next person who wants to make a
5 statement, pose a question. Anybody else?
6 Over here, ma'am.

7 MS. MCGARITY: Olga McGarity. I'm
8 the committee person. Olga McGarity, committee
9 person. You're looking at a 12 percent
10 increase and the City of Philadelphia currently
11 is the fifth largest city in the nation. It
12 holds one million less individuals than the
13 fourth largest city, which is Houston. And our
14 rates literally doubled. Water rates are twice
15 as high. How do you account for that? I'm
16 just trying to understand how a 12 percent
17 increase is justifiable. I can only think in
18 the past, have you not done the work or kept up
19 with your infrastructure? Can the Water
20 Department actually ask for government help to
21 help in fixing infrastructure instead of laying
22 the cost on families? A 12 percent increase --
23 I don't know if anybody has gotten a three
24 percent increase in their salaries for the

1 Water Department to justify a 12 percent
2 increase on individuals. It's insane. It
3 doesn't make sense. And according to the
4 statistics, New York has 8.5 million
5 individuals and their rate is \$59.00 a month.
6 L.A., 3.9 million --

7 MS. MCCARTY: Well, we have this --

8 MS. BROCKWAY: Hold on. Hold on.
9 One at a time.

10 MS. MCGARITY: Chicago, \$34.00.
11 Houston, \$37.00. Philadelphia, 71.6 on an
12 average cost for water? What's going on?

13 MS. BROCKWAY: All right. Now --

14 MS. MCGARITY: Really, this is
15 ridiculous. 12 percent increase. What have
16 you been doing in the past? I mean, Community
17 Legal Services says that they're going to look
18 into what they promised that they would do if
19 they justify what was last promised for the
20 last increase. Now, where are we heading?
21 This is ridiculous.

22 MS. BROCKWAY: Let Commissioner
23 McCarty provide you the answer from the
24 position of the Water Department.

1 MS. MCCARTY: So New York City, I
2 don't know if you know, but they don't really
3 have any drinking water plants. We have three
4 drinking water plants. They do have 14
5 wastewater treatment plants and we have three.
6 But they save a lot by not having to have
7 drinking water plants. Their infrastructure is
8 comparable in age to ours, but we do have an
9 aging infrastructure, which is one of the
10 drivers. Joanne mentioned that we are
11 increasing the replacement rate of our water
12 mains from about 22 miles a year up to 28 miles
13 a year. And that's a little over a hundred
14 years replacement rate for our pipes.

15 I can't speak to Houston. I'm not
16 as familiar with Houston's rates and what goes
17 into those rates. I would caution you though,
18 making a bar graph like that is very difficult
19 because you always want to try to make sure
20 we're comparing apples to apples. So water
21 sewer and stormwater. And I don't know if
22 that's included in Houston's rates or not
23 because a lot of times --

24 MS. MCGARITY: But these are the

1 rates you're providing us right here in your
2 document.

3 MS. MCCARTY: Houston is up there?

4 MS. BROCKWAY: Go off the record.

5 (Discussion held off the record.)

6 MS. MCGARITY: Philadelphia has
7 consistently been increasing their rates, their
8 water rates. Consistently. Consistently.
9 What was done with the last increase? And
10 before that, what was done with that increase?
11 So where are we now? Are we going -- next time
12 you come it's going to be another 12 percent
13 increase? I mean, are you keeping up? Are you
14 trying to figure out other ways to maybe borrow
15 money through the federal government to do some
16 of the work that you need to do through CDBG
17 funds?

18 MS. LABODA: My name is Melissa
19 Laboda. I'm not familiar with the acronym
20 you're using. Would you mind just telling me
21 what that --

22 MS. MCGARITY: Community
23 Development Block Grants. Can some of that
24 money be allocated to the Water Department for

1 infrastructure? You do need it, you can't get
2 that money.

3 MS. MCCARTY: That's for housing.
4 So I don't know --

5 MS. MCGARITY: What about Economic
6 Development funds?

7 MS. MCCARTY: We were able to take
8 advantage some years ago of the AA -- under
9 Obama during -- what was that called?

10 MS. LABODA: The American Recovery
11 Act, via the state -- via the Commonwealth of
12 Pennsylvania State Revolving Fund. We were
13 able to access four low-interest loans, not
14 grants. We did not receive a grant, even
15 though that's what we applied for. We received
16 the loans. We have those four loans. The
17 projects are being constructed. They're near
18 final. But unfortunately, if you go to the
19 Penvest Website of the Commonwealth of
20 Pennsylvania and you look at the maximum loan
21 they're willing to give, it's 15 million
22 dollars. Our capital program is about 2.5
23 billion. So we do borrow for most of our
24 infrastructure needs. We just don't utilize it

1 through a program that's capped at 15 million
2 dollars. We actually do it in the public
3 market.

4 MS. MCGARITY: But that amount you
5 have given is the total amount to fix the
6 entire capital improvement program. What about
7 last year? What about the year before? What
8 about the year even before that? Did you set
9 -- did you have a plan, a five-year plan, a
10 ten-year plan, a fifteen-year plan?

11 MS. LABODA: Of course.

12 MS. MCGARITY: Most eminent in
13 needs.

14 MS. MCCARTY: Yes.

15 MS. LABODA: Yes.

16 MS. MCCARTY: It's not like -- you
17 know, we go through our capital program and the
18 request from the facility -- our facilities are
19 old. We're the oldest water utility in the
20 country and our infrastructure is old. And
21 it's our responsibility to make sure that it
22 lasts way much longer. You know, continues to
23 last and we have to upgrade it. And when we
24 sit down with these meetings and -- to this

1 day, I continue to participate, as well as many
2 other folks from the Department with, you know,
3 the operations folks that say I -- this needs
4 to be upgraded, this is failing, these pumps,
5 these large pumps need to be replaced, they're
6 40 years old. You know, and we -- it's not
7 like we have an infinite amount of money. We
8 know that. And we have to prioritize. But
9 there's only so long you can put off spending
10 money on capital to replace something.

11 Because, again, it's that balance. You get to
12 a point where you're spending more to fix that
13 thing and keep it running than if you bought it
14 and -- you know, basically replaced it. So
15 it's just like, you know -- the analogy is if
16 you have a car and you had it for a long time
17 and you get to the that point, do I spend this
18 thousand bucks to fix it or do I buy a new car
19 and take the loan.

20 MS. MCGARITY: Well, the 12 percent
21 is not going to solve the problem. It's not
22 going to solve the problem and then the
23 following year we're going to look at another
24 increase and so forth and so forth.

1 MS. MCCARTY: Well, it's a two-year
2 request. The first year is 6.2 percent. It's
3 not 12 percent a year. So over the two year
4 period it's close to a 12 percent request.

5 MS. MCGARITY: Most families don't
6 even get an increase.

7 MS. MCCARTY: I understand that.
8 And utilities are going up, gas is going up,
9 electric is going up, chemicals are going up,
10 and we have to pay those bills as well. And we
11 take it very seriously because all of our
12 employees live in the city and pay these bills
13 either through home ownership or through
14 renting and their landlord. So we work very
15 hard to be as cost-effective as possible.
16 We're always looking at efficiencies. Can we
17 do this a little cheaper. Can we cut this
18 chemical cost. Can we take advantage of this
19 purchasing this this way as opposed to that
20 way. The drivers are, you know, the chemicals,
21 it's the infrastructure. Those are the biggies
22 for us.

23 MS. MCGARITY: Is there an itemized
24 list of what is going to be done, a proposal

1 that itemized the individual pipes that are
2 being taken care of, water pumps that are going
3 to be taken care of, all the information that
4 you're giving us so that we can understand the
5 financial piece of it as well?

6 MS. BROCKWAY: May I take that
7 question? The Water Department filed with the
8 Board about 500 pages of documents, which I
9 believe include this type of information. The
10 level of detail -- I haven't read them all.
11 But in addition to talking directly with the
12 people from the Water Department, you might
13 consult with Ms. Pickens from the public
14 advocate, Community Legal Services, because
15 that's one of the things they could look into
16 as well. And so that type of question will be
17 asked before us, before the Board --

18 MS. MCGARITY: 12 percent is just
19 --

20 MS. MCCARTY: So Joanne has --

21 MS. MCGARITY: It's overwhelming
22 for a lot of -- senior citizens --

23 MS. BROCKWAY: Let's let her finish
24 with that.

1 MS. MCGARITY: Low-income families.
2 It's overwhelming.

3 MS. BROCKWAY: Let's finish this
4 conversation for this evening with your
5 statement. I think we got the gist of what
6 your concern is and the Board will be looking
7 into questions like that.

8 MS. MCGARITY: I appreciate it.
9 Thank you very much.

10 MS. BROCKWAY: Anybody else who
11 would like to speak or ask a question. Ma'am?
12 Say your name.

13 MS. MELTON: Karen Melton. I just
14 have a few brief comments. Clean water is a
15 really precious resource. We're really
16 fortunate here in Southeastern Pennsylvania
17 that we seem to have a good supply of it. But
18 repairing leaks and breaks is not only very
19 costly, it wastes a lot of water and the
20 combined sewer overflows are detrimental to our
21 rivers. So I applaud the efforts that you have
22 put in to improving stormwater management. I
23 like to brag about Philadelphia being a
24 national model. I know there are many people

1 for whom even a few dollars a month is
2 important and I would hope that you would be
3 sensitive to that. Maybe reevaluate some of
4 your assistance programs. But I strongly
5 support the rate increase if that's what you
6 need to keep our infrastructure intact and keep
7 improving it.

8 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. Before
9 we go on to the further speakers, I forgot to
10 ask when we were off the record, I got your
11 name wrong. Ms. McGarity?

12 MS. MCGARITY: McGarity.

13 MR. CHAPMAN: It's my handwriting.

14 MS. BROCKWAY: You had mentioned
15 that you had got the number for Houston off the
16 Internet it sounded like.

17 MS. MCGARITY: Right.

18 MS. BROCKWAY: Do you happen to
19 know -- what did you do? Google it?

20 MS. MCGARITY: Yeah, you Google it.
21 Average water bills. Average water bill per
22 family.

23 MR. CHAPMAN: Can you share the url
24 with me so I can see it?

1 MS. MCGARITY: Sure. Absolutely.
2 Absolutely. It doesn't take any science to
3 find out the information.

4 MS. BROCKWAY: You go ahead and
5 share the url offline and we can look into
6 that. Thank you.

7 Is there anybody else who would
8 like to speak or ask a question or make a
9 statement?

10 MS. MCCARTY: We have some
11 information comparing apples to apples with
12 Houston and Philadelphia.

13 MS. LABODA: I mean, so we're --
14 again, this is Melissa Laboda. I apologize.
15 So we're looking at a water retail rate survey
16 that was completed recently and it looks like
17 on an annual basis, Houston's water and sewer
18 bill eclipses the City of Philadelphia by a
19 bit. So I think it's really important to get
20 the link that you're looking at because the
21 devil is in the details, ma'am, and I think it
22 would be helpful to know what you're looking
23 at. Because we're seeing metrics that show
24 Houston for water and wastewater, because we're

1 a combined system, as are they, that are nearly
2 comparable and those are a little bit higher.
3 So I would appreciate the comment and figure
4 out the data source that you have. Thank you.

5 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. Thank
6 you both.

7 Again, is there anyone else who
8 would like to speak this evening? Questions?
9 Comments?

10 MR. MILLER: I got something I
11 would like to say. This is just an example --

12 MS. BROCKWAY: This is Mr. Miller.

13 MR. MILLER: I believe the Water
14 Department should look in-house to save money.
15 The reason why I say this -- and this is very
16 -- it's cut and dry. It's very simple. I have
17 -- I have two -- I have -- my address is 495
18 and 493. It's a vacant lot. A few years back
19 the gas company came out and they ran gas lines
20 up. They found on 493 a vacant waterline and
21 they hit it and broke it. Well, they asked me
22 if it was my water. I told them no, mine is up
23 the street. They took two hammers, they
24 smashed the pipe together, they put it in the

1 ground. Amen. Covered it everything up.
2 Months later it started leaking. I called the
3 Water Department. Water Department. I told
4 them on the phone what it was. It was a vacant
5 line. They need to come out and turn the
6 ferrule off on the main. Okay. That's all it
7 was. 493.

8 Well, now here comes the Water
9 Department. We got a truck come down with four
10 guys in it. We got a backhoe come down with a
11 driver in it. That's five. We got the
12 supervisor come down, that's six. They're
13 there for probably six hours. They broke the
14 cover on my waterline, which I told them it
15 wasn't it. I had to get down and explain to
16 the supervisor what the problem was. You had
17 six guys, possibly seven to dig a two-by-two
18 hole and turn a valve off. Now that's wasted
19 money. Why can't the person that took the
20 phone call relay this message and the
21 information that I had given them to somebody
22 over here that said we can send two guys out to
23 dig a hole and turn a valve off, instead of
24 sending out six or seven guys and all that

1 equipment and wasted time? That's in-house --
2 in-house way of saving money. Now, that's all
3 I got to say. It happened. I saw it.

4 MS. BROCKWAY: Thank you. Do you
5 want to -- they may not be able to answer
6 individual problems.

7 MR. MILLER: No. No. I'm just
8 telling you that. I mean, you want to make
9 money to try and bring the infrastructure up.
10 I don't blame you. It's a good thing. But you
11 also want to try and save money. Now this is
12 only one instance. How many other instances in
13 the city are there? There's probably thousands
14 and wasted money. Your news media gets on
15 about wasted money and guys sitting on the side
16 -- from the Water Department sitting in trucks
17 for hours at a time doing nothing. Why not
18 investigate in-house first before you go out
19 and tax the public?

20 MS. BROCKWAY: Let's let
21 Commissioner McCarty give at least a short
22 answer to that. I don't think you're going to
23 get a specific answer to your question.

24 MR. MILLER: You wanted a

1 statement. I gave you one.

2 MS. MCCARTY: How many years ago?

3 MR. MILLER: That I had the problem
4 in the street?

5 MS. MCCARTY: Yeah.

6 MR. MILLER: It was just this past
7 summer.

8 MS. MCCARTY: Oh, okay. So I'll
9 look into that because it sounds like an
10 excessive number of folks that showed up. What
11 I can tell you though is that that was
12 considered what we consider a vacant broken
13 pipe. And it is actually the property owner's
14 responsibility to make sure that they get a
15 discontinuance permit so these sort of things
16 don't happen. Be that as it may -- and the
17 reference to the employees on the news that
18 were sitting in the cleaning truck, I can
19 assure you we've held hearings for them and
20 appropriate discipline was imposed. And
21 actually I don't -- I was deputy commissioner
22 at the time. I don't typically hold those
23 hearings and I held those hearings. I held all
24 of them for the supervisor and the crew. So

1 they were dealt with because that's
2 unacceptable.

3 MR. MILLER: When they came out and
4 they broke mine to find out if it was a leak
5 and it wasn't, they took a hammer and busted
6 the lid. So I asked the supervisor, can you
7 give me a lid. He said go to a vacant house
8 and go steal one off the pavement.

9 MS. MCCARTY: Okay. Well, that's a
10 problem. Did you get a lid?

11 MR. MILLER: No. I made one myself
12 and put it on.

13 MS. MCCARTY: We can -- we should
14 have replaced that lid.

15 MR. MILLER: Oh, it's done. I
16 fixed it.

17 MS. MCCARTY: I'm sorry about that.

18 MR. MILLER: You want things done
19 right, you do it yourself.

20 MS. MCCARTY: Well, that's not the
21 utility we want to be. I'm sorry for your
22 trouble.

23 MR. MILLER: I'm sorry I upset you
24 but I mean, that's the way it is. I tell you

1 the way it is. That's all.

2 MS. MCCARTY: And it shouldn't be
3 like that and, you know, I would encourage
4 everyone in here, if you have a problem with
5 us, you can always call the commissioner's
6 office. You know, I always suggest that you
7 try 685-6300 first, but if you don't get
8 satisfaction, I want to hear from you. You can
9 write me. You can call the commissioner's
10 office. Because customer service is very
11 important and the things you described aren't
12 acceptable so -- and we're better than that.
13 You don't have to believe me, but we are better
14 than that.

15 MR. MILLER: I just think that they
16 ought to be do more in-house investigation. I
17 know you have to contend with unions and stuff
18 like that, but to me I believe there's a lot of
19 wasted money in-house. Okay. And I think
20 there should be something done about that too.
21 And if you have to address the unions for it,
22 well then address them. See what you can do.

23 MS. MCCARTY: Well, we do do that
24 and we've reduced crew sizes over the years and

1 we've, you know, done things as I mentioned
2 about, you know, trying to save on chemicals
3 and things like that. So we are trying to
4 figure out how we can reduce our costs. But
5 yeah -- that's unfortunate and I apologize.

6 MS. BROCKWAY: I think you've made
7 your point very clearly and the commissioner
8 has responded as much as she can at the moment.
9 And this may come before the Board if it's a
10 systemic problem.

11 Is there anybody else who wants to
12 speak? Mrs. Brown.

13 MRS. BROWN: This goes back I think
14 to 2013. What was the end result of the
15 radioactive iodine found in our water? You
16 were deputy commissioner, right?

17 MS. MCCARTY: Yes, I was. So
18 that's the I-131, if I'm not mistaken. We're
19 not unique. We happen to be part of the
20 sampling around the country. It was not
21 related to Fukushima.

22 MS. BROCKWAY: I'm sorry, one at a
23 time.

24 MRS. BROWN: I'm sorry, I just

1 wanted a clarification. That was the EPA that
2 had done those studies and didn't actually
3 share them with us as citizens.

4 MS. MCCARTY: Well, it was -- we
5 provided the -- we were charged and correct me
6 if I'm wrong, my memory -- believe it or not,
7 2013 was a long time ago. The Fukushima is
8 what brought -- the incident in Fukushima is
9 what caused the EPA to look at the data. We
10 have been sampling for years and years and
11 providing the data, as required, to the EPA.
12 And there are -- maybe now it's different, but
13 back when this came to light there were only a
14 few labs in the country that could do this.

15 We ended up actually embarking on a
16 year-long sampling program to see if there
17 really is an issue for us and we didn't find
18 it. And we used a lab in Colorado, if I'm not
19 mistaken. And, you know, it's only -- I think
20 there's only a couple literally in the country
21 that do this sort of analysis to the detail.
22 And, you know, it is radioactive stuff. But
23 that costs money. We were able to fund that
24 because, again, we care about the water

1 quality. We wanted to make sure what we were
2 providing to our customers is as top quality as
3 possible.

4 One of the analogies I remember
5 from back then is that you get more radiation
6 from flying from California to Philadelphia
7 than the levels that we were seeing in the
8 drinking water. So it was -- you know, it's a
9 big concern. Understandable that folks -- you
10 know, what's going on, is my water safe. And,
11 you know, we took -- we looked into it and
12 there really wasn't a water quality issue.

13 MRS. BROWN: So reflecting what
14 you're saying is you did a follow up over a
15 year period?

16 MS. MCCARTY: Yes. Yes.

17 MRS. BROWN: But the source of the
18 radioactive iodine has not been actually --

19 MS. MCCARTY: Oh, it's everywhere.

20 MRS. BROWN: So it wasn't just the
21 Schuylkill?

22 MS. MCCARTY: Right. I mean we --
23 one of the things -- you know, be prepared to
24 deal with it if you sample and analyze for it.

1 And we choose to do that. I can't say that is
2 true for some of the other utilities that
3 surround us. And I can tell you, in fact, that
4 they don't. But they have the same source
5 water as we do. But they didn't sample and
6 analyze for it. We did.

7 MRS. BROWN: Right. Right. And
8 the suggestion at the time was, in fact, it
9 could be from treatments, radiation treatments
10 --

11 MS. MCCARTY: You have an excellent
12 memory.

13 MRS. BROWN: Right. From water
14 sources above us.

15 MS. MCCARTY: For folks with
16 thyroid problems. They used to be treated in
17 hospitals and all that waste contained. But
18 the way healthcare is anymore, it's all
19 outpatient. And so they treat you and a lot of
20 folks -- you've got to stay away from
21 everybody. So they go to hotel rooms, which is
22 the best thing because if you're the next guy
23 in there and you don't know that the person
24 before you was there for a week because he's

1 trying to get rid of all this radiation in his
2 body or her body. But that's what happened.
3 And so now it's just going down the drain and
4 there was no -- there was no, you know, smoking
5 gun. There was no one source.

6 MRS. BROWN: Yeah. Right. Okay.
7 Thank you for your assistance.

8 MS. MCCARTY: Sure.

9 MRS. BROWN: Appreciate it.

10 MR. MCNICHOLS: Is there a public
11 record of the reports that you referred to?

12 MS. BROCKWAY: Can you give us your
13 name, sir?

14 MR. MCNICHOLS: Yeah. My name is
15 Thomas McNichols. You said you did testing.
16 Is that a matter of course or was this a
17 special event?

18 MS. DAHME: You know, I think we
19 have -- I'm sorry. Joanne Dahme. I think we
20 have a facts sheet --

21 MR. MCNICHOLS: Would it be PWD or
22 EPA or anybody because --

23 MS. DAHME: You're talking about
24 the iodine-131? We do have a fact sheet based

1 on the work we were doing. As Debbie was
2 talking about, we worked with the state, the
3 DEP, the EPA, the health department, the state
4 health department. So we have a lot of
5 partners working with us trying to figure out
6 the source. So we do have a fact sheet which
7 talks about the sampling we did, the results,
8 steps for the future. Really it's working with
9 hospitals and others and we weren't going to be
10 doing that. It's the public health -- our
11 public health counterparts really working with
12 hospitals and others to figure out a good way
13 to have these patients who are taking the
14 iodine treatment -- how do you manage the
15 waste. So it's not a water treatment utility
16 issue. It's really a hospital issue. We do
17 have some information on our Website.

18 MR. MCNICHOLS: Thanks.

19 MS. MCCARTY: Thanks, Joanne.

20 MS. BROCKWAY: Anybody else? I
21 want to thank everybody for coming tonight and
22 for your attention and for your comments and
23 your questions. The Board will be taking these
24 things into consideration. The Board expects

1 to issue its decision in the beginning of June.
2 And again, you can provide written comments
3 through an e-mail to the Water Rate Board or by
4 snail mail. Unfortunately, we don't have a
5 Facebook or Twitter account. They don't.

6 So with that, I just want to thank
7 you all and I want to thank the hospital for
8 their hospitality and we'll call it a day.

9 (Hearing concluded 7:26 p.m.)

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

I hereby certify that the proceedings, evidence and objections noted, are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the hearing of this matter, and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

SUSAN A. HURREY, R.P.R.
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March 2, 2016

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