PHILADELPHIA WATER, SEWER AND STORM WATER
RATE BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Thursday, March 18, 2021
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TIME: 6:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Virtually
HELD BEFORE: MARLANE R. CHESTNUT
Hearing Officer

---
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: This is the fourth public hearing scheduled by the Philadelphia Water, Sewer and Storm Water Rate Board to hear public comments in the pending request of the Philadelphia Water Department to change its rates and charges for fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

My name is Marlane Chestnut. I am the hearing officer that's been selected by the Rate Board to oversee this case.

Normally, we would have an introduction and I would let the participants introduce themselves. We'd talk about the schedule and I'd explain the process, but I understand that Council Member Quiñones-Sánchez has a commitment this evening, so she requested that her representative, I guess, be allowed to go first.

Is that you, Eric?

MR. DASENT: No. Council Member Sánchez is here.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Oh. She's here?

MR. DASENT: Yes.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you very much. And thank you for working with Eric on this.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Council Member, please.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you to all the Water Rate Board Members for their participation and their advocacy and all of the work you do all year long.

As many of you know, my name is Maria Quiñones-Sánchez. I'm Councilwoman to the 7th Councilmanic District. And for the last four or five years, have been working very closely with the Water Department in hoping to create, along with our advocates, one of the most important toolboxes that we have for keeping people in their homes, which is water affordability rates.

I want to thank Commissioner Hayman and his entire team who's worked with me over the years and around -- not only this issue, but
how do we continue to provide water, which we believe is a right for folks, to the citizens of Philadelphia and ensure that water -- that is not a reason why folks must leave their homes.

I want to thank the Water Rate Board for providing this forum for us to provide the kind of input that we need.

The Water Rate Board is a creation of City Council and President Darrell Clarke, and we view it as a valuable tool in ensuring that there is fairness and there is a public discussion around water increases.

I want to thank our advocates from Community Legal Services and others who continue to work with us.

We are extremely excited about our TAP program that benefits thousands of residents and households. And we are super excited about the launching of our forgiveness program last year and look forward to its implementation process.

I will be forwarding an official letter by all members of City Council. I will read some
of the content of the letter in the chronology because I think it's important for the record, but understand that City Council may weigh in with its own public hearing and discussion in this matter as we enter our budget process.

As all of you know, last year's budget process was quite difficult, but as a member of City Council and a senior member of City Council and as Chair of Appropriation, there's always been a political willingness and space for us to do what is necessary for our residents, for our infrastructure, by also protecting our most vulnerable.

If we've learned anything from COVID, this is when it is even more important for us to do. So the letter will read that we respectfully ask that you reject the proposed water increase by the Water Department so that no family has to choose between heat, food and water while we continue to face this public health crisis.

As many of you know, one in four customers has fallen behind on their bills during the pandemic, and more than 50,000 residential
households have fallen far behind, that they risk water shutoff.

On February 8, I sent a letter to Commissioner Hayman asking for the Water Department to reconsider this rate proposal and to leverage our recent investments by the State and forthcoming, at that point, federal funds and to sign up thousands of families eligible and not yet enrolled in our TAP program.

On February 26, the Commissioner responded and we -- a letter, which I'm sure will be provided as part of the record -- and we were pleased to hear of the Water Department's decision to extend the moratorium to April 2022. We appreciate that effort moving forward.

On March 11, President Joe Biden and Congress delivered a substantial aid to the City of Philadelphia when they signed into law the American Rescue 10 Act of 2021. This made clear that billions of dollars would be coming to the City of Philadelphia and that those dollars could be used to make the much needed improvements in our water and sewer
infrastructure, and at the same time provide additional support for water bill assistance to tenants in the City of Philadelphia and homeowners.

Additionally, the Water Department recently submitted and participated in our CARES Act reimbursement for the City of Philadelphia.

I believe that given all of the recent announcements, we are in a place where we have time, time, to really review the money that is coming into the City of Philadelphia.

All of you know that in addition to the reinvestment fund money and the stabilization fund money at the Water Department, that we can continue our infrastructure plan, put a pause on the rate increase and work at modifying our infrastructure plan while not sacrificing and jeopardizing anymore the residents who find themselves many times in an intenable situation given the pandemic recovery.

What we've learned is as much as we all say we want this recovery to be different, that we want to have a social justice lens and
equity lens, the applications of rate increases like this never bear out to what we're saying. Let's not only say it after the social unrest and the COVID recovery, a bump that we've had in the road as of the vaccination and access, let us put a pause button on this particular action and use the political will that exists in the City of Philadelphia to ensure that we're prioritizing capital improvement and not use a class A rating as an excuse to over burden the residents at this time.

Again, thank you to the Water Rate Board. I look forward to working with the Commissioner and all of you so that we can do both -- we can continue to invest in our infrastructure and we can ensure the residents of Philadelphia that cities like the City of Philadelphia will not use tax rate increase or tax increases to balance our bump, but that we will be more responsible with their taxpayer dollars.

Thank you very much. And thank you for allowing me to go first this evening.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very
much, Council Member. I appreciate your
remarks.

Does anyone want to comment on Council
Member's --

MR. BALLenger: I just wanted to express
my gratitude for your time this evening,
Council Member Sánchez. There's a lot going
on, so I appreciate you coming and sharing with
us tonight.

MR. DASENT: The Department joins in
thanking Council Member Sánchez. We thank you.

MR. HAVER: Thank you, Council Member.

MS. CROSBY: Yes. On behalf of the
Revenue Department and the Water Department,
thank you, Council Member Sánchez, for
appearing tonight at the Rate Board.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm sort of
surprised to see you, Council Member Sánchez.
Usually, people send their representative or
someone from their office. So I appreciate you
taking the time directly to come.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: The work we've
done, which has been incredibly successful and
game changing -- we have cities across the
country really looking at our work. It's too
important. And I want all of you -- as you've
taken your time to listen, to understand that I
understand the theory of this issue and that
we're willing to work with you on behalf of
Council leadership and the rest of the council
members.

Thank you again. And good evening to all
of you and thank you.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: We'll resume
then.

Before I do, let me state that this is an
on the record hearing. There's a court
reporter who is going to produce a stenographic
record of this hearing. And that will be
posted on the Rate Board's website along with
any other documents that relate to this case.

If you do go to the Rate Board's website
to see what's posted there, make sure you hit
the tab that says the 2021 Rate Proceeding not
the 2021 Rate Adjustment Proceeding. That's a
different proceeding. So the documents in this
case will be under the rate proceeding.

Now, the Rate Board is the independent
body that was appointed to make decisions concerning the Water Department's rate request. It's been in effect for about ten years and has handled a number of rate cases in that time.

As part of its mandate, the hearings be conducted openly and transparently. The Rate Board hired Community Legal Services to represent the interests of residential customers and small users and hired me to act as Hearing Officer.

We'll go into a little more about why CLS was selected and why I was selected and what they are planning to do.

Just to give you an overview -- let me back up. I need to say something. I think we should do it a different way, here.

We're here to hear from you, which are the customers, because it's important to put a human face on the people who are affected by the Rate Board's decision and the activities of the Water Department.

We can talk about the customer class generally or generically and say that the customers are being impacted by this or the
rate increase will be that, but it really helps
to remember that the customers are people.
People like you. People who have enough
difficulty and need to have their concerns
expressed.

This is a chance for you to tell us your
story, how it affects you, what suggestions do
you have for the Water Department to do a
better job? What has your experience been?

But I'm also going to take the time to
talk about the process. And hopefully, you'll
feel comfortable that this is a fair, impartial
and open process.

Nobody is keeping anything secret.
Everything is looked at intensively. And I
hope -- you may not feel comfortable with any
kind of result, but I hope you feel comfortable
that we are certainly looking out for your
interest. I'll talk more a little bit about
that.

But at this point, I will allow the Water
Department to make a brief statement.

Mr. Dasent, did you want to --

MR. DASENT: Yes. Sure. Thank you, Judge
Glen Abrams will present the Department's overview of the rate proceedings and he's available to speak now.

MR. ABRAMS: Thank you. And good evening everyone. My name is Glen Abrams and I'm speaking on behalf of the Water Department in this proceeding.

We first want to thank you all for joining this hearing tonight and to share your reviews about the rate increase request that the Water Department has filed with the Philadelphia Water, Sewer and Storm Water Rate Board.

As you may know, if the Rate Board approves the Water Department's full request, a typical residential customer using 500 cubic feet of water per month would see their bill increase by about 11.6 percent in Fiscal Year 2022 and 5.3 percent in Fiscal Year 2023 or approximately $7.74 per month beginning on September 1, 2021 and an additional $3.98 beginning on September 1, 2022.

The Water Department recognizes that any increase in rates can be a hardship, especially
right now, but this increase is necessary to address the Department's current financial deficit and to continue maintaining, upgrading and renewing its system to make sure that clean water is delivered as safely and reliably as possible, and that waste water treatment and storm water management services continue unabated.

This system provides essential services that are the foundation of public health in Philadelphia.

Importantly, since the Water Department is a municipal utility, it has no shareholders and every dollar that it collects is used to protect the safe and reliable operation and maintenance of the utility system.

Rate relief is necessary now to sustain our operations.

It should be noted that the Water Department continues to invest in much needed upgrades to critical water and waste water infrastructure, including replacing aging water mains to reduce the occurrence of water main breaks and increase the reliability of water
service to customers, extending the life and reliability of the waste water system by repairs and improvements to treatment facilities and improving drinking water treatment and improving our water conveyance system by rehabilitating critical water infrastructures, such as pumping stations and water mains as well as upgrading water treatment facilities.

All projects planned for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 are critical investments to ensure the utility can support its operations and continue to provide safe and reliable service to current and future customers with a well-maintained water and waste water system that they can count on.

I would also highlight that the Water Department has a robust and comprehensive customer assistance program, which helps low-income customers pay their bills, including the Tiered Assistance Program or TAP, the senior citizen discount program and other programs that are more flexible than ever during this difficult time.
The Water Department has also agreed to extend the shutoff moratorium for residential customers through April 1, 2022 and has paused enforcement activities for our most vulnerable residential customers.

If you're experiencing financial hardship, we want to help. We encourage you to apply for TAP, the senior discount or other programs that are available to assist households with payment difficulties. These programs are accessible through: www.Phila.gov/waterbillhelp or by calling (215) 685-6300 Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

I also note that if you have specific billing questions or other service issues that you would like assistance with, please let us know and we will have a customer service representative contact you as soon as possible.

Use the chat function to identify yourself or let us know that you would like to speak in a breakout room to exchange contact information.

Now, the purpose of today's session is to hear from you, the consumers. We really
appreciate you taking the time to share your views with us today. And we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you, Mr. Abrams.

Ms. Scott?

MR. BALLenger: Ms. Chestnut, I'm going to take this one.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Oh. You're going to take this one, Mr. Ballenger?

MR. BALLenger: Yeah.

Good evening. I have a little better Wi-Fi in this room. Good evening. My name is Robert Ballenger. I'm joined this evening by Kinteshia Scott. We are two lawyers at Community Legal Services Philadelphia.

We have a team who's been appointed to serve as Public Advocate, to represent the interests of the residential and small commercial customers, the mom and pop and corner shops, throughout the City. And there's about half a million of those accounts. And we represent their interests as a whole in this rate proceeding.
So we've retained a team of experts to really comb through the Water Department's proposal and to present their independent analysis to the Water Rate Board that will ultimately make the decision of whether and, if so, how much the Water Department's rates are able to increase.

So just as sort of a thumbnail sketch of what's on the table here, the Water Department has proposed to raise residential water bills by a little over 17 and a half percent over two years. And for an average residential customer, that amounts to $140 additional per year for your water service.

So we have some concerns about that proposal. We've heard a lot of concerns over the course of this proceeding so far. And we want to hear your concerns about that.

And should the Water Department raise your rates during a pandemic? Should it look for ways to lower costs? What about the estimated $1.4 million in local government recovery funds that Philadelphia is going to get? Shouldn't the City use that to support the Water
Department instead of increasing your rates?
What would it mean to your family to have to pay more right now for water?

And, you know, we've talked a little bit about the programs that are available to help you. Has the City done everything it can to help you access those programs and benefits that may help you afford your bills?

So we really want to hear from those of you who have taken the time out of your lives and your schedules and your evening to be here with us today, because what you share will be really an important part of the record.

The Board needs to hear from you, the customers, and understand what you think about this request to increase rates and charges.

So I want to thank you and encourage anyone who is prepared to speak to share with us this evening.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you,

Mr. Ballenger.

Now, there are other parties -- participants in this case -- the Philadelphia Water Revenue Board, which does the actual
billing and collection on behalf of the Water Department, the Philadelphia Large Users Group, PECO and a number of individuals.

As Rob indicated, the Board selected Community Legal Services to represent the interests of residential and small users. And the Board made -- the Water Department made its preliminary filing in January and its final filing in February. And since that time, there's been a lot of activity going on in this case.

The Public Advocate has done an amazing amount of discovery, which means they've gone through the filing and asked follow-up kind of questions in asking Company, the Water Department, to support particular requests. All of that is posted on the Rate Board's website and you're welcome to see the questions and the answers.

There has been -- like I said, happening -- CLS is very experienced with these kinds of cases. And I think so far has done a very good job of representing you in terms of this.
We had a prehearing conference in February to talk about preliminary issues, the schedule, and there's a certain amount of time allowed by regulation that the Rate Board has to make its decision.

So to comply with that schedule, testimony from the non-Water Department parties is due Monday, which is when they have a chance to comment on the filing and make their own suggestions as to what the Rate Board should do. There's another round of testimony. They'll be technical hearings at which these parties can present their witnesses to support those statements. That will be probably the end of April.

I will hopefully write my report with a recommendation to the Rate Board by the end of May. And the Rate Board will make its decision by the end of June, so that any rate decisions can be recommended by the beginning of the fiscal year, which is September 1.

The Rate Board, as I said, selected CLS because of its experience, and they selected me to be the Hearing Officer because of my
I have over 25 years' experience with the Public Utility Commission as an Administrative Law Judge, here, in Philadelphia. I've heard hundreds of rate cases. I know everything there is to know about utilities and their regulation -- what a well-run utility looks like. What expenses are reasonable? How should things be done?

I also had a lot of experience in case management -- how can we have an efficient equitable process by which all these issues are developed?

I also did thousands of inability to pay cases and individual customer complaints. I'm very aware of the situation that people in Philadelphia face with their utilities.

In addition to that, I have ten years'

experience doing other utility work. I worked for the Public Utility Commission where I was charged with representing the public interest.

I spent a couple years with the Office of Consumer Advocate representing residential interests. And I might as well say it, but
after I retired, I did some work for some
utilities, too, in Philadelphia mainly
representing -- advising them on customer
service issues.

So I really do have a good background.

I'm very sensitive to affect on customers of
utility actions and regulatory actions. And I
hope you understand that I strongly believe
that we have to take your interest into
account. And we can't just make decisions in a
vacuum.

Now, the parties will tell you that I have
continually stressed that this is not a
confrontational kind of a hearing. You may
think it's the Company versus the Water
Department, but it is not. That's not what it
is. And that's not the best way to handle
this.

It's not a -- it's just not the way you
think of litigation. This is more of a
collaboration where the Water Department
presents its need for a case and the other
parties respond to it and get together and
resolve it, because it may not seem to at
first, you know, when you're first looking at it, but you as customers are very important to the Water Department. They don't want you to have rates you can't pay.

It's a lot better if they have rates that are affordable, because then they don't have to deal with the collection and termination and, to be honest, dealing with unhappy customers. They don't want you filing complaints. They want you to be satisfied with their service and they want you to be okay with your bills.

Now, you, as customer, of course you want affordable rates, but you're also entitled to adequate service. You don't want the company cutting corners.

So while it seems that these are two different kinds of interest, they really are the same. You want that point where the Water Department has enough money to do its operations efficiently and give you good service and you pay rates that are just enough to let them do that, but not more.

So I see this as a collaboration. And I would hope almost like meeting on a bridge,
where there's a midpoint where these interests can all be accommodated.

So just -- that is my philosophy. And I would like to think that's one of the reasons why I was selected by the Rate Board, because I do see this as possibly a productive exercise. Nobody wants to waste anybody's time or money. We just want a result that's fair. And I do believe that an equitable process produces a result that is equitable.

So in that spirit, I'm going to talk about -- I'm going to ask you to give your statement today. Let's talk about the process to do that.

We have -- people have registered, and I'll go through that, but if you haven't registered, you can still express your opinion. We will take you at this time. Hopefully, there will be time.

You don't have to make a statement here tonight. You can send your comments or concerns directly to the Rate Board. We post them on the website. And I promise you I read every, single one of them. People have done
that or you can send a letter to the Rate Board.

As I'm sure you're all aware, there is this pandemic ongoing. It's a public health emergency. So all hearings are held remotely. This one, as well as the hearings that will be held in April, if the hearings are necessary. And you're certainly welcome to observe both, as well. Notices will be posted on the Rate Board's website.

Now, this was -- doing it virtually is new to me and new to the Rate Board and I think the Water Department, but having public hearing is not. And there are a lot of activities in terms of outreach that both the Company and the Public Advocate undertook to make sure that people are aware that these hearings were being conducted. And I'm kind of curious to see which of those things worked.

So when I call you up to testify, I'm going to ask you to give your name and spell it for the benefit of the court reporter. I'm going to ask for your address. I'm going to ask if you're representing yourself or a group.
And I'm also going to ask how did you hear about this? Was it through social media? Did you get an e-mail? Were you talking to someone, word of mouth -- just so we know what works and what doesn't work.

We're not going to set a time limit on your talking. I just hope that you'll be respectful of other people so that we can get to everybody, because we want everybody to be heard. It's very important that that happen.

And just to show that it is important that you be seen and heard, I'll note that the Chairman of the Rate Board is present, Mr. Popowsky is here, watching it, watching us, I guess, and he's going to take to heart what you have to say.

As Mr. Abrams indicated, if you have a personal issue or a service complaint or a billing issue, you really don't want to discuss that in public. We can arrange for you to enter a breakout room and talk directly with the Company and try to resolve your problem or get contact information, at least, so that they can do that.
If you have a question about how the rates are derived and we can answer them quickly, we'll do that.

But some of your questions may need further explanation or review. And Mr. Dasent will get back to you. We'll make sure your concerns are addressed either tonight or somehow.

Okay. I think we'll get started with the people who signed up.

Steven is the moderator and he's in charge of making sure this runs smoothly.

MR. LIANG: I believe Mr. Skiendzielewski registered earlier, but he didn't specify a date, so he's here now.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

Mr. Skiendzielewski?

(No response.)

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: You have to un-mute him, Steven.

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Can you hear me now?

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes.

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Okay. I --

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Stop for a
Could you please state and spell your name for the record?

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: I'm sorry. For the record, my name is Michael Skiendzielewski. I'm a lifelong Philly resident and PWD customer who's been before the Water Rate Board before.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Your address, please?

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Oh. 516 Parkhollow Lane, Philadelphia, PA 19111.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And you're appearing on your own behalf?

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: My issues is -- I'm speaking -- a cover of many, many people because it has to do with ethics and integrity. Anything else I need to put down on the record?

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: No. I would ask you to confine your remarks to the issues, which are the subject of this proceeding, as you know from your prior experience. But go ahead.

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: I have to mention a
couple words you used in your presentation,

Ms. Chestnut.

You mentioned collaboration. That's what you wish. And in my particular set of circumstances, that's what I've wished for a number of years.

But to describe -- to expect or think or believe that from the Water Department and Water Revenue Board and the City officials and attorneys, a collaborative focus and philosophy is just not there. It's just not there.

And the other words you mentioned were fair and equitable. It's interesting. I have mentioned fair, equitable and reasonable any number of times over the past six years with regard to these issues, okay?

But separate from that, my things have to do immediately with -- and you know what they are about. And I will submit some things for the record that we've posted.

Throughout the City departments, we have integrity officers. Each department has an integrity officer that reports to the inspector general. For the past two and half weeks, I've
asked the Water Revenue Board deputy commissioner for the name of the integrity officer so that I could submit allegations of financial impropriety. Financial impropriety is something that speaks to water rates.

So I see that she's listed here. I would like to know the name of the integrity officer for the Water Revenue Bureau.

(No response.)

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Can you hear me?

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Who is speaking for the WRB? Is that you, Ms. Crosby, or who?

MR. DASENT: I was going to wait for the end to respond.

We provided the name of Lisa Brett, who is chief integrity officer for PWD, to Mr. Skiendzielewski and I've indicated --

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Who is speaking now, please?

MR. DASENT: Andre Dasent.

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Mr. Dasent, I have that information. That's the Philadelphia Water Department.

I asked for the integrity officer of the
Water Revenue Bureau. You were aware of my request. You're aware of the repetitive nature --

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

Ms. Crosby, can you answer that or can somebody else here --

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Ms. Crosby, the e-mail --

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Hold on a second, sir. I'm speaking.

MS. CROSBY: Good evening, Judge Chestnut.

I'm represented in this proceeding by (inaudible.)

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Can someone give a name or do you want to get back to Mr. Skiendzielewski?

MR. DASENT: I'll provide a name later. I can find out in short order.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: That's fine.

Go ahead, Mr. Skiendzielewski.

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Do you have oversight for the Water Revenue Bureau?

MR. DASENT: We haven't planned on a question-and-answer panel.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yeah.

Mr. Skiendzielewski, this is just a statement.

If you can answer quickly, yes or no, but I don't want to get into anything further.

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Ms. Chestnut, I do appreciate -- I'm ending my inquiry now.

But it has to do with -- I know what the Board is about in terms of these issues have to be related to financial water rate issues.

The things that are -- that have been brought up before and will be brought up again impact water rates.

Philadelphia Water Department help loans, according to State Law, the City is not responsible for that. They have given out discounts.

And despite numerous and unending efforts for people to review that and the billion dollar agency not to think it's significant enough to review and investigate reports, that calls into question all of their decisions.

But anyhow, I thank you for listening. I wanted it on the record that I was asking for the name of the integrity officer, asking
directly to the deputy commissioner of the Water Revenue Bureau, and failed over and over and over and over again to provide the name. We aren't interested in integrity ethics and corruption. We have a difficult matter in front of us.

Thank you, Ms. Chestnut. I appreciate your efforts there in this regard, but this is not collaboration.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm sorry. I don't know what to say, but okay.

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: This is not about you. This is about the Company, the institution, the organization.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Excuse me.

I come from a career where accountability and transparency in review is 24 hours a day. It is clear that many of these officials, high rank, high paid, have never seen the light of accountability. So thank you. I thank you very much.

And I'm sorry that maybe these were off target but I wanted it on the record that
Ms. Crosby refuses adamantly to provide the name that's necessary. Thank you. Bye.

Hearing Officer Chestnut: I'm not sure that that's a fair characterization, but okay. It will speak for itself, okay.

Mr. Dasent: Judge Chestnut --

Hearing Officer Chestnut: Yes?

Mr. Dasent: -- just so the record is full, we will get the name of this chief integrity officer from WRB, just --

Mr. Skiendzielewski: If you have to get it, it's a scam.

Mr. Dasent: No. It's a question. I'll ask it and I will get back to you.

Mr. Skiendzielewski: Please. Don't insult the parties here.

Hearing Officer Chestnut: I don't understand why Mr. Dasent can't just send you an e-mail.

Mr. Dasent: I have to ask the question and get it to you.

Hearing Officer Chestnut: Okay. Steven?

Mr. Liang: Barbara Panzano registered for March 16 at 6, but she appears to be here now.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

Could you state and a spell your name for the record, please?


HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your address, please?


HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And how did you hear about this hearing?

MS. PANZANO: By e-mail.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sorry. I forgot to ask.

Are you appearing on your own behalf or for a group?

MS. PANZANO: No. I'm on my own behalf.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Go ahead then, please.

MS. PANZANO: Okay. I've been in this house since 1984. And years ago, we used to pay like every three months for our water bill. And it was very reasonable. And then it became once a month. And it has gradually become the
highest bill that I pay a month. It is more
than my electric. And it's more than my gas.
And I have gas heating. I have gas cooking. I
have a gas dryer and a gas water heater.
But my water bill is higher than all of
them. And I really think that's unreasonable.
And I think there must be inefficiency
somewhere, but all we hear about is more
increases and more increases and more
increases.
And I don't think the other two utilities
are doing a bad job, but they are cheaper than
the Water Department. And I don't think they
are letting things go. And I think they are
doing a good job on what they're supposed to
do, so there's no excuse for these rates just
increasing and increasing and increasing.
Something has to cut back somewhere.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Amen.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Steven, you
need to take care of that.
MR. LIANG: Okay. Who was that?
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I think that
was Claudia Sheradon.
MS. SHERADON: Yes, it was.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I don't know if I mentioned this, but after everybody has given their statement I'm going to ask Mr. Dasent or Ms. Scott or Mr. Ballenger or, actually, anybody has any questions.

Now, this is not to cross-examine you or to embarrass you, but if they want to clarify or follow up on something you said, I'd like to give them a chance, okay?

Mr. Dasent or Mr. Ballenger?

MR. BALLenger: He's muted, so I'll just go ahead and say thank you for your testimony this evening, Ms. Panzano, and no questions from me.

MR. DASENT: Thank you, Ms. Panzano, also, for testifying.

And if you have questions of the Department and you can leave your contact information in the chat or share your e-mail, I can --

MS. PANZANO: He froze.

MR. BALLenger: I think he froze out.

Do you want to leave your contact
information? I think he's back.

MS. PANZANO: I just wanted to make the
statement, basically. I wanted someone besides
myself to hear my complaints.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well,
Ms. Panzano, we certainly appreciate it, but
maybe the Company can do something to help you.

MS. PANZANO: Okay. I'll leave my contact
info.

MR. DASENT: Perfect. Thank you very
much.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.
That takes us to Beatrice Sovich is next
on the list.

MR. LIANG: I think I got an e-mail from
her a little bit ago that she wouldn't be able
to make it -- to this hearing.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Next
person I have is Dana Hirshenbalm.

MR. LIANG: Yep. That's who I have.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you here?

(No response.)

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'll come back
and maybe they'll be here.
Okay. Who do you have next, Steven?

MR. LIANG: Michelle Deboer. I think I saw her.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I think I saw her, too -- oh. There you are.

MS. DEBOER: I'm Michelle Deboer.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Could you please spell your name for the record?

MS. DEBOER: M-I-C-H-E-L-L-E, D-E-B-O-E-R.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your address, please?

MS. DEBOER: 1240 South 18th Street, 19146.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are you appearing on your own behalf or for a group?

MS. DEBOER: I'm making a statement on my own behalf.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And how did you hear about this?

MS. DEBOER: I discovered the information about the Water Rate Board when I was attempting to get information to clarify my own situation with the Water Department. And I saw there were public meetings. And I also reached
out to the Community Legal Services, because they were noted as the advocates.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Go ahead.

MS. DEBOER: Okay. Your Honor, thank you for the opportunity to share an abbreviated summary of my experience and some of my concerns as they relate to the rate increases and adjustments being proposed.

I can assure you that I am a real person and that the decisions of the Rate Board and the Water Department all contribute and have an impact on us.

And my biggest concern is that my ability to pay for my current water bills -- yes, multiple water bills for my one property -- when the Department is asking for more when there's already concerns about transparency and equity and fairness amongst the charges made for residents and businesses, I think that it's concerning.

I was -- a little bit of background, I was teaching in D.C. and I came here 12 years ago to visit a girlfriend. And I fell in love with
a boy. And he made me fall in love with
Philadelphia. And now here we are, married
with two kids, living in our house. It was a
big deal.

I'm a teacher for the School District of
Philadelphia.

And as soon as we bought the house, there
was a pay freeze. And everything kind of fell
apart at the same time. So we weren't quite
making not enough to get the assistance through
other supports and we were making just enough
to make sure that the bills came out right at
the right time when the paychecks went in.

And financially, it's tough. And there's
a lot of people that are living like that.

They are waiting for the paycheck to hit before
the bills get paid. And even through all of
that, it's tough.

But right after I had my second child, I
realized that getting two bills was not a
normal thing. And that was -- I called and
asked if I could have them combined. They
said: Nope. You can't have them combined.

There's not something that -- we can't do that.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Excuse me, can I just ask you a question? Two bills for what? I'm kind of confused. Two water bills?

MS. DEBOER: Yeah. I get two water bills from the Water Department. One is for water usage, storm water and service fees. And the other one was just storm water.

And so they -- the second account was -- it varied. The storm water one was different fees. I always paid it. And I didn't think about it.

And my information got to someone in the accounting department. And the determination was made that the charges on the second account were an error -- oops. We shouldn't have been charging you on the second account. Don't worry. We're going to close it. So they closed it. I didn't see any of the money that I paid to that account.

And then they said: Oh. And by the way, upon further review, we're creating a third account for you. And that was based on a Google Image search of my home. They said that I have not been paying for a monthly fire
service charge for my sprinkler system that was required when my house was built in 2011, but -- I don't know if it's still a requirement.

But the letter was very nice. And it said: We're going -- sorry that we haven't been charging you. Our mistake. But we're going to back bill you for four years and they sent me a bill for $1,140.20 two weeks before Christmas. So I had an infant and a toddler and a $1,200 bill that I earned like that.

So I called. I got transferred. Voicemail boxes were full. I couldn't find anything online. I had no idea what this sprinkler fire charge was for. It was 25, 26 now it's 27, but I was completely overwhelmed.

I spent an entire hour in my car crying hysterically, because I had no clue how I was going to pay it. I didn't know what pocket to empty when they were already empty.

But the bills kept coming -- two envelopes every month. And they continue to come from the Water Department.

Anyone that has a sprinkler system -- but
it's not really everyone that has a sprinkler systems. It's only ones that they've realized or accounted for -- and so everything in terms of documentation varies.

But I don't -- it hurt, because I didn't feel like I could trust anything. Some people are getting a bill and some people aren't.

And that worries me because, you know, as a public utility, I'm just sending money and I'm hoping it goes to the right place. And I can't be sure that that's accurate. So it's a huge clerical issue for the Water Department, but, you know, for me, it was more than just a clerical issue. Like it impacted me in a huge way.

And so that kind of oversight is concerning, because if my -- because there was no transparency for the charges on the water bill, because I didn't understand what I was being charged for.

And that they say the website -- it took me some digging. In chapter four, the monthly service charges for the furnishing of water for the purpose of fire protection -- and that's
$27 and change for up to a 4 inch connection --
I never thought that I would be saying these kinds of thing. This is really not my wheel house, so I'm trying, here.

I've got a 2 inch connection. So that's half of my water bill. My water bill is 55 and I'm paying 28 for a sprinkler system that doesn't even have water running through it. It just sits. It's stagnant -- in the event of an emergency, which I'm very thankful for.

But having a completely separate bill and no transparency of what it's for and saying it's for your safety -- I believe in our fire department. And I'm glad that I have a sprinkler system, but that's a lot of money.

And then they said: Well, you get a discount. You get a discount on your homeowner's insurance. It's $84 a year discount I get for having a sprinkler system.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Deboer, I can absolutely understand how stressful this whole thing is for you -- and anybody in that situation, absolutely. And I can understand your concern about the difficulty of
understanding what it is you're being charged
and having confidence you're being charged
correctly.

With respect to your particular situation,
I can't imagine that if you talk directly to
the Company, there's not something they can
help you with.

Is that okay with you, Mr. Dasent?

MR. DASENT: Yes. I'd like that

opportunity.

And we can even do a breakout room right
now -- if someone from the -- if Glen Abrams
and someone from the Water Revenue Bureau could
join Ms. Deboer.

It just seems like we could talk through
at least getting contact information and follow
up on your concerns.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Is that okay

with you?

MS. DEBOER: Absolutely. I mean, I don't
want it to be a complete, you know -- I wrote
it down and deleted it and I'm going to say it
anyway, but every single person that's driving
around in a white truck, in a white van or an
SUV -- there are lovely and wonderful people that work for the Water Department. They are friendly. They are nice. They are kind. I appreciate that. It feels like they are servicing a community.

And when you pick up the phone and call customer service, it's just defeating and there's no answers and it's this round about thing.

MR. DASENT: Let's see if we can cure that.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you for sharing your experience. I know it's distressing, really.

Hopefully you can talk directly to the Company and they can help you. And maybe get some ideas from you on helping other people in your situation, too.

MS. DEBOER: I appreciate it.

The rates that are associate -- I know the rates are going to go down a bit with this proposal, but in terms of just looking at other areas, the rates at $27 a month -- even some other large cities like Baltimore -- here, it
would be $330 a year at this rate. In Baltimore, Maryland, it's $168 a year. In Denver, Colorado, it's $6.37 a month.

A lot of places charge a monthly fee that is under $15. And so for a 2 inch line, I'm concerned about some of the rates. And for a residential single-family home -- I'm not creating revenue out of my house. I'm making lesson plans and folding paper for my kids. It's an extremely high rate to charge someone.

MR. DASENT: Let's try to work through this.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Can you set them up?

MR. DASENT: I see Ravon and I hope Glen will join, also. Danielle Lavery is here, also. Those three folks can help.

MR. BALLENGER: And before you all go, I just want to -- on behalf of the Public Advocate, thank you Ms. Deboer, for sharing your story here tonight. I think it raises an interesting issue that hasn't come up before about -- really, about a rate design issue. So
I think it's something we should all be mindful of.

MR. LIANG: I'll create the room now.

MR. DASENT: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just wanted to know -- is this the end of the meeting?

MR. LIANG: No, no. There's more time after the registered participants.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes.

MR. LIANG: There was one more registered.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Is that Mr. Wallace?

MR. DASENT: Yeah. Ivan Wallace.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Wallace, are you here?

(No response.)

MR. DASENT: If he's not, then I did have Victoria as the next person to speak.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Wallace, if you're on a phone, you have to un-mute yourself, because I do not see you online.

MR. WALLACE: Workers Benefit Council, Ivan Wallace.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We've already heard
from the Workers Benefit Council several times, so I'm not going to hear you again.

MR. WALLACE: Okay.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Unless you want to testify as an individual.

I've already heard from them, okay?

MR. WALLACE: Can I speak?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Wallace has a testimony for himself.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: He can testify for himself, but like I said, it's really not a productive use of time to have to go over this yet again, because I understood the points --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Everybody has a different story.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Wallace?

MR. WALLACE: Yes? Hello.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Could you please state and spell your name for the record?


HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your address, please?
MR. WALLACE:  5452 Lebanon Avenue

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Do you want to give a statement on your own behalf as a customer?

MR. WALLACE: Yes. Hello. My name is Ivan Wallace. I've been a long-time resident of Philadelphia. At one time I lived in Washington, D.C. I'm a retired health physicist from the NIH.

And also, when I came back to Philadelphia, I did work as an educator for a side program that the Water Department sponsored teaching environmental science at the Overbrook Arts and Environmental Center on Lancaster Avenue.

Right now, I'm basically a raw food caterer. And I teach healthy eating.

And I'm here to really testify about, you know, some struggles I had, really, with paying my water bill, gas bill and some health issues that happened shortly after I returned to Philadelphia.

I had a struggle with tripping in the
street. Fell into a bus. Had a stroke and a heart attack. And when I recovered from that, I, basically -- really just had, you know, time, really, just in a rehab facility, you know, really just struggling, trying to get my speech back, my balance back. And finally, I did really, you know, recover. And, you know, really just had trouble paying the bills.

But for the most part, you know, the -- my water has been cut off maybe three times. And I really could not really, you know, find the, you know, the sympathy from the Water Department, you know, really just trying to get notes to keep it on.

But subsequently, a few years before my incident, when I first came back to Philadelphia, I must regress that taking care of my mother in like 2007, she had a series of strokes and dealing with, you know, coming back here and dealing with the property, we had to admit her to the hospital -- a rehab facility.

And she had been out of the property for almost a year and a half. And her water bill had been rising. And we basically didn't
really have people in the house and the Water Department --

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Wallace,
could you please talk about the Water Department and the proposed filing?

MR. WALLACE: Okay.
The Water Department, basically, could not really tell me why the bill was rising on the property. And I kept calling about, you know, why my rate's really rising. And they couldn't even tell me, you know, did I have a leak in the property or in the street.

So in the winter that passed, there was basically freezing in the street. And -- so there was a leak in the street, but technically, I was told that, you know, I had to get a private plumber to come dig up the street.

But at first, it wasn't told that it was my property or the property next door. So one winter passed, you know, there still was a leak. The second winter passed. We had to get the street dug up. And we basically was attached a $3,500 bill. And the next winter
came and there still was a leak in the street. And the property next door was the problem.

So, you know, both houses basically got a 3,000 bill that was attached to two properties on the street. And the street really still has a ditch from whoever really was the contractor that dug up the street.

They did a poor job even really patching up the job that was done where, you know, Lebanon Avenue still had -- the pavement wasn't really, you know, repatched up from -- the whole process of re-piping -- I mean, the whole thing of like re-piping the sewer system is really like being thrown back on -- the infrastructure is really being thrown back on the customer where it comes down to, you know, what really is, you know, what really is the homeowner's expense or the City's expense. It seemed like it was an unfair treatment.

And personally, my problem was really with the care of my mother, that thing stressed her out to the point where, you know, I think her death was even caused from the stress of, you know, just dealing with that at an old age.
She couldn't even enjoy her retirement.

Back to the whole thing on throwing the cost on the infrastructure, that was really unfair. And I think that, you know, the ditch that was left in street is really still a major problem that I know a lot of people that are still dealing with this infrastructure problem needs to really, you know, it's really just a problem that, you know --

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Let me see if I understand this.

Is it still -- is the street still open? Is it still an issue in the street?

MR. WALLACE: It's not open, but the tar and basically where -- the patch up job is not really --

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: It's a poor patch job?

MR. WALLACE: It's a poor patch job.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: That's nothing the Company can address?

MR. DASENT: I'd like to talk with this gentleman about this a little more --

Mr. Wallace, I'm sorry.
And if you can leave your contact information or if you care to join me -- I think it will be easiest if you left your name in the chat and I can reach out to you.

MR. WALLACE: Yeah, I can.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And hopefully, that can get resolved.

MR. DASENT: Yeah. I just would like to address and make sure we understand the nature of the problem is it's resurfacing -- the area that was dug up, those sorts of things.

But it seems like it may even boil down to the responsibility of the customer for certain areas of service, like the service line. And we need to explain that a little better so that you understand what your responsibility is, what our responsibility is.

And if it's our responsibility, we need to make sure the job is done correctly.

MR. BALLENGER: Can I ask a couple of questions --

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Absolutely.

MR. BALLENGER: -- just to make sure.

Mr. Wallace, you mentioned you had like a
$3,000 bill. Was that because you used a help loan from the City to make the repair?

MR. WALLACE: Well, I don't think it was -- I don't know if it was a loan. It was basically just attached with the payment that was, you know, it was basically just a, you know, it came with the assistance of what really just happened when they dug up the street.

And it was just added to the bill when the procedure happened, so I don't know if it was a loan or you know?

MR. BALLINGER: Okay. And the Water Department's billing you every month for that repair; is that right?

MR. WALLACE: Yes, yes.

As a matter of fact, my sister, her property -- it just happened with her over in Overbrook Farms.

She basically got something done. It was said that her piping was, you know, faulty.

And they dug up her piping to the house. And she has same issue, really, right now. It's a $3,000 bill over in Overbrook Farms right now.
It's almost like it's happening all over the space. The infrastructure is really a problem.

MR. BALLENGER: Sure. Yes, Mr. Wallace, it is.

And it sounds like your neighbor then -- it was actually your neighbor's pipe that was leaking?

MR. WALLACE: And basically the whole neighborhood was really just looking at us, because people couldn't even walk to their cars for two consecutive winters because it was a sheet of ice just blanketing down a quarter of the block of where we live. It was really a hazard for the whole neighborhood, really, those two winters.

Thank you Mr. Ballenger and Ms. Scott, because -- the happy part was I got connected to you all. And I found out about the TAP program. And that really works. I think that's the good part. I'm on the TAP and that is a blessing. So I basically have relief and that is a blessing.

And I can basically say that ESWA put me
in touch with Mr. Ballenger and Attorney Scott.
And that is the high point of my testimony.
Thank you for --

MR. BALLenger: That's very kind,
Mr. Wallace. I want to thank you for joining
us and sharing your story. And I hope that
the -- you can take advantage of an opportunity
with the Water Department to talk about these
issues.

MR. DASENT: We have someone for a
breakout room, Steven, Ms. Kersey, K-E-R-S-E-Y.
Do you see that? Let me make sure I spelled
her name right.

MR. LIANG: K-E-R-S-E-Y?
MR. DASENT: Yep.
And if we can get your contact information
to follow up, that would be very helpful,
Mr. Wallace. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hello?
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Hold on a
second, please.

MR. DASENT: We've run into a glitch,
Mr. Wallace.
Can you put your name into the chat?
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Wallace, can you just input your e-mail address or your contact information in the chat box? I think that might be easier. Do we have his e-mail?

MR. DASENT: I can get it from Steven, as well.

MR. LIANG: He left me a voicemail. He didn't send an e-mail.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: That's okay. Mr. Wallace, Mr. Dasent can call you or someone from the Water Department can call you directly, how's that?

MR. WALLACE: Okay. That will work.

MR. DASENT: Thank you very much.

MR. LIANG: To the person that was calling in on the phone, there's currently a list of people waiting to speak, so I can add you to it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. LIANG: Can I just have your name?


MR. LIANG: Okay. Thank you.
I'm going to put you on mute for now, but once it's your turn, I'll ask you to un-mute.

Next up, I believe, would be Victoria Alfred.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Victoria Alfred-Levow?

MS. ALFRED-LEVOW: So my name is Victoria Alfred-Levow.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Could you please spell that for the record?

MS. ALFRED-LEVOW: Sure. Victoria, V-I-C-T-O-R-I-A. And my last name is Alfred-Levow, one word but hyphenated. And it is A-L-F-R-E-D, dash, L-E-V-O-W.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your address, please?

MS. ALFRED-LEVOW: 3424 Henry Avenue, 19129.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are you appearing on your own behalf or for a group?

MS. ALFRED-LEVOW: On my own behalf.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And how did you hear about this?

MS. ALFRED-LEVOW: I heard about it,
1 actually, a few different ways. I got an
e-mail from a group called Reclaim Philadelphia
about these hearings. And I also read an
Inquirer article by a reporter who, I think, is
actually in this chat right now.

   But like one of the first links was about
the rate increase.

   HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Go ahead then,
please.

   MS. ALFRED-LEVOW: Sure. First of all,
thank you so much to everyone else who
tested before me. It was really impactful
to hear your stories of what's been going on
with your relationship with the Water
Department.

   I definitely have not lived in
Philadelphia as long as many of the residents
on the call. I grew up outside of Philadelphia
in Lower Merion and just moved to Philadelphia
this September.

   And my dad has been helping me out with
rent and bills, but that is going to end next
September, when, obviously, I'll be responsible
for bills on my own. And I know that I will
probably be working a job in the hospitality industry, which, I'm hoping, I'll be able to get a good salary, but I know that that's not guaranteed if I take hourly positions.

So just thinking about 140 more dollars over a year is, you know, that's like groceries for a month.

And just -- I think that Mr. Ballenger mentioned it before. And he was also quoted in the Inquirer saying this, but I don't believe that the only place for the Water Department to receive the funds -- they very much need to make sure that we're all safe and drinking clean water. I don't think that I need to be the one to help them out with that. I don't think that anyone else who has given testimony is necessarily coming from a place where they can do that.

And it's important to pay money to your municipal utility because there are those maintenance fees.

And I actually live right across from the reservoir and have grown pretty interested in why Philly tap water tastes the way it does and
how it is completely safe, but that the Water Department has their PR issues.

And I think another, you know, possible issue is that I didn't really know about the possibility for healthcare during a pandemic and didn't know that these opportunities are out there.

So it's just kind of frustrating to me that although the aid packages exist, you have to be in a place where you can find out about them.

And then in the meantime -- there are 40 participants still on this call. There were a few more that left, but there are thousands of other people to whom this $140 is really going to matter.

And considering that the stimulus money is coming to Philadelphia and we still have to figure out where that's actually going while also considering that there are plenty of other cities who have found their own ways to make their rates a little bit lower and possibly fairer for their citizens.

I think that -- I know that the
Philadelphia Water Department is working really hard every day to make sure that the tap water that I drink and try to convince my friends that it's safe to drink -- that they are really trying to monitor for our safety. And I also think that in order to do that, there's not necessarily a need to look at the consumer first. There has to be somewhere else within.

I believe in the article it mentions that we do have emergency reserves, which they are reluctant to bend down, because it's hard not having a backup. But this would be the time to use the backup, considering that so many people are really behind on their water bills.

My personal situation right now, I don't have to face this, but I know that I will soon. And I really appreciate living in Philadelphia. It's been a great change from the suburbs. And I plan to stay here for as long as possible, hopefully working in the hospitality industry, and meeting people from all over the City who always have something to teach, always have something to give.

And I think that in this case, we don't
need to be giving extra money to the Philadelphia Water Department -- if it can come from another place.

But also, I agree with what you said, Judge Chestnut, that hopefully this is a place where we're all coming to achieve fairness and we're all hoping to work together in order to get people to be safe and have their water bills where they need to be.

Thank you, Judge Chestnut, and everyone else who showed up today. And -- yeah. Thank you very much.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very much for taking the time and sharing your thoughts with us. We appreciate it.

Does anyone have any questions for Ms. Alfred-Levow?

MR. DASENT: No, but thank you for participating. We appreciate it.

MR. BALLINGER: Same here. Thank you for testifying this evening.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Steven, who's next?

MR. LIANG: The next up, I think, would be
Constance. She's had her hand up for a while.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

MS. DAY: Good evening.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Could you please give and spell your name for the record?

MS. DAY: My name is Constance Day, C-O-N-S-T-A-N-C-E. Last name is Day, D-A-Y.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your address, please?

MS. DAY: 4429 North 9th Street, Philadelphia 19140.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you appearing on your own behalf or for a group?

MS. DAY: More or less on my own behalf for a group, that they don't know about yet.

I happen to be the block captain of the 4400 block of North 9th Street in the Hunting Park section of the City. My husband and I have been residents in this community for over 30 years and in our home since 1985.

And I heard about this forum through an e-mail from one of the other community organizations in the area.

I found it to be very interesting
testimony. The young lady with the multiple
bills that was coming in, I was really -- it
was really tugging at my heart.

But I appreciate the platform that's been
provided.

For informational purposes, I decided to
get on just to glean what was happening so that
I could share with my neighbors.

I have a few seniors on the block,
homeowners. And they always would call for one
thing or another -- thinking the block captain
has all power. I try to do my best to help to
meet the needs of the seniors -- if they need
food or if they need extra cash, we try to hope
to meet that need.

And I do know that bills are always a
hardship on the seniors. Myself and my
husband, we are seniors as well. Fortunately,
we've been blessed to be able to manage our
expenses. And this is -- it wasn't done
overnight. It was over a long period of time
of managing a budget.

So, out of useful information going
forward, and who I can share -- or which
direction I can turn my neighbors to in the event that they do need help in that area with their water bill, I was a little unnerved about receiving the e-mail about the rate increase. But I heard a break down from one of the representatives here that was on earlier. And I felt a little better about the periodical increase over the years.

But at the end of the day, for some, it will still come to an amount that would not be manageable, especially for seniors -- and young families, young couples with children.

With that being said, I wanted to thank the Councilwoman, I'm a resident in her district, for coming on and sharing the statement representing this area of Hunting Park, which is very diverse. We have a lot going on over here.

They did the park with the preservation -- it was a water project that lasted about two years in Hunting Park.

And there's been some complaints about that, because it really wasn't -- I would say -- finished properly. They dug out these
little pools all over this park and boarded it with a green substance. And now it collects the water, but it's unsafe for youth.

The park has a lot of sports activities going on. We have baseball. We have football. There's tennis. There's handball. There's basketball courts. There's a rec center right in the middle.

And with these water preservation -- I'm not sure if I'm using the correct term for it -- these areas that are not blocked off properly can be easily a pool that someone, an animal, even, can drowned in. So there's been a number of complaints about that.

But overall, I thank you for allowing me to speak. And I just wanted to get that out there, that this forum has been very, very helpful. Transparency is paramount these days with so much that's been going on with everyone.

Thank you, Judge Chestnut, and all the other officials that are on this call.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you, Mrs. Day.
Does anybody have any questions?

Mr. Dasent did you want to follow up on what she was saying about the --

MR. DASENT: Yes. I'd like to reach out to Ms. Day if she'll give me her contact information to follow up on the park and some of her other comments to address her concerns.

And Ms. Day, if you can leave your name in the chat, we can reach out to you that way.

MS. DAY: Okay. I will. Thank you so very much.

I apologize for the video. I was having some problems with the screen. It came up and I looked all fuzzy so that's why you don't see my face.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very much for taking the time. We appreciate it. And let me say, people have been referring to me as Judge Chestnut. I think it's a hold over from when I worked at the PUC and was an Administrative Law Judge, but that's not a lifetime appointment. You don't have to call me that. You can call me Ms. Chestnut. That's fine.
MS. DAY: Sounds good.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I have to say, I'm used to it, though, so I don't always catch it when someone says it.

Steven, who is next on the list?

MR. LIANG: Catherine. She sent me a private message.

MS. JENNINGS: Hi.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Hold on. I have to find you.

MS. JENNINGS: I'm just a black screen.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Oh, there you are.

I'll be honest, this is my first Zoom public hearing --

MS. JENNINGS: You're fine.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm an old person and it's harder for me, but I'm trying.

Okay. Do you want to give us your name and address for the record, please? Spell your name.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And how did you hear about this?

MS. JENNINGS: I heard it from e-mail and local civic groups.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you appearing on behalf of a group?

MS. JENNINGS: Not formally, no. I'm appearing on behalf of myself, but probably many others -- the opinion of many others.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

MS. JENNINGS: So anyway, what I'm not hearing addressed at all here -- and maybe it was addressed in prior meetings or future meetings it will be, whatever -- but I'm not hearing anything about landlords.

And so with this rate increase coming, obviously, during this pandemic and everything else, the water bill is something that follows the owners of the property.

And so this highly affects small landlords and small business owners, whereas electric bills and gas bills follow tenants and nothing follows squatters.

So I hear -- and I'm not sure if I have
the number correctly -- that right now we
have -- and I could have the wrong number --
75 percent -- as high as 75 percent of water
bills not being paid. And this falls then back
on the people who actually are paying their
water bills.

And for landlords -- are paying -- so if I
have tenants who -- the water bill is
incorporated into their lease and they decide
that they -- and I know many of these
situations -- when they decided last April, I'm
not paying anything now. I don't have to. And
I can use as much water as I want, et cetera,
et cetera, it's falling back on the landlords,
who are getting hit in an astronomical way
anyway.

So are any considerations at all taking
place for the landlords? And is now really the
time to do any type of rate increase, really,
for anything? That's all I have.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Dasent, do
you briefly want to respond to the landlord
question?

MR. DASENT: Yes. We have an RCAS group
that deals with landlord issues among other things, but they have a good number of landlords and folks with small rental properties.

And I think that would be a helpful way to reach out to Catherine. And I'd like also to get her name, because there may be other issues that we can help her with and to explain the rate increase and why we need it, because we are in a financial deficit.

And I know that has to be balanced against the needs of our customers, as well.

But we're happy to talk to her about that.

MS. JENNINGS: May I ask a question regarding the statement you just made?

What is being done to go after the people who aren't paying their water bill?

So if you have -- and I don't know, exactly, what your numbers are, but I'm going to take a wild guess that the percentage of nonpayment is higher than the percentage of people paying. So it falls back on one group.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: That's a legitimate question, Ms. Jennings, absolutely,
in terms of uncollectables and the impact, but it's not something that can be addressed right here and now tonight.

What I can suggest is Mr. Dasent can talk about that with you, also, okay?

MR. DASENT: Yes. If you have time right now, we can go into a chat -- Glen Abrams is here.

If not, leave your name in the chat and we'll reach out to you later.

MR. BALLenger: Can I ask a question real quick?

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Absolutely.

MR. BALLenger: I'm just curious. Have your tenants applied for programs like the TAP program to help with their water bill?

MS. JENNINGS: Some have, some have not. And I'm not speaking for myself, but it could happen to me tomorrow. We have tenants who have become squatters.

So even though I speak a little bit for myself, we have an overall broader issue, I think, as well, that -- I'm not just being seen addressed anywhere.
MR. BALLenger: The Water Department has tried to do some things for duplicate billing. Do you receive like duplicate bills for your tenants' accounts?

MS. JENNINGS: No, I do not.

MR. BALLenger: Okay.

MR. DASENT: Catherine, I'm not seeing your contact information in the chat. I'm hopeful you'll provide that, because we'd really like to follow up.

MR. LIANG: Now that everyone is back, I can assign her to a breakout room.

MS. JENNINGS: I can't do one right now, but I left you my e-mail address. And we can make an appointment to have a conversation.

MR. DASENT: That works. Thank you.

MR. BALLenger: Thank you for your contributions this evening. I have no additional questions.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very much for spending the time to talk to us.

MR. LIANG: Next up would be Antonia Batts. She was on the phone initially.

MS. BATTs: Yes. Hello.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Wait, wait.

Hold on a second.

Do you want to give us and spell your name?


HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your address, please?

MS. BATTs: Yes. 1401 North 16th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19121.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. And are you appearing on your own behalf or for a group?

MS. BATTs: I'm actually appearing on behalf, mostly, of the Workers Benefit Council.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

Ms. Batts, we've already heard from them multiple times. It's not really fair to other people.

MS. BATTs: Okay.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Unless you want to talk about your own experience as a customer, but it's just not fair to everybody else who hasn't had a chance yet.
MS. BATTS: That's no problem.

I was hoping to just mention -- even though I admit I am not a person at this time who generates a water bill on my behalf that I would pay -- being a veteran, I was hoping to say, I was anticipating the possibly of maybe buying a little humble home in the near future, because I have a relative who is aging.

And if there were a need for me to anticipate trying to buy a home, I would be concerned about my budget that I can approve from being able to afford something that, you know, would be figured into the possibility to live.

She would be, you know, pretty much low income. And I'm on a fixed income, myself. And not a pretty good one, but it's feasible.

And I was hoping to ask if, you know, you all can let us know if there's any other alternative means for the water bill people to be able to work things out, you know, so we can have a cost of living wage that can adjust to whatever your financial requirements will be, that you'll take all of that into
 Because many of us, we don't -- we try to be there for our aging parents, but it's not easy when you're trying to see if you can even fit into a home to budget for, you know, just the basics to be able to live by.

So thank you very much if you'd consider that.

And I don't know if the VA will approve me for a loan or however they do it, but I would hope that you, you know, would take that into consideration. And thank you very much.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you, Ms. Batts. I hope you're successful in getting your house.

MS. BATTS: Thank you.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Does anyone have any questions for Ms. Batts?

MR. DASENT: Well, I hope the TAP program will be a resource that she can draw on if she's eligible.

And point out to her when she does have a home and wants to sign up for an account, the WRB can help her get into the appropriate
And at present, with her senior parents or members of the household, they might qualify for the senior discount right now.

MS. BATTS: Oh. Okay. Thank you.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I urge you to make use of anything you can. There are a lot of programs out there. Hopefully they work for you.

Okay. Any other questions for Ms. Batts?

(No response.)

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very much, Ms. Batts. We appreciate you taking the time to talk to us.

MS. BATTS: Thank you.

MR. LIANG: Next up would be Lauren Fahnestock.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: There you are.


Address is 5135 Newhall Street, Philadelphia 19144.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you appearing on your own behalf --
MR. FAHNESTOCK: I am.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And how did you hear about this?

MR. FAHNESTOCK: E-mail.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

MR. FAHNESTOCK: I want to thank the Water Department for -- and the Water Rate Board for this opportunity to hear from customers. I think it's really important that all voices are heard.

I am a 25-year resident of Philadelphia and, as noted in my address, current resident of Germantown.

And I want to take the opportunity to applaud the Water Department for providing an essential service to our City, because without clean water, the City wouldn't exist as it is does today and certainly cannot continue to function in a healthy way without clean water that is essential to life.

I also want to praise the Department for the efforts to make water affordable. I think I heard a number of times that the TAP program was referenced. And I know a number of folks
that have been, you know -- friends, neighbors -- that have been on that program. And I understand it's one of the best assistance programs in the country by a water utility. So I applaud the Water Department for that.

And even the compassion the Water Department has shown with the shutoff moratorium, I think it's commendable -- just the compassion shown to the City with those measures.

And as a customer, I think the water rates proposed are reasonable, you know, given the essential nature of clean drinking water for our City, you know, considering the need, the amount I need to pay on monthly basis for other utilities -- specifically, I'm thinking about broadband, internet, wireless service. I pay far more for those two than I do for clean drinking water. And frankly, those are less essential to my daily survival than clean water.

So I do think, you know, what the Water Department is requesting with this rate
increase is reasonable.

And so I just want to underscore, from my perspective, the importance of sustaining our drinking water infrastructure and for our City to remain healthy and viable as a City. We certainly see the need for investment in our infrastructure across the board and not just drinking water infrastructure but streets, roads, et cetera.

And so I recognize that our City has to find any and all means to make that happen. So -- I want to just voice my support for the Water Department.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you for taking the time.

Does anyone have any questions for Mr. Fahnestock?

MR. DASENT: I'd just like to observe as a guy from Germantown, Germantown rules. Thank you.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I don't know.

Since my family is from South Philly, I'm not sure I really want that on the record.

(Laughter.)
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Ballenger?

MR. BALLenger: Well, I guess -- no, no questions.

But I think, you know, it's important to hear multiple perspectives, but I'm a little bit concerned that perhaps you're speaking also in your professional capacity here.

Is that -- do you work in the water industry, sir?

MR. FAHNesTock: I do, yes.

MR. BALLenger: Well, I appreciate your input. Thank you.

MR. HAVER: I'll ask. In what capacity do you work?

MR. DASENT: This is becoming cross-examination.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yeah. Is it relevant?

MR. HAVER: Of course it is. And it's a normal question to ask people if they work for the Water Department or the Water Revenue Bureau or have family members that or are contracted.

That's a normal part of asking people
before they testify. It certainly speaks to their bias.

MR. FAHNESTOCK: I'm a Civil engineer by training, and so I do believe in the value of our infrastructure, so...

MR. BALLenger: I think everyone here would agree with that. Thank you, sir.

MR. FAHNESTOCK: Mm-hmm.

MR. LIANG: Next is -- I'm not sure their name. Their screen name is G-R-N-S-L.

MS. GREEN: Hi. Can everyone see me?

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes. Do you want to give us your name please?

MS. GREEN: Yes. My name is Evelyn Green.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Could you spell that for the record?

MS. GREEN: E-V-E-L-Y-N, G-R-E-E-N.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your address, please?

MS. GREEN: 160 West Cheltenham Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19120.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you appearing on your own behalf or are you speaking for a group?
MS. GREEN: I am appearing on my own behalf.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And how did you hear about the hearing?

MS. GREEN: Through the newspapers. I was just reading it through Metro.

And also, I have been communicating with the Water Department regarding my bill.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Go ahead, Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Okay. The reason I wanted to be part of this hearing is because I'm very, very concerned about the Water Department increasing the water rate among Philadelphia residents.

I am concerned with this when we are in a pandemic, when the job lists right here in Philadelphia is even insurmountable. I even was laid off my job during the pandemic, in which has hurt me considerably.

Also, during this, I have been trying to fight, in terms of my water bill, for over three years -- I have tried to get assistance from the Water Department. I applied for TAP.
I applied for the LIHEAP program.

But they stated that I was not eligible, because I own a duplex. I live in the duplex. And at the time, I did not have a renter. And I was laid off and I almost lost my home.

I believe that the Water Department should have a separate procedure and policy for those who have a small dwelling like me and I live in.

If it was not for my family members, I would have lost my home, because I did not have -- once I was laid off, I did not have the money to continuously, continuously pay, because I was trying to do repairs for my duplex.

And I think a rate -- an increased rate would even hurt us considerably.

And I understand that the Water Department and many, many companies are facing financial crisis, but I want to make this stipulation, as well, this comment, and I hope I don't offend anyone -- that I believe -- and when I'm doing the statistics and when I'm examining statistics and looking at incident rates, in
the Philadelphia population, we have many, many
communities of color.

And it is going to impact African
Americans, Hispanics, dramatically. Many
people will speak and say and come on your
behalf in terms of your hearing and state that:
Oh, well, the Water Department should do an
increase. They have been hit. And you have
been impacted.

But I don't think anyone is looking at the
statistics in terms of the social determinants
that's impacting African Americans. And the
rate increase is going to impact us as a
group -- and minorities. It's going to impact
minorities. It's not going to impact
individuals that may have high salaries.

And it's always impacting minorities.
Rates not just for the Water Department -- our
insurance, it's always impacting minority
communities in the North Philadelphia area.

I live in Olney section. We always are
getting hit very, very hard. And we are facing
many social determinants -- in our city of
Philadelphia.
And I wish there was some way that the Water Department could -- besides in this pandemic -- to reach out and have a fundraiser, have a telethon for the Water Department -- I'm not sure.

But to put this on, I think is adding insult to injury. It's already -- we're dealing with -- our people are dealing with mental health crisis. I am a crisis counselor. I'm also a public health professional. And I have hundreds and hundreds of people calling me. They are stressed out with the pandemic, with the bills. I have people that say: I'm so depressed. I'm ready to give up.

With all of these bills -- so now, here comes the Water Department adding another layer when already we have the Coronavirus that we have. Now we have more financial. All of this, and no one is dealing with the social determinants.

I would not dare -- I would not ask any agency. I would hope that not any agency would come for poor people in this Philadelphia area and ask for increase in the moment that we're
having a pandemic and a financial crisis.

It is just -- when I heard about it in the newspaper that you were going to increase the rates, I said: I don't know what the Water Department is looking at. I don't know with all of the things and the social determinants -- and when I'm talking about social determinants, I'm talking about the education system. I'm talking about income levels. I'm talking about healthcare. I'm talking about all of these things that we are hounded with.

And at this moment -- was not a good time to bring up the water -- increase in the water. I'm getting phone calls, because people know that I'm a public health professional. They know that I'm a crisis counselor, so they're calling me saying: Can you believe this? Are you going to be speaking? What are you going to do? Crying. People have lost their loved ones through COVID and now they said they have to deal with this, with the Water Department.

And I want to thank the Water Department
for giving us that forbearance where we do not
have to try to pay everything at one time. I
know that y'all are facing crisis, as well.
But I ask you to please consider -- not during
this time, to increase the rate.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.
That was very compelling. And that's the
reason we have these public hearings, is to
hear how it impacts people -- to put a face to
the impact of the decisions.

I find it sometimes easy to forget that
real people are affected by these decisions and
by these utilities. It's hard for everybody.
It's been a very horrible year.

And I will tell you there are utilities in
the state that have just gone ahead like there
was no pandemic. And I'm always amazed at
that.

MS. GREEN: I'm amazed. Like I don't
understand it. I mean, how could -- you know,
and no one looks at people's emotional health.
People are going off.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mm-hmm.

MS. GREEN: And this -- when you talk
about a rate increase, I try to tell people:
Calm down. I understand with money, but we got
people who have lost their lives. Y'all know
we have over 500 deaths in the United States
because of Coronavirus. I've lost several
people, friends and family, due to this
Coronavirus. So they are dealing with that and
here it comes -- boom.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very
much for taking the time and expressing
yourself like that.
Does anybody have any questions or
comments?
MR. DASENT: Just one comment, Ms. Green,
just recognize last year, right before the
pandemic, we filed for rate relief. We
withdrew that rate cause, because of the
pandemic and we knew all the pain and the
problems that it would create with the shut
down of the economy.

Having done that and borrowed against our
reserves, we're now in a position where we have
to ask for some money to make sure we can
sustain vital utility services for everybody.
And we recognize it has to be a balance between what you can afford and what we can, sort of, do to get by. But that's what we're trying to do, sort of thread that needle. And it requires your input. And we thank you for that.

MS. GREEN: Okay. You're welcome.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Ballenger?

MR. BALLenger: I just wanted to also thank you for your testimony tonight and just make sure that we reiterate that the final decision is made by the Board. It's not made by the Department.

And we're going to be taking some different positions from the Department in this case about what should happen next.

MS. GREEN: Can I just say something else?

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.

MS. GREEN: In terms of over the years, has the Water Department looked to ask different corporations to help the Water Department? I mean, what kind -- I want to know what kind of fundraising or what -- I know this is, you know, the city and the state and
1 all of that.
2 But what can -- is there some type of task
3 force to help the Water Department? Why can't
4 if you had a task have that help the Water
5 Department?
6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very
7 much, Ms. Green. Again, we appreciate this.
8 Thank you.
9 MR. BALLenger: I think that's an
10 appropriate follow up for the Department.
11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Absolutely.
12 MR. DASEnt: Ms. Green, I don't know that
13 I have your contact information. I can get it
14 from Steven, but if you leave it in the chat,
15 I'll be double sure to reach out to you.
16 MR. LIANG: I don't have her contact
17 information. She hasn't sent it to me.
18 MR. DASEnt: Okay. Ms. Green, if you can
19 leave your e-mail in the chat -- you're
20 frozen --
21 MS. GREEN: My phone number is (267)
22 324-1120.
23 MR. DASEnt: Great. We will reach out to
24 you, because I would like to follow up and
respond to some of your concerns.

MS. GREEN: Okay. Thank you so much and thank you for allowing me to speak.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: We appreciate it. You did us a favor.

Mr. Ballenger, did you have something you wanted to say?

MR. BALLenger: No thank you,

Ms. Chestnut.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you. Steven?

MR. LIANG: That's all the people I had on my list.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Is there anybody who hasn't spoken who wants to?

MS. REED: Hi. I just wanted to, if it was possible, to have a minute to speak? I know it's getting pretty late.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure. Are you Amber?

MS. REED: Yes, I am Amber.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Could you give and spell your name for the record, please?

MS. REED: Yes. It's A-M-B-E-R. And my
last name, as well, correct?

MR. DASERT: Yes.

MS. REED: It's R-E-E-D, Reed.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your

address please?

MS. REED: Yes. 5534 Beaumont Avenue.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Your ZIP?

MS. REED: 19143.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you

appearing on your own behalf or for a group?

MS. REED: Yes, I am. I'm appearing on my

own behalf.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And how did you

hear about this?

MS. REED: A family member informed me

about it.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: So word of

mouth?

MS. REED: Yes, mm-hmm.

So I just wanted to jump in really

quickly. I am a tenant who does pay her water

bill in addition to all of the other utilities.

And I would just say, I understand

everybody is concerned about the increase, as
am I, for someone who has taken on a lot of financial responsibility. And I understand the other side of the aisle where, you know, we do need to increase funds to take care of the infrastructure.

However, I do have to echo the sentiments from the other side, which is raising the rates at this time in such a really difficult financial time for a lot of people would be very insensitive. But also, it would not be mindful of the financial struggles that people are going through.

And I don't know if it was covered, but one of the things I was thinking about listening to a lot of people speaking was if there was a process in which the rates would be increased so that it's not a burden that's dropped on people all of a sudden -- like I don't know if that was something that was talked about or...

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well, I was going to say, it is a two-year increase.

MS. REED: Okay.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Some on the
first year and then some on the second year.

MS. REED: And that would take into consideration people transitioning back into the work force.

I know that the country is slowly starting to open up, but the financial instability is still, for many people, the same.

That is all I have to say.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Does anyone have any questions for comment?

Mr. Dasent or Mr. Ballenger?

MR. DASENT: No. Just thank you, Ms. Reed. I'm taking notes. Thank you.

MR. BALLenger: Likewise, Ms. Reed. Thank you for your testimony.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you for taking the time. Appreciate it.

Anybody else who hasn't already spoken?

(No response.)

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I don't see anybody raising their hands --

MR. LIANG: Barbara Panzano raised her hand again.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: You've already
spoken, Ms. Panzano. If you want to take -- I

don't want to get into a continuous loop here,

but if you want to make a real brief statement.

MS. PANZANO: Very brief statement.

One thing that I didn't hear addressed

through the whole meeting was looking for

efficiencies.

As I've explained, this is the highest

bill I pay out of all the utilities -- maybe

whatever PGW is doing and PECO is doing would

be a help to the Water Department.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Panzano,

we've got that. Right.

And I can assure you that definitely the

Public Advocate is looking for efficiencies in

every as aspect of the Company's operations.

That is, actually, one of the main purposes

here -- to make sure they are as efficient as

possible and really do need a rate increase if

one is ordered.

I think the last time the Company had a

rate case with the Rate Board -- I forget how

much the Department asked for, but I think they

only got a very small increase, which was a
small percentage of what they filed for. No?

Mr. Ballenger?

MR. BALLenger: There's some debate about that.

MR. DASENT: 1.4 percent.

MR. BALLenger: Yeah, plus 15 million.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. I wasn't involved in that, so I don't want to say it. But I just wanted to point out that the Company doesn't always get what it asks for. In fact, I'd say it very rare that they really do.

But yes, efficiencies and external sources of funds are, I would say, on everybody's find. Okay. I think we should wrap it up here then.

Does anybody want to -- Mr. Dasent?

Mr. Ballenger?

MR. DASENT: No benediction tonight.

We're just grateful for everyone coming out.

MR. BALLenger: Likewise. Thank you very much, Ms. Chestnut, and to every who came out this evening. It's been our best attendance yet.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I think it was.
I do want to remind everybody that you still can send comments to the Rate Board. Certainly, like I said, I'll read them. They'll be posted.
And if you're interested in following the progress of the case, go to the Rate Board's website. Documents are posted there and information is provided there.
And it's really -- maybe I'm biased, but I think it's pretty easy to navigate and pretty clear.
So that should help you keep in touch in terms of what's going on, because we do try to keep everyone notified, okay?
MR. BALLenger: Someone else is trying to get in.
MR. FOSTER: Real quickly. Sorry.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well -- okay.
Are you a customer?
MR. FOSTER: Yes.
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Do you want to give your name and spell it for the record?
MR. FOSTER: Yes. It's Thomas Foster,
HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your address?

MR. FOSTER: 2200 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Unit 1512, Philadelphia, PA 19130.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you appearing on your own behalf?

MR. FOSTER: Yes.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Go ahead, sir.

MR. FOSTER: I just wanted to say that I appreciate how the shut off freezes through April 2022 now. And I also appreciate how PGW is working on the watershed program to keep the streams and everything else clean, because the rivers -- all the trash and everything flows to the rivers, so just keep up the good work with that.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Is that it?

MR. FOSTER: That's it.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: That was brief.

Thank you.

Does anyone have any questions or comments?
about that?

MR. DASENT: Nope. Thank you.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very much, sir.

MR. FOSTER: You're welcome. Have a good night.

HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you. You too.

Thank you all. I appreciate the time and the effort that everybody took. Good night.

- - - - -

(Whereupon the hearing concluded at 7:58 p.m.)

- - - - -
CERTIFICATION

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

___________________________
Kathryn Doyle
Court Reporter - Notary Public

(The foregoing certification of this transcript does not apply to any reproduction of the same by any means, unless under the direct control/or supervision of the certifying reporter.)
Philadelphia Water, Sewer and Storm Water Rate Board Public Hearing
March 18, 2021

Page 3

complaint 27:18
complaints 22:15 24:9
39:4 70:22
71:14
complete 47:21
completely 44:16 46:11
65:1
comply 21:6
comprehend... 15:18
concern 41:14 46:24
concerned 49:6 80:11
86:6 88:13
88:16 98:24
concerning 11:2 41:21
45:17
concerns 12:4 18:15
18:16 18:
25:22 28:7
41:8 18
47:17 72:7
97:1
concluded 105:13
conducted 11:6 26:18
conference 21:1
confidence 47:2
confine 29:20
confrontati... 23:14
confused 43:3
Congress 6:18
connected 59:18
connection 46:1 5
consecutive 59:12
consider 81:7
93:4
considerably
Philadelphia Water, Sewer and Storm Water Rate Board Public Hearing  
March 18, 2021  

STREHLOW & ASSOCIATES, INC.  
(215) 504-4622