

Philadelphia Water, Sewer and Storm Water Rate Board Public Hearing
March 18, 2021

PHILADELPHIA WATER, SEWER AND STORM WATER
RATE BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Thursday, March 18, 2021
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TIME: 1:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Virtually
HELD BEFORE: MARLANE R. CHESTNUT
Hearing Officer

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2 P R O C E E D I N G S

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4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: This is on the
5 record.

6 Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for
7 participating. This is the third public
8 hearing that has been scheduled by the
9 Philadelphia Water, Sewer and Storm Water Rate
10 Board to hear comments and suggestions and hear
11 from you, the people who are -- will be
12 directly affected by the Water Department's
13 proposed changes in rates and charges.

14 I'm going to take some time and explain
15 what the Rate Board is, what it does, how it
16 makes its decision. I will introduce the
17 parties to you. And they can make a brief
18 statement.

19 I will tell you how it is that you can
20 testify or make your opinions known and
21 hopefully give you confidence that this
22 proceeding -- the whole process is being
23 conducted fairly and thoroughly.

24 So let me start by saying that the Rate

1 Board was established about ten years ago as an
2 independent body to review rate and requests
3 made by the Philadelphia Water Department.

4 As part of its mandate to conduct an open
5 and transparent examination of any proposed
6 rates, the Rate Board took various steps. For
7 one thing, it hired Community Legal Services to
8 represent the interests of residential and
9 small users. And we'll talk about that.

10 It selected me as the Hearing Officer,
11 excuse me, to conduct this hearing. And I'll
12 talk about why they selected me and how I
13 conduct this.

14 Due to the ongoing public health emergency
15 caused by the COVID pandemic, all hearings are
16 held remotely and will be held remotely. These
17 are public hearings for members of the public
18 to talk. In addition, there will be technical
19 hearings which parties present written
20 testimony by their various experts and present
21 that testimony to witnesses to be cross
22 examined.

23 As you can see -- maybe you can't see --
24 there's a court reporter here who is taking

1 down what's being said and will produce a
2 stenographic record of this hearing. That
3 transcript, along with every other document
4 produced in this case which is the Company's
5 filing, discovery done by the parties,
6 communications are all posted on the Rate
7 Board's website and are available for you to
8 look at. And I encourage you to do so.

9 If you do go to the Rate Board's website,
10 be aware that the proper section is called the
11 2021 Rate Proceeding. It's not the 2021 Annual
12 Rate Proceeding. That's a reconciliation of
13 the tap water program. It's a separate
14 proceeding. It's just a mathematical kind of
15 true up and really does not directly impact
16 this case.

17 If you're looking for items related to
18 this case, look under 2021 Rate Proceeding.
19 And that's where all the documents will be
20 posted.

21 Now, before we get to hearing from you --
22 and it's important that we do, it's very easy
23 for people in the rate making process to talk
24 about the customers as a class and talk about

1 the impact on the customers, but it helps to
2 have a face to put to it.

3 And as the parties all know, because I
4 constantly remind them, real people are
5 affected by these actions. Real people who
6 have problems and families and jobs and
7 concerns. We need to keep that in mind. This
8 isn't a theoretical exercise where we talk,
9 just generally, about rates and even impacts.
10 We have to see how it affects people.

11 But it's also important that you
12 understand what is happening and how it does
13 affect you and how you can participate and help
14 the process.

15 Now, as I mentioned, the water company --
16 excuse me, the Water Department filed a trade
17 filing. They did the preliminary filing in
18 January. The final filing was made in
19 February. And the regulation in set of the
20 Rate Board is a pretty compressed time schedule
21 that this rate request has to be examined and
22 decided by the Rate Board.

23 So we have had a prehearing conference.
24 We adopted a schedule. And the schedule,

1 generally, establishes that there are deadlines
2 for discovery, for other matters, for
3 settlements.

4 We will have technical hearings sometime
5 at the end of April. And those dates will be
6 posted on the Rate Board's website. You are
7 welcome to observe.

8 After that, the parties will file briefs.
9 Those briefs also will be filed and posted.
10 And then I'll write a report for the Rate
11 Board's consideration.

12 Now, if we keep to the schedule, my report
13 should be out at the end of May. And the Rate
14 Board will make its decision by the end of June
15 so that any rate decision can go into effect by
16 September 1.

17 The rates that are proposed here are for
18 fiscal years 2022 and 2023, so it's a two-year
19 period.

20 I think I mentioned that the Rate Board
21 did hire another -- the other statutory party
22 is called the Public Advocate to represent
23 interests of residents and consumers and small
24 users.

1 In this proceeding, the Rate Board hired
2 Community Legal Services to act as the Public
3 Advocate based on its experience in the these
4 kinds of cases. And I will let them also tell
5 you what they are doing and what their plans
6 are.

7 The proceeding has other participants
8 including the Philadelphia Water Revenue, which
9 does the actual billing and collections on
10 behalf of the Water Department. The
11 Philadelphia Large Users Group, PECO and a
12 number of other individuals.

13 Speaking of the Rate Board, let me note
14 that the Chairman of the Rate Board, Mr. Sonny
15 Popowsky is present. Mr. Popowsky, do you want
16 to wave?

17 CHAIRMAN POPOWSKY: (Waves.)

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Now, with
19 respect to this hearing, as I indicated,
20 there's a court reporter, so speak slowly and
21 clearly. When it's your turn -- and I'm going
22 to go in the order that people registered -- I
23 will ask you your name, your address, if you're
24 appearing on behalf of yourself or on behalf of

1 a group. And since this is the first time
2 we've done these via Zoom, I'm going to ask how
3 you heard about this -- did you get an e-mail?
4 Did you see it on social media? Was it word of
5 mouth? Was it in the newspaper? Just so we
6 can see what methods worked and what didn't
7 work.

8 And you can give your statement. And if
9 any of the counsel have a question for you,
10 that question will be to clarify what you said.
11 It's not cross-examination. No one is trying
12 to trip you up. It's just to clarify.

13 In connection with that, let me make a few
14 statements about your testimony.

15 The subject is the proposed rates. If you
16 have other concerns, such as individual billing
17 issues or service issues, don't talk about that
18 here, because it's not appropriate for you to
19 have to give personal information publicly.
20 What we can do is, the Company can direct you
21 and a Company representative into a breakout
22 room. And they can address you directly and
23 resolve your concerns.

24 If you have questions about the rates,

1 themselves, or the process, if we can answer
2 them quickly here, we will. But if we can't,
3 Mr. Dasent, I'm sure, will be happy to get back
4 to you with a response.

5 But do keep in mind that there are a
6 number of people signed up. And we hope to
7 accommodate everybody in terms of time.

8 After you've completed your statement,
9 you're welcome to stay and watch the rest, but
10 you don't have to. You can leave at any time.

11 Now, let me talk about the process,
12 because, like I said, I think it's important to
13 have these public hearings so that the Rate
14 Board and everybody sees the actual people
15 impacted by these rates and the affect that it
16 has on them.

17 But the second aspect of it is to let you
18 know how the Rate Board goes about making their
19 decisions so that you have confidence in the
20 process.

21 As I said, the Rate Board did hire
22 Community Legal Services to represent
23 customers. And I can tell you from my own
24 experience, they have a lot experience in these

1 cases. And they do a wonderful job. They have
2 their own experts and they are thoroughly
3 examining all aspects of the filing. And I
4 really have nothing but admiration for the way
5 that they have been interacting in this case.
6 They are very thorough. They are professional.
7 They are reasonable. And I think you can feel
8 a certain amount of confidence that they are
9 representing you in a good way.

10 Now, Mr. Dasent represents the Water
11 Department. And I'm not sure how much
12 influence he has with his client, but I can
13 tell you from my own experience with Mr. Dasent
14 that he is also a very ethical, professional
15 person. And he is not out to manipulate or act
16 unfairly.

17 Now, I think you're wondering how I can
18 say that about them, because I have been around
19 utility regulation and done utility regulation
20 in Pennsylvania for many, many years.

21 I was an Administrative Law Judge with the
22 Public Utility Commission for more than 25
23 years. I have done hundreds of rate cases --
24 all kinds of cases, all kind of rates. I've

1 done water cases. I've done electric cases.
2 I've done gas stations. I know what
3 utilities -- how to run a utility. How
4 well-run utilities should operate. I know what
5 utility expenses should be.

6 I'm also very good at case management --
7 moving this case along and not wasting
8 anybody's money, because the rate case expenses
9 are considerable.

10 But my experience also includes thousands
11 of inability to pay cases. So I understand
12 what it is to be in a position where it's hard
13 to pay your bills, especially water bills. I
14 can't tell you -- but I take thousands of
15 cases. That's not an exaggeration.

16 I have done service complaints. I have
17 done inability to pay cases. After I retired,
18 the Commission asked me to stay on for a year
19 and help with the inability to pay backlog,
20 which I did.

21 Most of my time has been doing water -- in
22 Philadelphia, although I spent a couple years
23 in Harrisburg earlier in my career. I was an
24 Administrative Law Judge for more than 25

1 years.

2 But before that, I also have relevant
3 experience, which was that I worked for the
4 Public Utility Commission in various
5 capacities. And I always represented the
6 public interest, except for several years when
7 I worked with the Office of Consumer Advocate
8 representing, specifically, residential
9 customer interest.

10 But my entire career in the field of
11 utility regulation has been representing the
12 public interest.

13 As an Administrative Law Judge, you have
14 to learn how to balance interest -- all of
15 which are valid -- to come up with a result
16 that is fair and equitable for everybody.

17 Now, that's what I'm going to talk about
18 here with respect to this case, which is that
19 as the parties know, you are -- it's not an
20 adversarial proceeding in the least. It may
21 seem like it. It may seem like it's the
22 Company versus the customers, but it's not.
23 It's a collaboration.

24 The Company -- excuse me, the Water

1 Department does not want rates that you can't
2 pay. It's expensive to collect and terminate
3 service and they don't want unhappy customers.
4 They don't want people filing complaints. They
5 want you to be satisfied with your service.
6 They want you to be satisfied with the rates
7 you pay.

8 And conversely, you want to be sure, as a
9 customer, that the Water Department does have
10 enough money to give you the service that you
11 want. You don't want them cutting corners.
12 You don't want them being in a poor financial
13 position so it will cost more to borrow money.

14 So it's a mutually beneficial arrangement.
15 I want you to think of it from that
16 perspective. This is not litigation. This is
17 a collaboration. It's not a like a criminal
18 case where there's a degree of guilt to be
19 established or there's a civil case where
20 there's liability or damages, but this is
21 working together to find that point where the
22 rates are affordable, yet sufficient for the
23 Water Department.

24 And so -- to that end, I've been very

1 aggressive in making it clear to the parties
2 that I expect that they work together, both on
3 procedural issues, like coming up with a
4 schedule or a briefing format or how to do
5 particular issues, as well as the substantive
6 matters. And so far, they really have. I
7 mean, I've been very impressed.

8 And it's a process. I mean, it really is
9 a process. But the Rate Board has done its
10 best to make sure that it's a fair, impartial
11 and expeditious process.

12 I feel very strongly that an ethical
13 process produces an ethical result. If it's
14 not an equitable process, you may or no may not
15 get an equitable result.

16 So just from my perspective, and I hope
17 you'll understand that, that we're all trying
18 to work together. And we appreciate your
19 comments. We appreciate your suggestions. I
20 certainly hope that the Water Department takes
21 your suggestion in mind and will try to improve
22 its operations.

23 And conversely, I think that the Public
24 Advocate recognizes that the Water Department

1 does have certain constraints.

2 With that in mind, we'll go and get
3 started with this.

4 I'm going to call people in the order that
5 they registered. And if you have not
6 registered but wish to make a statement, that's
7 fine. We'll get to you. If you decide you
8 want to register for another public hearing --
9 there's one tonight at six -- that's fine or if
10 you wish, you can send an e-mail or a letter to
11 the Rate Board.

12 I'm not sure if I have the address handy,
13 but -- it's WaterRateBoard@Phila, P-H-I-L-A,
14 dot Gov. And I urge you to go to the Rate
15 Board's website. That really is a very good
16 source of information and also a way of
17 communicating.

18 Now, a lot of people have sent e-mails.
19 And they are posted on the website. And I can
20 assure you that I have read and will read every
21 one of them.

22 Like I said, I feel very strongly that we
23 have to hear everybody's voice.

24 Okay. Before I introduce the

1 representatives from the Public Advocate and
2 the Water Department, I think Mr. Dasent, did
3 you want to say something before you give your
4 presentation?

5 MR. DASENT: No, nothing on our behalf.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

7 Mr. Ballenger, did you want to say something?

8 MR. BALLENGER: Yes, Your Honor. Good
9 afternoon. I'm going to ask my colleague,
10 Kinteshia Scott to give a little overview of
11 our role and our sincere request that members
12 of the public speak up and be heard in this
13 case.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. That's
15 great.

16 Mr. Dasent, do you want to give a little
17 presentation on the part of the Water
18 Department so that people understand the rate
19 filing and what affect it will have on it?

20 MR. DASENT: Yes. Thank you, Judge
21 Chestnut. Glen Abrams, actually, is here from
22 our Public Affairs Unit to give the
23 Department's overview of the rate proceeding.
24 And he's prepared to proceed.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

2 Mr. Abrams?

3 MR. ABRAMS: Yes. Thank you Ms. Chestnut.

4 And thank you, Andre.

5 Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Glen
6 Abrams and I'm speaking on behalf of the
7 Philadelphia Water Department in this
8 proceeding.

9 We first want to thank you all for joining
10 this hearing this afternoon to share your views
11 about the rate increase request that the Water
12 Department has filed with the Philadelphia
13 Water, Sewer and Storm Water Rate Board.

14 As you may know, if the Rate Board
15 approves the Water Department's full request, a
16 typical residential customer using 500 cubic
17 feet of water per month would see their bill
18 increase by about 11.6 percent in Fiscal Year
19 2022 and 5.3 percent in Fiscal Year 2023 or
20 approximately \$7.74 per month beginning on
21 September 1, 2021 and an additional \$3.98
22 beginning on September 1, 2022.

23 The Water Department recognizes that any
24 increase in rates can be a hardship, especially

1 right now, but this increase is necessary to
2 address the Department's current financial
3 deficit and continue maintaining, upgrading and
4 renewing its system to make sure that clean
5 water is delivered as safely and reliably as
6 possible, and that waste water treatment and
7 storm water management services continue
8 unabated.

9 This system provides essential services
10 that are the foundation of public health in
11 Philadelphia. Importantly, since the Water
12 Department is a municipal utility, it has no
13 shareholders and every dollar it collects is
14 used to protect the safe and reliable operation
15 and maintenance of the utility system.

16 Rate relief is necessary now to sustain
17 our operations.

18 It should be noted that the Water
19 Department continues to invest in much needed
20 upgrades to critical water and waste water
21 infrastructure including replacing aging water
22 mains to reduce the occurrence of water main
23 breaks and increase the reliability of water
24 service to customers, extending the life and

1 reliability of the waste water system by
2 repairs and improvements to treatment
3 facilities and improving drinking water
4 treatment and improving our water conveyance
5 system by rehabilitating critical water
6 infrastructures, such as pumping stations and
7 water mains as well as upgrading water
8 treatment facilities.

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

15 I also -- I would also highlight that the
16 Water Department has a robust and comprehensive
17 customer assistance program, which helps
18 low-income customers pay their bills, including
19 the Tiered Assistance Program, or TAP, the
20 senior citizen discount program and other
21 programs that are more flexible than ever
22 during this difficult time.

23 The Water Department has also agreed to
24 extend the shutoff moratorium for residential

1 customers through April 1, 2022 and has paused
2 enforcement activities for our most vulnerable
3 residential customers.

4 If you're experiencing financial hardship,
5 we want to help. We encourage you to apply for
6 TAP, the senior discount or other programs that
7 are available to assist households with payment
8 difficulties. These programs are accessible
9 through this website:

10 Www.Phila.gov/waterbillhelp or by calling (215)
11 685-6300 Monday through Friday between 8:00
12 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

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

19 Please use the chat function to identify
20 yourself or let us know that you would like to
21 speak in a breakout room to exchange contact
22 information.

23 Now, the purpose of today's session is to
24 hear from you, the consumers. We appreciate

1 you taking the time to share your views with us
2 today. And we look forward to hearing from
3 you. Thank you.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you,
5 Mr. Abrams.

6 Ms. Scott?

7 MS. SCOTT: Thank you, Judge Chestnut.

8 Good afternoon, everyone. My name is
9 Kinteshia Scott and I am joined by my
10 colleague, Robert Ballenger, and we are
11 attorneys at Community Legal Services.

12 CLS has been appointed to serve as the
13 Public Advocate to represent the interest of
14 residential and small commercial customers in
15 this rate proceeding. We are working with a
16 team of experts to examine the Water
17 Department's proposal and to present our
18 analysis to the independent Water, Sewer and
19 Storm Water Rate Board that will make a
20 determination of whether and, if so, how much
21 the Water Department's rates are allowed to
22 increase.

23 The Water Department has proposed to raise
24 typical residential water bills by 17 and a

1 half percent over the next two fiscal years.

2 That would cost you an average of about \$140
3 more per year.

4 We have concern about the Water
5 Department's proposal and we would like to hear
6 from you.

7 For example, should the Water Department
8 raise your rates during a pandemic or should it
9 look for ways to lower costs? What about the
10 estimated \$1.1 billion in local government
11 recovery funds that Philadelphia is going to
12 get? Shouldn't the City use that money to
13 support the Water Department instead of
14 increasing your rate?

15 What would it mean to your family to have
16 to pay significantly more money for water right
17 now? And has the Water Department done
18 everything that it can do to help you get the
19 assistance that you may need.

20 Please share your views. What you share
21 today will be an important part of the record
22 of this rate case. The Board needs to hear
23 from you and understand what you think about
24 the Water Department's request to increase your

1 water bills.

2 Thank you for making time to participate
3 in this process.

4 And I would just like to note that if you
5 do have questions that you think would be
6 appropriate to direct to Public Advocate, I
7 will drop our e-mail address in the chat.

8 Thank you.

9 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you,
10 Ms. Scott.

11 I guess then the next -- we will proceed
12 to the scheduled -- the registered people.

13 I note that someone from -- I take that
14 back.

15 Steven, I guess the first person is Lauren
16 Katz.

17 The process is that -- Steven has muted
18 everybody. And when we get to your names, he
19 will un-mute you. If you're on the telephone,
20 I think you have to un-mute yourself by hitting
21 star nine. I think that works. I hope it
22 works, because I haven't tried it myself.

23 MR. LIANG: And Ms. Katz is here.

24 MS. KATZ-SMITH: Yes, I'm here.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Katz, can
2 you please state and spell your name for the
3 record?

4 MS. KATZ-SMITH: Sure. My name is Lauren,
5 L-A-U-R-E-N, Katz, K-A-T-Z, Smith, S-M-I-T-H.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your
7 address, please?

8 MS. KATZ-SMITH: My home address is 321
9 West Allens Lane and that's 19119.

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

12 MS. KATZ-SMITH: I'm here to speak on
13 behalf of my client, Community Partners in West
14 Philadelphia.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

16 Can I ask how you heard about this? Was
17 it social media? E-mail?

18 MS. KATZ-SMITH: Our clinic learned about
19 the opportunity to speak through social media.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. And
21 again, what was the name of your client?

22 MS. KATZ-SMITH: I'm a clinical law
23 professor at the Kline School of Law at Drexel
24 University. And I co-direct a legal clinic,

1 the Stern Community Lawyering Clinic, which
2 offers free legal services to citizens of West
3 Philadelphia. And we represent community
4 members that seek a variety of legal issues
5 including -- it's usually related to housing.
6 And I'm here today to speak on behalf of my
7 clients and Community Partners.

8 We have clients and serve clients in our
9 clinic who experience the gravity of
10 humiliation of living without water.

11 One client, Mr. J, a senior citizen, who
12 lives in West Powelton, lived for seven years
13 without water. He hauls jugs of water on a
14 weekly basis, a physically difficult task, and
15 an entirely unacceptable scenario.

16 In 2016, our clinic advocated before this
17 Board for an extension of the RAP agreement
18 program to individuals who did not hold title
19 to their homes -- community members like Mr. J.

20 That advocacy resulted in meaningful
21 change. And the City has made great strides by
22 enacting legislation that expands affordable
23 water access for residential water customers
24 who are struggling afford their bills.

1 And this proposed rate hike presents us
2 with the opportunity to speak on behalf of our
3 clients and their right to water once again.
4 And I thank you so much for the opportunity to
5 speak.

6 For some of our clients, clients like
7 Ms. P, a resident of Mantua, a single parent
8 living on a fixed income of less than \$1,000 a
9 month, this rate increase would be
10 unmanageable.

11 Ms. P lost her job in March of 2020 and
12 has not been able to find work. With three
13 children living and learning remotely from
14 home, her cost of living, including the cost of
15 her utility bills throughout this pandemic and
16 quarantine has increased significantly.

17 As she awaits assistance, including rental
18 assistance, she faces the threat of eviction
19 and has watched her debt increase to
20 unresolvable amounts.

21 Through tears, she describes the stress
22 that she is under to provide and stay afloat.
23 She cannot pay her bills now and more is just
24 not possible.

1 The moratorium will protect the most
2 vulnerable from water shutoff, residents like
3 Ms. P, in the short-term. But her access to
4 water in the future may be curtailed due to
5 this unaffordable increase.

6 As we face what seems to be an inevitable
7 rate increase due to the terms of the Bond Rate
8 Covenant, we implore the City to enact policy
9 solutions that reflect its recognition that
10 access to safe, affordable water is a human
11 right.

12 You are asking the poorest citizens of the
13 City to shoulder an economic burden at a moment
14 in time that they face uncertainty and
15 devastation.

16 Some Philadelphia families, families like
17 mine, can pay more, but my clients cannot.
18 They are already under too much financial
19 pressure.

20 This water rate making process presents us
21 with a unique opportunity. Our City and this
22 Board can demonstrate best practices observing
23 our most at-risk families.

24 I urge you to work with your government

1 partners to make water affordable through
2 grants or subsidies or from this federal
3 stimulus funding to those whose access to water
4 will eventually be curtailed.

5 Thank you so much for the opportunity to
6 speak.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.

8 Mr. Dasent do you have any questions for
9 Ms. Katz?

10 MR. DASENT: I have no questions, Judge.
11 I'm sorry.

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
13 Ms. Scott or Mr. Ballenger, any questions?

14 MR. BALLENGER: No questions, Your Honor.
15 Thank you, Ms. Katz.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you. We
17 appreciate your perspective.

18 Steven, who is next?

19 MR. LIANG: (No response.)

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Let me just add
21 for everybody, Steven is the moderator of this
22 hearing.

23 MR. LIANG: Next is Coryn Wolk. I believe
24 that's how I pronounce the name.

1 MS. WOLK: Hi. My name is Coryn Wolk.

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

4 MS. WOLK: C-O-R-Y-N, W-O-L-K.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. And your
6 address, please?

7 MS. WOLK: 5131 Baltimore Avenue.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your ZIP?

9 MS. WOLK: 19143.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. And how
11 did you hear about this?

12 MS. WOLK: I heard about it through news
13 coverage, from The Inquirer.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Great. Are you
15 appearing on your own behalf?

16 MS. WOLK: I'm on my own behalf, yes.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Go ahead then,
18 please.

19 MS. WOLK: So I'm a residential customer
20 in West Philadelphia. And there are three
21 people in my house, two of whom are not working
22 full time, which is including me, which is how
23 I'm just able to be here right now.

24 We have been able to pay our bills,

1 luckily, but like a lot of people have been
2 able to pay their water bills, we don't have
3 infinite money to afford constant increases.
4 And I'm aware that there are many people who
5 are much more on the edge than we are.

6 In our house we've -- partly through Water
7 Department programs, some of which have been
8 cut, and partly through having the resources to
9 buy and install these things.

10 We have the rain valve, inefficient shower
11 heads, inefficient washing machine, et cetera,
12 so we do our best to cut our bills back.

13 I'm actually not even sure from the
14 information that I've been able to find how
15 much that would help with this problem, because
16 it's not clear whether there's going to be
17 perverse incentives here where if people's
18 bills go up and then they cut back on their
19 usage as much as they are able to, whether that
20 would just create more revenue problems for the
21 Water Department that would lead to further
22 increases. Whether the affordability problem
23 is -- will become its own problem if solved.

24 I also wonder if the Water Department has

1 done the math about how many people are on the
2 brink of being completely unable to afford
3 their water bills. We're not on that edge even
4 though increased bills would be a problem for
5 us, but I -- based on how many people,
6 especially around me, it's close to half of my
7 neighbors are behind on their bills.

8 So if the rates go up, will that send more
9 people into being completely not paying their
10 bills and being at the mercy of the moratorium
11 and then the Water Department either getting no
12 money from them or shutting off their water,
13 which, to me, seems like a completely -- it's
14 not even a potential solution to this, to cut
15 off families' water in Philadelphia.

16 So it seems like the options for the Water
17 Department are to take away water from people
18 who can't afford their bills, you know, the
19 people who are currently getting water under
20 the shutoff moratorium and future people who
21 won't be able to afford these increases,
22 continue the cycle of just, kind of, trying to
23 get infinite money from people who can afford
24 their bills and dealing with more and more

1 people not being able to afford them and trying
2 to balance the books that way or finding
3 another way to get this revenue.

4 I know from The Inquirer coverage that
5 part of why residential customers, and this is
6 true for me, our bills have gone up is because
7 more people are at home and not at large
8 institutions. It's also not clear to me
9 whether that could be another potential source
10 of revenue or whether that's part of the
11 problem here.

12 I tried to find some answers from this on
13 the Water Department's website. And, you know,
14 for context, I'm someone who's worked in public
15 policy. I'm very literate, at my computer all
16 day. Love nerding out about this kind of
17 thing. And I couldn't find any of these
18 answers. And I'm also one of the few people
19 who found out about these hearings.

20 So this information is really not
21 accessible. And the process, itself, is not
22 extremely accessible to most of the City.

23 And, obviously, the Water Department needs
24 to find money somewhere, but this just doesn't

1 seem like a solution in any way, you know,
2 morally about shutting off people's water or
3 even fiscally how the solution will play out by
4 raising bills for everyone. Thank you.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I will say --
6 thank you, Ms. Wolk.

7 I will say that what you said about being
8 able to find the answers to your questions, the
9 questions you've raised are excellent ones.
10 They cut to the heart of the matter, but they
11 are complex.

12 So there isn't probably going to be an
13 easy answer on anybody's website. I think you
14 have to balance a lot of issues.

15 But yes, it is hard. You can't -- I mean,
16 like I said, I did most of my career in
17 Philadelphia. And we must always recognize
18 that rates are higher in Philadelphia. Costs
19 are higher in Philadelphia. People are poor in
20 Philadelphia. There's always a struggle.

21 Because at some point, you know, you can't
22 get money out of a stone and water is a
23 necessity. These are very complicated issues,
24 which is why we are trying to have as

1 thorough -- an examination of this rate request
2 as possible.

3 I can assure everybody, if there's any
4 other possible way for the Company to get
5 sufficient revenues for it to provide adequate
6 service, we will direct them to do it or
7 they'll do it themselves.

8 But yes, absolutely, I think we all
9 recognize that raising rates is a last resort.
10 Because, as you said, it creates more
11 uncollectables.

12 Now, the pandemic has certainly been a
13 complicated factor in terms of usage, in terms
14 of revenue, in terms of all kinds of issues
15 that flow through.

16 So yes. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to take
17 up your time here, but I thought we should
18 comment on that.

19 Mr. Dasent, do you have any --

20 MR. DASENT: Just as a follow up, Glen
21 Abrams will put contact information in the chat
22 so that you can reach out to him and he can
23 direct you to various resources that we have to
24 explain why we need rate relief, various

1 assistance programs that are out there and that
2 we are very sensitive to the fact that there
3 are many folks at the brink. And we want to
4 find the resources to help, whether within our
5 existing programs or taking advantage of
6 federal programs that are available to us now.

7 So reach out to Glen. And I can leave my
8 e-mail address, as well.

9 Just so you know, we do want to answer
10 your questions. Thank you.

11 MS. WOLK: Thank you.

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Scott, did
13 you have anything you wanted to say with
14 respect to Ms. Wolk's statement?

15 MS. SCOTT: Thank you, Ms. Wolk, for your
16 statement.

17 And in addition to what Mr. Dasent also
18 mentioned, I did want to mention that, as I
19 stated earlier, the Public Advocate has hired a
20 team of experts. And our experts will be
21 submitting their testimony this upcoming
22 Monday. And that will be uploaded to the Rate
23 Board's website.

24 And our experts have looked meticulously

1 through the filing and have come up with some
2 recommendations.

3 So if you have any questions about what
4 their thought process is, I invite you to send
5 an email to the Public Advocate if you'd like
6 to talk a little further. Thank you.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.

8 Steven, who's next? Maria Ortiz.

9 MR. LIANG: Yes. She's on the phone, I
10 believe. I asked her to un-mute. Let's see if
11 she can.

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I don't see
13 that.

14 MR. LIANG: She's the phone number (215)
15 758.

16 MS. ORTIZ: Hello?

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Ortiz, is
18 that you?

19 MS. ORTIZ: Yes. Good afternoon.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Good afternoon.
21 Could you please give and spell your name
22 for the record?

23 MS. ORTIZ: Okay. My name is Marie Ortiz,
24 O-R-T-I-Z. I live in South Philly for 63 years

1 and currently at 18th and Reed.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Ortiz,
3 could you give us your address, please?

4 MS. ORTIZ: 1813 Reed Street.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your ZIP?

6 MS. ORTIZ: 19146.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you giving
8 a statement on your own behalf or for a group?

9 MS. ORTIZ: On my own behalf and also the
10 Philadelphia Worker Benefit Council.

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

13 MS. ORTIZ: Okay. I have lived in South
14 Philly for 63 years, currently at 18th and
15 Reed. I'm now -- and I'm retired, but I worked
16 in the City at a flower shop and other places
17 for all my working years.

18 I am a member of the Philadelphia Worker
19 Benefit Council, which is a body of low-paid
20 workers and unemployed and those who are on
21 fixed incomes.

22 We oppose the rate increase and demand
23 that the Board takes steps to keep low-income
24 wage working families safe and secure.

1 Running water in a home is essential. You
2 need it to stay healthy and to create a clean
3 space and live and raise a family.

4 So many families are already struggling
5 and are out of work living on fixed incomes and
6 are left having to choose between paying rent,
7 water, heat, medicine, adequate food and child
8 care.

9 Raising rates in the middle of a pandemic
10 and economic crisis will only make things worse
11 for low-income wage families and will hit them
12 the hardest.

13 6,000 seniors have been displaced from
14 their homes since this pandemic while wages
15 have dropped off. Property taxes and utility
16 payments continue to be collected monthly.

17 The ten-year abatement used by developers
18 have turned the costs in my neighborhood
19 without regards to those who have lived here
20 for generations.

21 These tax breaks that the City has given
22 to developers, creates the budget shortfall
23 that has been passed on to the residents.

24 I have watched Philadelphia become more

1 and more unaffordable for people working less
2 than \$15 an hour, called the essential jobs.
3 Rent, utilities and other prices are all
4 increased in the City, while working-class
5 wages are not.

6 We're going from one water bill charging
7 quarterly in the past to three now, which is
8 water, sewer and storm water, that are charged
9 every month.

10 In the past, my bill would be like \$75 for
11 three months. Now I pay \$100 a month. You
12 can't hide the fact that we have been paying
13 more when the developers in the neighborhood
14 have caused leaks, burst pipes and other
15 damage.

16 Long-time residents of Philadelphia are
17 forced to pay more for the repair. Charging
18 residents over \$6,000 or more for something
19 that is not our fault or simply beyond our
20 means to pay. The developers should be able to
21 pay for these damages. They should not have to
22 fall on long-time residents.

23 These neglective developers could also be
24 an additional source of income for the utility

1 companies.

2 What happened to City Council and other
3 lawmakers caring about the people in the
4 community?

5 A rate like this will hit the hardest
6 working low-wage income family and most -- and
7 will engage in the life and affect thousands of
8 low-income working children.

9 Again, I urge you to reject the rate
10 increase and find a way to meet your budget
11 shortfall without taking it out on low-income
12 wage working families at this critical time.

13 And I urge you to make developers take the
14 responsibility for the damage they are causing
15 to the water infrastructure in the City.

16 The Working Benefit Council's demands are
17 the following: A, lower the rates for those
18 300 percent of poverty or below to no more than
19 6 percent of the income, as per federal
20 standard -- household budget.

21 B, apply the same policies to those above
22 300 percent of poverty level who can
23 demonstrate financial hardship.

24 C, year round moratorium on utility

1 shutoff for any household or below 300 percent
2 of federal poverty level.

3 D, stick to the U.S. Sustainability
4 Development Goals, which were agreed upon by
5 the U.S. government back in 2015.

6 One of the goals is goal number 6, which
7 is the government should provide clean water
8 and sanitation.

9 E, provide that relief for those who are
10 falling behind on their water bill.

11 I would like to thank everybody. But I
12 think this is important, because I don't know
13 if anybody is aware how our infrastructure has
14 been damaged due to the development of these
15 new developers that come into the area and are
16 not taking responsibility.

17 I think the water company can make more
18 money charging these developers more fees for
19 the damages they do, instead of putting it on
20 the City. If they want to build, they should
21 be responsible for the damage that they do to
22 the City. Thank you.

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Does anybody
24 have any questions for Ms. Ortiz?

1 MR. DASENT: No questions.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very
3 much, Ms. Ortiz. I very much appreciate your
4 comments.

5 MS. ORTIZ: Thank you.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Steven?

7 MR. LIANG: Next up is D. Herbert, which,
8 I assume, is Mr. Dallas Herbert.

9 MR. HERBERT: Yes. Hello. How are you
10 doing? My name is Dallas Herbert.

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Herbert,
12 could you spell your name for the record?

13 MR. HERBERT: D-A-L-L-A-S, H-E-R-B-E-R-T.
14 And that's senior.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your
16 address, please?

17 MR. HERBERT: 5968 Newtown Avenue, 19120.

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

20 MR. HERBERT: I'm on my own behalf.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Can you tell us
22 how you heard about this?

23 MR. HERBERT: Well, I belong to a
24 grassroots organization, 215 People's Alliance.

1 And we had a meeting. And one of the members
2 brought it up, that this meeting was happening,
3 and if anybody was interested, so here I am.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Great.

5 MR. HERBERT: I've been at this address
6 for a little over 20 years. And I've never
7 missed a payment. I've never paid a late fee.
8 I am a retired operating engineer from Local
9 542 and -- see, I got some of this wrote down.
10 I'm married and my wife is also retired.

11 Being on a fixed income is never good news
12 when the things we need and use the most, like
13 water, become more expensive.

14 I'm here today not so much for myself, but
15 for the people who really cannot afford another
16 rate increase. I say another rate increase,
17 because I remember a time when the water bill
18 was due about four times a year or so. What I
19 pay in a quarter of a year I now pay monthly.

20 I realize water infrastructure can be
21 costly.

22 As a retired operating engineer, I've
23 installed water pipe, sewer pipe and storm
24 drains all over the City from the Northeast to

1 South Philadelphia, from West Philadelphia to
2 Germantown. I know the manpower, the machines
3 and materials have to be paid for by water
4 users.

5 But I would ask you to first make sure the
6 big water users are up-to-date with their
7 payments. Make sure water waste is minimalized
8 and give customers correct meters readings and
9 not estimates.

10 Maybe you could increase payments in
11 smaller percentages and increments over a
12 little longer period of time. I understand you
13 want to do this in two years, as to not cause
14 unburden -- undue burden on older, more
15 vulnerable customers. I mean, our money hardly
16 ever, if ever, increases.

17 In closing -- and I did have a complaint.
18 What got me here, like you said, this ain't the
19 place to do is, I've been paying my bill for so
20 long, when I got one last time, that was double
21 what I've been paying. And I figured, well,
22 let me pay this bill, because it may be a
23 hiccup in the mail, you know, because the mail
24 be running late sometimes. So I went on and

1 paid the double.

2 And then I got this month's bill and it's
3 doubled again.

4 I mean, when -- it's only my wife and I
5 here, we don't use too much water. So I'm
6 talking like \$50 a month. And I got a bill
7 last month that said \$100. I went on and paid
8 it. I got one this month, \$100.

9 So now, I called this morning, the 6300
10 number, and I haven't talked to anyone yet.
11 They are supposed to get back to me. That's
12 another thing. You can do something with that
13 customer service, too.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Herbert, I
15 think that's a good point.

16 Why don't you talk directly to Mr. Abrams
17 and he can help you.

18 MR. DASENT: He can go in the chat and do
19 that right now, take your information and get
20 back to you.

21 MR. HERBERT: I'm not very literate with
22 that thing, but I'll try to get in there.

23 MR. HAVER: I would like to ask
24 Mr. Herbert before he goes into a separate --

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure. Go
2 ahead, Mr. Haver.

3 MR. HAVER: Mr. Herbert, my name is Lance
4 Haver. I'm one of the interveners in the case
5 and very familiar with the 215 Alliance.

6 My question to you sir, is: Would you
7 support taking 3 percent of the stimulus money
8 that the City is getting and setting it aside
9 to make the rate increase unnecessary?

10 MR. HERBERT: Yeah. I'd be -- I'd be
11 behind that, yes.

12 MR. HAVER: Thank you, sir.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Steven, are you
14 going to do a breakout room for Mr. Herbert?

15 MR. DASENT: And Mr. Abrams and maybe
16 someone from Water Revenue Bureau, like
17 Danielle Lavery, on the line, who also is in
18 the room.

19 MR. LIANG: There's someone from PWD that
20 wants to.

21 MS. LAVERY: I'm happy to go, as well.

22 MR. DASENT: Perfect.

23 Danielle, Glen Abrams and Mr. Herbert.

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you for

1 bringing it up.

2 MR. HERBERT: Thank you very much for
3 giving me this place. Thank you.

4 MR. LIANG: Okay. They should have been
5 assigned.

6 Next up is Cynthia Kishinchand.

7 MR. DASENT: If I might, Your Honor,
8 Ms. Kishinchand is Mark Kishinchand's wife and,
9 our former commissioner, a wonderful
10 commissioner. And we're so pleased that she's
11 here.

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you. And
13 I'm sorry for messing up your name.

14 MR. LIANG: Sorry about that.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Did you want to
16 make a statement?

17 MS. KISHINCHAND: Yes.

18 My name is Cynthia Kishinchand. And we
19 moved to Philadelphia --

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Wait. Before
21 you --

22 MS. KISHINCHAND: K-I-S-H-I-N-C-H-A-N-D.

23 And the address is 3114 West Coulter Street,

24 C-O-U-L-T-E-R, Philadelphia, obviously,

1 19129-1002.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you,
3 Mrs. Kishinchand.

4 Do you want to give your statement?

5 MS. KISHINCHAND: Okay. First of all,
6 thank you for this opportunity. Some of you
7 may have the misfortune to remember me,
8 because, basically, I'm just -- my testimony is
9 going to be similar to what it was in 2018.

10 The other thing I want to mention is when
11 my husband and I moved here, it was the week we
12 got married, summer of '68, and he was going to
13 be working at the testing lab at 7th and
14 Lehigh. We had no idea what was ahead of us,
15 but all the way through the water has always
16 been great to drink drinks.

17 On that note, although I understand why
18 the Water Department is requesting reported
19 rate increases of 11.6 percent September 1,
20 2021 and 5.3 percent September 1, 2022, total
21 of 17.6 percent, I'm concerned and perplexed
22 about the 25 percent discount for registered
23 nonprofit institutions and organizations.

24 As a ratepayer, I endorse a discount but

1 with some revisions. Particularly, after
2 pondering the range of the value of endowments
3 of some nonprofits and institutions, their
4 fundraising campaigns and the compensation of
5 their chief executives.

6 For instance, the University of
7 Pennsylvania currently has an endowment of
8 \$14.9 billion, an increase of \$4.8 billion,
9 that is 47.5 percent from 2018.

10 In 2020, the annual salary of president
11 Amy Gutmann was \$3,600,000. President Joe
12 Biden's salary is \$400,000. Governor Tom Wolf
13 denied his salary of \$194,823, while Mayor
14 James Kenney is paid \$217,820.

15 It's my understanding the 25 percent
16 discount granted to nonprofit institutions
17 amounts to, approximately, \$10 million per
18 year. Although I do not know how much of that
19 cost is borne by an ordinary taxpayer, I assume
20 it affects the amount of one's water bill.

21 Therefore, I beseech the Water Rate Board
22 and City Council to thoroughly review the
23 criteria of the 25 percent discount for
24 institutions and the criteria for individuals

1 for limited incomes before enacting any wage
2 increases.

3 When in doing so, I trust the Board and
4 City Council will review and make public the
5 history of this discount, its impact on
6 ratepayers, the amount of dollars discounted
7 versus what's granted, the financial assets of
8 those institutions qualifying for the discount
9 and a list of municipalities offering a similar
10 discount.

11 One possible approach would be to enact a
12 policy wherein there were clear criteria
13 regarding eligibility.

14 For instance, set a cap of 10 million on
15 the local assets of the institution or have a
16 sliding scale taking into account the assets
17 and the salaries of executives with a cap of
18 200,000.

19 I realize my request for a thorough review
20 and revision of the current 25 percent discount
21 for institutions may slow down the rate
22 increase process, but I'm confident the Board
23 and City Council will address every aspect of
24 all the discount policies of the Water

1 Department.

2 Thank up.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Any questions
4 for Mrs. Kishinchand?

5 MR. DASENT: No questions.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very
7 much. That was a very interesting point. And
8 I appreciate you bringing it up.

9 That's really the value of these kinds of
10 hearings, because I'm sure that's looked at by
11 the Public Advocate, but this really emphasizes
12 it for me.

13 MS. KISHINCHAND: But you don't know when
14 it started?

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: No.

16 MS. KISHINCHAND: The Board doesn't know
17 when it started?

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: The Board may.

19 MR. DASENT: We can get that information
20 for you, though. It goes back quite a few
21 years and its gone through a number of
22 iterations.

23 MS. KISHINCHAND: And if it could be
24 posted on the website, you know, the details.

1 By the way, I did e-mail my testimony as
2 an attachment to the Water Board's --

3 MR. DASENT: So we can follow up with you.
4 We probably need an e-mail address. We'll get
5 it from Steven or -- if Steven has it, we'll
6 get it from him.

7 MS. KISHINCHAND: Yeah. And it's on the
8 testimony. Poor Glen Abrams probably knows my
9 e-mail address by heart.

10 MR. DASENT: Okay.

11 MS. KISHINCHAND: I think Glen has eight
12 days a week. He's quickly responsive.

13 MR. DASENT: We'll try to follow up and
14 get you a history of the discount and we'll
15 take it from there.

16 MS. KISHINCHAND: Thank you very much.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'll be honest,
18 I think the Company should do more than just
19 give a history. I think it's a good idea to
20 look at it.

21 I mean, let's face it, that's probably a
22 very politically sensitive type of issue. And
23 I'm sure it's not as easy as I would like it to
24 be, but it's certainly worth looking at, okay?

1 MR. BALLENGER: I just wanted to add in
2 here, that I think you were right to identify
3 City Council as someone who probably needs to
4 weigh in here since that's where the
5 authorization comes from.

6 MR. DASENT: That's exactly right.

7 MS. KISHINCHAND: I copied them with my
8 testimony. I mean, some of them are already
9 familiar with me because I tend to testify here
10 and there.

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Thank
12 you very much.

13 MR. BALLENGER: Thank you. I remember you
14 from 2018, as well. Good to see you.

15 MS. KISHINCHAND: Think about what my poor
16 husband has been putting up with for 52 years.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Steven,
18 I think the next person is Jeremy Hancher.

19 MR. LIANG: Yes. Jeremy.

20 MR. HANCHER: Can you hear me?

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes. Are you
22 ready to talk.

23 MR. HANCHER: Yes. My name is Jeremy
24 Hancher, J-E-R-E-M-Y. Last name is Hancher.

1 It rhymes with rancher, but it's an H,
2 H-A-N-C-H-E-R.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

4 MR. HANCHER: I'm at 348 Fitzgerald
5 Street. ZIP code is 19148.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: How did you
7 hear about this, Mr. Hancher?

8 MR. HANCHER: I read The Philadelphia
9 Inquirer almost daily, so I think it was Andrew
10 Maykuth's articles covering the rate increases.

11 So I'm here on my own ability. I will say
12 that I do have like a 20-year background in
13 environmental studies. I teach a college
14 course outside of the City, on innovation
15 entrepreneurship and sustainability. So that's
16 kind of what I like to do.

17 I already submitted some comments. I
18 think they are posted on the Water Rate
19 website. I just checked a little earlier, but
20 I'm going to kind of deviate from those
21 comments a little bit.

22 What my comments will be is: I'd like to
23 see the Water Department focus a little bit
24 more on trying to reduce operating expenses,

1 increase efficiency and better monitoring.

2 Now, I know I'm probably not as well
3 prepared as I should be for this testimony. I
4 haven't had as much time to look at a lot of
5 the background documents, but I really want to
6 applaud some of the previous speakers, some of
7 their comments. I think I'm going to echo some
8 of theirs.

9 I'm kind of a nerd, as well. I had --
10 quite an extensive bit of experience doing
11 energy efficiency work with PECO and the Act
12 129 stuff.

13 So I've got spreadsheets for all my
14 utilities as a homeowner in the City of
15 Philadelphia since -- I've been a homeowner
16 since 2007, so I've got every monthly bill kind
17 of in this spreadsheet. I know exactly how
18 much I've paid each much for my Water
19 Department billing since 2015. And I know
20 exactly how many cubic feet I've used per
21 month.

22 So I guess what I want to kind of focus on
23 is, again, how to reduce costs.

24 With Act 129, I don't know if it would be

1 a possibility, but I would really encourage the
2 Philadelphia Water Department to come up with
3 some sort of mechanism or incentive programs
4 that offers either grant or rebates. One of
5 the previous speakers talked about putting in
6 energy efficient water fixtures -- someone
7 would go to Home Depot and get an EPA water
8 sensor fixture, put it in there and reduce
9 water costs. I think that would be an
10 excellent way to maybe reduce some of the brunt
11 of a rate increase if that were to occur.

12 I do want to echo some of the previous
13 comments as to University City or other ZIP
14 codes, such as Center City.

15 I think some of those -- what would be the
16 mechanism if we could look at water rates per
17 ZIP code and not just a blanket rate for the
18 entire City? I think some of the ZIP codes
19 could incur a higher rate versus other ZIP
20 codes, some of the more working class or lower
21 income ZIP codes.

22 I'm kind of jumping around on some of my
23 bullet points.

24 I do want to at least say that if some of

1 the -- again, I don't know all the information,
2 but if some of the incurred costs would go
3 towards ensuring cleaner drinking water that so
4 we don't have an incident such as the Flint
5 water crisis or, again, another hot topic as of
6 late is the polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFOS
7 chemicals getting into water supplies.

8 If the Water Department can ensure that
9 we're not getting PFOS chemicals into drinking
10 water, I would absolutely applaud that and say:
11 Of course I would incur a cost to that. I
12 would really highly suggest that, that occur --

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Hancher?

14 MR. HANCHER: Yes?

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: For the benefit
16 of the court reporter, could you slow down just
17 a little? I'm not sure she was able to pick up
18 some of those long words.

19 MR. HANCHER: Which part? I talk pretty
20 fast. I apologize.

21 The PFOS, the polyfluoroalkyl
22 substances -- I think there was another article
23 in the Inquirer from Frank Kummer. I just read
24 an article about that, as well.

1 So yeah. Again, I kind of want to -- I'm
2 okay with certain rate increases, but I don't
3 want to see a blanket rate increase without
4 saying: Hey. We need to at least look at this
5 as an innovative, you know, thought process in
6 saying hey, we need overall, as a City, reduce
7 some of the operating costs.

8 Let's not just let -- and again, in some
9 of my already previously submitted comments,
10 let's charge more for special events -- some of
11 the parades, you know, pre-pandemic that would
12 occur, or Made In America or the Broad Street
13 Run.

14 Let's not just have a special event and
15 let people open up the fire hydrants. As a
16 resident of South Philly, I can't even tell you
17 how many times I've driven through and seen
18 people willy-nilly open up a fire hydrant to
19 cool off or have a nice, you know, pool in the
20 City streets and stuff like that.

21 Better monitoring functions I think would
22 be something that I would be -- really
23 encouraged and would definitely advocate for.

24 I'm trying to think what else. I guess

1 I'm kind of rambling a little bit, so I
2 apologize if you need me to back up on
3 anything, but yeah.

4 Maybe offer a better timeline as to when
5 some of these aging infrastructure projects
6 will occur either block by block or by ZIP
7 code. And I think I did see this, but I just
8 wanted to put that in there for the record, for
9 the testimony.

10 Because again, if some of these higher
11 costs are going to go towards fixing old water
12 mains or getting out cast iron pipes, let's
13 figure out what the timeline is going to be
14 that these projects are going to happen.

15 So that's all I have for you. I thank you
16 for the opportunity to speak.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you for
18 your suggestions.

19 Does anybody have any questions for
20 Mr. Hancher?

21 MR. DASENT: We'd like to reach out to
22 Mr. Hancher, if you'll share your e-mail
23 address. We can tell you some of the things
24 we're doing for like main and sewer

1 replacement, other activities, to do the
2 necessary replacement to keep a reliable system
3 in operation for our customers.

4 Glen Abrams can certainly get back to you,
5 if you leave your e-mail address in the chat,
6 it will be very helpful and we will reach out.

7 MR. HANCHER: Thank you.

8 MS. SCOTT: No questions from the Public
9 Advocate.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you very
11 much.

12 I think the next person is Mitch Chanin.
13 Mr. Chanin, would you please give and spell
14 your name for the record?

15 MR. CHANIN: Sure. It's Mitch,
16 M-I-T-C-H -- my legal name is Mitchell,
17 M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L, Chanin, C-H-A-N-I-N.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your
19 address, please?

20 MR. CHANIN: 124 Tomlinson Road,
21 T-O-M-L-I-N-S-O-N, up in 19116.

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

24 MR. CHANIN: I'm representing just myself.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. And how
2 did you hear about this?

3 MR. CHANIN: I think I probably first
4 heard about it from Community Legal Services,
5 but also saw press reports and social media
6 posts.

7 Yeah. And just as an anecdote, I'm the
8 person who brought it up the 215 Peoples
9 Alliance meeting, so great to see you here
10 Dallas Herbert and thanks for testifying.

11 Yeah. Is it okay for me to go ahead?

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Oh, sure. Go
13 ahead. I'm sorry.

14 MR. CHANIN: I'm also going to deviate
15 from my prepared statement, because I don't
16 want to repeat too many things that have
17 already been said. I really appreciate the
18 testimony that's been offered so far and the
19 ideas that have been raised, some of which I
20 thought of and some of which were brand new to
21 me.

22 My main point, I guess, that I want to
23 share is that I agree with everyone who -- it
24 seems clear that the Water Department needs

1 more revenue to repair and replace
2 infrastructure and for all the other reasons
3 that have been stated, but I have not seen in
4 the materials that were made available so far
5 any thorough analysis of alternatives to this
6 across the board rate hike.

7 And I am not at all convinced that this is
8 appropriate, given the difficult economic
9 conditions that we've been facing in Philly for
10 year, the high poverty rate.

11 And yeah, I think it's -- the rate hike
12 that has been proposed will cause enormous harm
13 to low and moderate-income customers and really
14 should not be approved by the Board for that
15 reason.

16 And I'd really like to see a range of
17 alternatives examined and shared with the
18 public and to have a more robust kind of
19 deliberation about how we can generate the
20 revenue that's needed for these infrastructure
21 repair projects and the Water Department's
22 other needs.

23 A couple of things that jump out at me
24 from reading the materials and then hearing

1 today's testimony were that though the Tiered
2 Assistance Program is put forward as a solution
3 for alleviating the impacts of rate hikes on
4 low-income customers, something that's come up
5 in a number of organizations that I'm part of
6 is just the threshold, the cutoff, is way too
7 low.

8 You know, the 150 percent of the
9 federal -- if I'm understanding correctly, you
10 know, the Tiered Assistance Program is
11 available for customers whose income puts them
12 below 150 percent of the federal poverty line.

13 You know, for one person, that threshold
14 is \$19,400 per year. So I'm very fortunate
15 that my income is higher than that, but I can
16 almost guarantee that if my income were \$19,401
17 per year, I would not think that \$144 yearly
18 increase in my water bill would be manageable.

19 And so, you know, that's -- that TAP
20 program seems very good for those who are able
21 to access it, but it is way too low to actually
22 alleviate the impacts of this rate hike.

23 I also wanted to echo my concern that I
24 haven't heard the Water Department or the City

1 explore the possibility of using funds from the
2 American Rescue -- I forget -- the American
3 Rescue Act. I'm forgetting the name of the
4 official bill, but there is money, from what I
5 understand, that is in that bill for water
6 infrastructure, broadband and other essential
7 infrastructure needs.

8 And I don't understand why the Water
9 Department is not putting forward an ask to use
10 some of that money for infrastructure
11 replacement and repair.

12 If I'm understanding correctly, something
13 like a third of our water mains date back to
14 like the early 19th century or earlier. And
15 the City, in my opinion, has to make an
16 excellent case for using funds to repair and
17 update this extremely old infrastructure.

18 And with a lot of discussion of federal
19 infrastructure package coming up this year, I
20 would really like to see the Water Department
21 put forward a proposal for that, as well. It
22 would be an excellent use of federal funds to
23 repair and improve our infrastructure, here, in
24 Philadelphia, our water infrastructure, and to

1 alleviate the need for rate hikes, especially,
2 for low and moderate income customers.

3 And then one other issues I wanted to
4 raise, I'm not an expert on this, but I also
5 consider myself a big policy nerd, but my
6 understanding is that the Water Department's
7 declining -- I think it's called the declining
8 block rate structure, you know, includes much
9 lower rates for customers that use a lot more
10 water than smaller customers.

11 And I'd like to see an equity analysis of
12 that policy and a consideration for
13 alternatives to that.

14 What are the impacts on low and moderate
15 income ratepayers of that, you know, discount
16 for large customers -- who is benefiting and
17 who is paying the price for that?

18 And I hope that the Board will consider
19 that seriously, as well, in examining the
20 proposed rate hike.

21 And I understand from Penn Future and from
22 some other organizations that there are some
23 other options for generating revenue that can
24 be used for the clean storm water

1 infrastructure program, which I think is an
2 extremely important program that should be
3 funded, but are there other ways to bring in
4 capital to invest in storm water infrastructure
5 that doesn't come out of ratepayers, in
6 particularly, low and moderate income
7 ratepayers.

8 So yeah. Those are the things I wanted to
9 share. Thank you very much for your time.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Any questions
11 for Mr. Chanin?

12 (No response.)

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Before we go
14 on, honestly, the question of the American
15 Rescue Plan Act, federal funds, is, obviously,
16 a topic of much concern and interest.

17 A lot of people mentioned it. And
18 obviously, it's a factor here.

19 I think it's premature to say -- I don't
20 think that the Company -- I don't think that
21 the Water Department is not going to
22 aggressively look for that money.

23 But maybe, Mr. Dasent -- I'm sure you
24 can't make any definitive statement, but they

1 are probably still analyzing it -- but can you
2 make a statement about whether the Water
3 Department is actually trying to get some of
4 that money available?

5 MR. DASENT: Yes. We certainly are trying
6 to actively seeking out funding to support our
7 customers from a variety of sources. We are
8 reviewing the recent federal legislation to
9 identify programs that may provide funding for
10 the Water Department. That's about a week
11 old -- little more now.

12 And we're identifying those programs,
13 figuring out those dollars, how much will be
14 coming to the City of Philadelphia.

15 And once a determination is made, we can
16 also reach out to the Administration, which we
17 are doing right now, to determine the amount to
18 be allocated to the Water Department, if any.
19 Because they have a number of programs, a
20 number of departments, we're just one, but we
21 are advocates for our customers.

22 And it's important to note, we are also
23 surveying programs that will be residential
24 assistance, that will provide residential

1 assistance directly through PHDC and other
2 programs that are out there, because this
3 isn't -- the new American Rescue Plan Act isn't
4 the only pot of money that's out there.

5 And so we're trying to see in the
6 aggregate how much in the way of resources we
7 have for our customers and for the utility
8 directly. And then we can report back when we
9 know more.

10 But our first step is to identify the
11 programs. We've seen a number of sources to do
12 that. We have our own sources, as well. We're
13 working with the Administration, also. And
14 we'll do our best to get as many dollars as
15 possible.

16 We have to see what's out there and
17 applicable to us, and how material that is to
18 this rate increase. It may help the utility,
19 but not necessarily be material in amount to
20 have a major factor on the rate increase.

21 We will keep you posted. We're in the
22 beginning of this analysis.

23 MR. HAVER: For clarity, there's not a
24 single cent from the American Rescue Recovery

1 Plan that's included in this proposed rate
2 increase; isn't that correct?

3 MR. DASENT: Well, I'll note that we
4 prepared this increase in the fall and late --
5 yeah, fall and winter of last year in
6 January --

7 - - - - -

8 (Non-reportable crosstalk.)

9 - - - - -

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Stop
11 interrupting him.

12 MR. DASENT: Seven days ago, or a little
13 more, the American Rescue Plan Act was enacted.
14 And so we predate that.

15 We are trying to do our analysis, taking
16 into account the benefits it may offer, but it
17 requires us to reach out to the Administration
18 and do our own homework to make sure we can be
19 a good advocate for customers and help get
20 either resources directly in customers' pockets
21 through some of the prior acts out there -- the
22 CARES legislation and the like, as well as the
23 American Rescue Plan Act.

24 And we will keep you posted on that, but I

1 think it was signed into law March 11.

2 MR. HAVER: Again, for clarity, there's
3 not a single cent anticipated in this current
4 rate increase from the Act; is that correct?

5 MR. DASENT: We were not clairvoyant in
6 putting the rate case together in the late fall
7 and winter of last year, so it is correct.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Haver, come
9 on. You know better.

10 MR. HAVER: I don't know better, Your
11 Honor, because Your Honor is introducing
12 testimony that is inappropriate for Your Honor
13 to put forward.

14 The Water Department has not sought that
15 money. It's not included in this rate case.
16 And for Your Honor to suggest that they are
17 going to do it in the future is unfair to
18 ratepayers. It's unfair to the proceedings.

19 If I could say so, Your Honor, you know
20 better. This is inappropriate for you to offer
21 testimony.

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Haver, I'm
23 going to give you a certain amount of tolerance
24 here. You're disrespectful. You're incorrect

1 and you should know better.

2 I simply asked Mr. Dasent to update us on
3 the Company's efforts to address this issue
4 that has come up within the last week. For you
5 to imply anything further -- I'm really shocked
6 that you would do that. But I'm not going to
7 spend any more time on this. That's not why
8 we're here.

9 MR. HAVER: Review your records, Your
10 Honor. You will see what you said.

11 MR. DASENT: Just so the record is full,
12 Your Honor, you are factually correct. We have
13 reached out to the City Administration. We are
14 actively seeking resources to support our
15 customers from a variety of places, including
16 the American Rescue Plan Act.

17 And thank you for this opportunity to say
18 that.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.

20 MR. CHANIN: Can I make a very short
21 follow up since that response was in response
22 to my testimony?

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Very short,
24 because you aren't the only one who raised it.

1 MR. CHANIN: Understood. You know, I'm
2 not an expert on how these proceedings are
3 supposed to be conducted, but in my opinion, it
4 would be very prudent to delay a decision on a
5 rate hike pending a resolution of that
6 question.

7 You know, how can we know if a rate hike
8 is required when there's been no, you know,
9 when, as Mr. Dasent just said, they are just
10 beginning to explore the possibilities of
11 alleviating the need of a rate hike through an
12 allocation of funds that have just been offered
13 to the City.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chanin.

16 MR. DASENT: And just to amplify one more
17 time, if I may, Your Honor, within a week or
18 two -- and I'm hoping within a week -- we
19 should have the beginnings of an analysis that
20 would be based upon our interaction with the
21 City Administration.

22 We are not sitting on our hands. We will
23 get the information back to you. And between
24 now and the time a decision is made, I think

1 we'll have enough information to see how
2 material an impact -- any resources outside of
3 the Department and coming from federal
4 legislation -- may have or may not have on the
5 rate increase.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.

7 MR. BALLENGER: Ms. Chestnut, if I may,
8 we're getting a little bit into argument to an
9 extent, here. I think.

10 You know, the points about the timing I
11 think are well put, because we have testimony
12 due Monday, so getting information from Andre
13 that we didn't have more discovery questions
14 about, and maybe members of the public would
15 want to also know about, is -- we're kind of in
16 a tough spot, here. I think we're going to be
17 talking about that a little.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: We'll talk
19 about that.

20 MR. BALLENGER: Since there has been so
21 much interest in how these funds may come to
22 the Department, we certainly appreciate all the
23 perspective of those who have raised it
24 publicly here, something we have been

1 discussing internally.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Great. Thank
3 you.

4 Let's get back on track here and talk
5 about decisions.

6 We've come to the end of our registration,
7 haven't we, Steven?

8 MR. LIANG: Someone messaged me privately,
9 Ms. Alison Kenner requested to speak.

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

12 MS. KENNER: Alison, A-L-I-S-O-N, Kenner,
13 K-E-N-N-E-R.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your
15 address, please?

16 MS. KENNER: 458 Duck Pond Lane, 19041.

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

19 MS. KENNER: I'm here for a group.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Go ahead.

21 MS. KENNER: So I'm here for the Energy
22 Rights Project, which is a federally funded
23 study that looks at household energy
24 vulnerability in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region

1 and Philadelphia, specifically.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

3 MS. KENNER: So thank you. I'm an
4 associate professor in the Center for Science
5 Technology and Society at Drexel University.
6 I'm also the director of the Energy Rights
7 Project, which is a three year, federally
8 funded study that looks at household energy
9 insecurity in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic and
10 Philadelphia, specifically.

11 My research has documented utility
12 insecurity in Philadelphia since 2015 and the
13 barriers that citizens face trying to access
14 affordable energy, including water.

15 I'm concerned about the timing of the
16 proposed water rate increase and believe that
17 the rate increase, like the shutoff moratorium,
18 should be postponed for one year.

19 Raising water rates during a pandemic will
20 increase debts, hardship and vulnerability for
21 many Philadelphians. And social -- it will
22 worsen social and economic inequality in a City
23 that faces too much inequality already.

24 In a structured phone interview that we

1 conducted over a six week period this winter,
2 we spoke to 83 Philadelphians to hear how they
3 were managing energy use at home during the
4 pandemic.

5 Of the 83 people we spoke with, more than
6 75 percent were African American women. 34
7 indicated that their water bill had increased
8 since March 2020.

9 But here's the thing: It wasn't just the
10 water bill. Other bills had increased, as
11 well.

12 42 respondents said that the gas bill had
13 increased and 55 respondents had their electric
14 bill increase.

15 So part of the problem with the proposed
16 water rate increase is that it's not looking at
17 the bigger pictures of people's lives. And
18 that the water bill is just one of many monthly
19 bills that have gone up since March 2020.

20 The PECO bill has gone up. The PGW bill
21 has gone up, as well, because people are
22 spending more time at home, of course. People
23 are needing to secure more food, because they
24 are at home instead of at work or at school.

1 And even cleaning supplies -- this was one of
2 the surprising things from our study is that so
3 many people mentioned that they were having to
4 spend more money on cleaning supplies to reduce
5 the risks associated with COVID 19.

6 In the same study of 83 respondents, 23
7 people indicated that they were struggling to
8 pay their water bill. People indicated that
9 they were juggling bills more during the
10 pandemic. They are having to make hard choices
11 to pay some bills one month and others the next
12 month.

13 And as we know, internet and phone service
14 has now become more essential than ever.
15 People need internet for their jobs, to look
16 for work. It's how their kids go to school.

17 So in other words, I think we have to
18 consider -- we have to ask when considering the
19 water rate increase, how many of reported
20 154,00 people who are behind on their water
21 bill, are also behind on other bills.

22 Or, for example, you know, have increased
23 costs with increased usage, you know, been met
24 with increase in pay? No. People's monthly

1 income is not going up despite the fact that
2 their monthly bills are going up.

3 So while we're starting to return to a
4 life before the pandemic with kids going back
5 to school, for example, you know, experts are
6 pretty clear on this, it's going to take a long
7 time to recover financially. And it's not good
8 strategy for the City to burden the already
9 burdened -- those who can't pay their water
10 bill, for example, with higher water bills this
11 year. There's just too much ongoing
12 uncertainty.

13 And I'm well aware that the Water
14 Department has expanded its assistance programs
15 this year. TAP, the special hardship program,
16 the seniors discount and I really applaud this
17 move.

18 However, of the more than 100
19 Philadelphians that we interviewed since last
20 May, May 2020, only two have mentioned TAP, for
21 example. By contrast, almost everyone else
22 said they were aware of LIHEAP. Two-thirds
23 said they were familiar with PECO's CAP Program
24 and about the same number mentioned PGW's CRP

1 program. And over 50 percent of respondents
2 were aware of the federal weatherization
3 program.

4 So put next to these numbers, it was
5 striking that only two people have mentioned
6 TAP.

7 One of the things that we do here
8 repeatedly in our research is that people on
9 fixed incomes and the working poor do not
10 qualify for many utility assistance programs.
11 It's just their income is maybe just a little
12 bit over what the cutoff is.

13 So more collaboration, outreach and
14 education is needed here. And I know Laura
15 Copeland's who is on this meeting, in this
16 meeting, and I've seen her speak at a number of
17 public events, which is wonderful.

18 I'm wondering, you know, PGW has a
19 wonderful workshop series that they run for
20 their customers. Perhaps this is something the
21 Water Department can explore so that folks can
22 learn about available assistance programs and
23 water conservation, you know, where someone can
24 go into communities and do this kind of

1 outreach, which is so needed at this time.

2 To conclude, you know, as someone who
3 teaches and studies urban climate exchange at
4 Drexel as well as an educator with Climate
5 Ready Philly for five years, I'm well aware of
6 the critical importance of a well-funded
7 Philadelphia Water Department.

8 Neighborhood flooding and aged pipes are
9 one of the most common problems that get
10 discussed when I interview Philadelphians.

11 But, you know, timing is everything. And
12 the plan to assist citizens in need, I think is
13 inadequate as it's currently sketched out.

14 So I urge the Water Department to postpone
15 this increase and also to expand TAP to include
16 grants -- not loans or payment plans, but
17 grants for the working poor and to make the
18 application process less burdensome.

19 Thank you so much.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you,
21 Ms. Kenner.

22 Does anybody have any questions.

23 MR. DASENT: Just to thank Ms. Kenner for
24 her input. And if you have Laura Copeland's

1 contact information, we welcome your input
2 directly.

3 I do a lot of work for PGW, so there may
4 be things that we can be collaborative about.

5 MS. KENNER: I would love to collaborate
6 more. Sure.

7 MR. BALLENGER: And Ms. Kenner, if you
8 don't mind, we may also get in touch with you.
9 I'd be curious to learn more about the research
10 you've been doing.

11 MS. KENNER: Yep. I'd be happy to be in
12 touch with folks.

13 It's an ongoing project. We hope to
14 interview 600 Philadelphians by the end of
15 September. That's our aim.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
17 Ms. Kenner, if you want to provide your e-mail
18 address in the chat for Mr. Dasent and
19 Mr. Ballenger, I'm sure that might be the best
20 way for them to contact you.

21 MR. DASENT: Thank you.

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Is there
23 anybody else who wants to give a statement?

24 MR. LIANG: Yes. We have Glenn Oliver and

1 Delores Brown-Waters.

2 I think Mr. Oliver was registered for 6
3 p.m., initially, but he seems to be here now.
4 And I believe he wishes to speak.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Oliver,
6 hold on a second.

7 Okay. Mr. Oliver?

8 MR. OLIVER: Thank you, Your Honor. Can
9 you hear me?

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I can. I can.

11 MR. OLIVER: My name is Glenn Oliver. And
12 that's spelled G-L-E-N-N, O-L-I-V-E-R.

13 And I'm actually speaking to you from San
14 Diego, California. I'm quite a long way.

15 And you may ask how I found out about this
16 hearing. I read the newspapers, so I found out
17 from a story that was in the Philadelphia
18 newspaper.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: You're in San
20 Diego? Do you own property or do you live in
21 Philadelphia?

22 MR. OLIVER: No, I do not. And I'll
23 explain why I reached out.

24 I'm a former water commissioner and I've

1 been in the water industry for over 20 years.

2 And I actually own a company where we help
3 water utilities save money with power-based
4 solutions.

5 But as a former water commissioner, it hit
6 me more than once when we had to do these kind
7 of rate hearings that it's incumbent upon a
8 water district to try to explore all avenues to
9 reduce costs whenever possible.

10 And I believe that there's an opportunity
11 for the Philadelphia Water Department to
12 potentially save a lot of money that the Water
13 Department is not taking advantage of.

14 There are utilities that are coming
15 together in what's called a virtual community
16 to hear information and save money on parts and
17 materials.

18 Just by virtue of being a part of this
19 virtual community where utilities are working
20 together, they are saving as much as 15 percent
21 on parts and materials.

22 And in this case, if the Philadelphia
23 Water Department joined this community, this
24 means that they can potentially be saving, you

1 know, as much as 7 and a half million dollars
2 on their materials and supplies budget, which
3 means that the budget for materials and
4 supplies for the Philadelphia Water Department
5 would be going down by \$2 million a year
6 instead of going up by 5 and half million
7 dollars a year.

8 And, you know, I will add that we've been
9 trying to reach out to someone at the
10 Philadelphia Water Department to introduce this
11 to them so that they can at least explore it.

12 And honestly, we haven't been able to get
13 anybody to give us a call back.

14 And so I thought at least this is
15 something -- and I'm not here to oppose the
16 rate increase or support it, but I do think
17 that if there's an opportunity for the sake of
18 the ratepayers or the City to save money simply
19 by joining with other utilities that are
20 working together to save money by sharing
21 information and this, you know -- 15 percent,
22 some may say that's not really important,
23 that's not enough money to worry about. But I
24 think it should matter. And I hope at some

1 point the Water Department will at least take a
2 look at this. And maybe they'll decide to join
3 with other utilities that are taking advantage
4 of this.

5 And that concludes my comment. And thank
6 you very much.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Any questions
8 for Mr. Oliver?

9 MR. DASENT: Just one.

10 Mr. Oliver, leave your e-mail address in
11 the chat. I'll make sure someone gets back to
12 you.

13 MR. OLIVER: Sure. I'll do that. I just
14 gave it to Steven. I will leave it for
15 everybody.

16 MR. DASENT: Yeah. So we can reach out to
17 you directly.

18 MR. OLIVER: Sure. Thank you.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.

20 Any questions for Mr. Oliver?

21 MR. BALLENGER: No questions by the Public
22 Advocate. Thank you, Mr. Oliver.

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you,
24 Mr. Oliver.

1 Now, is there somebody else?

2 MR. LIANG: Delores Brown-Waters.

3 MS. BROWN-WATERS: Hello, everybody. My
4 name is Delores Brown-Waters. D-E-L-O-R-E-S.
5 Brown-Waters is B-R-O-W-N, hyphen, W-A-T-E-R-S.
6 I live at 5159 Pennway Street, Philadelphia,
7 Pennsylvania 19124.

8 And I found out about this from an
9 organization I'm a part of which is ESWA,
10 Eastern Service Workers Association. And I
11 didn't see it anywhere else. So I found out
12 about this through them, so I'm glad they did
13 tell me about it.

14 I wrote something up real quick. I'll go
15 right here. I'm a family of four. My oldest
16 daughter has Autism and my youngest daughter
17 has asthma. My husband is a senior citizen and
18 I have different ailments that affect me.

19 I'm coming to you and asking you to deny
20 the Water Company's rate hike. It seems as
21 though my water bill keeps changing and
22 increasing every so often, for whatever reason
23 under whatever category on my bill.

24 It really feels like I'm being forced to

1 pay the Water Company's debts to bond
2 holders -- and not my own debt, but theirs.

3 I did inquire about my bill being so high.
4 And all of a sudden, you know -- when it
5 happened. But unfortunately, the answer that I
6 got was: It's your bill and you must be using
7 more water.

8 It would have been nice for the Water
9 Department to say: How about we send someone
10 there to check out what might be happening and
11 not: It's you bill and you must pay.

12 Another thing I wanted to touch on is the
13 eligibility requirements -- or should I say,
14 income as a relief requirements or guidelines
15 for these programs.

16 They are actually really ridiculous,
17 because when a family of four can't qualify
18 when one person is a retired senior citizen and
19 his wife is a part-time bus patron slash one on
20 one person who works with children with
21 disabilities in section 8 housing and not
22 taking consideration that and with everything
23 else that you pay, it just doesn't seem fair.

24 So I just want to thank you for letting me

1 speak.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: We appreciate
3 you taking the time to share your story.

4 Any questions from Ms. Brown-Waters?

5 MR. DASENT: Yes.

6 Ms. Brown-Waters, if you have the time, if
7 you could go into the chat or a breakout room
8 with Danielle Lavery, she's from the Water
9 Revenue Bureau, and Glen Abrams, we can talk
10 through your problem and try to understand a
11 little more about what we can do to help and
12 where we've fallen short in the past.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Is that okay
14 with you, Ms. Brown-Waters?

15 MS. BROWN-WATERS: It's okay with me, yes.

16 MR. BALLENGER: I just wanted to thank you
17 for your testimony, Ms. Brown-Waters.

18 MS. BROWN-WATERS: Thank you.

19 MR. LIANG: I think the people that were
20 initially signed to the breakout room can
21 rejoin it. I can't reassign them.

22 MR. DASENT: Is Glen one of those people?

23 MR. LIANG: Yes.

24 MR. DASENT: Then we're in good shape.

1 Hopefully we can get Glen in the breakout room
2 and Danielle.

3 - - - - -

4 (Whereupon technical issues were discussed off the
5 record.)

6 - - - - -

7 MS. BROWN-WATERS: You want me to put my
8 number in the chat?

9 MR. DASENT: In the event that technology
10 fails us, yeah. I'm old fashioned.

11 I see Ms. Brown-Waters' number.

12 And Glen, I hope you'll lead the charge
13 with Ravon(ph). Because we can reach out by
14 phone.

15 MR. ABRAMS: We have her contact
16 information -- telephone number and e-mail. So
17 we will follow up with her with information on
18 customer assistance programs and, you know,
19 applications and such.

20 MR. DASENT: If we can do some forensics,
21 because I've seen fluctuating water bills
22 before and I'm sure we're able to do that.

23 MR. ABRAMS: We can certainly take a look
24 at the usage on that particular account.

1 MS. BROWN-WATERS: There's a lot of people
2 like me, as well, though -- especially with the
3 organization I'm part of. They have that same
4 situation.

5 And a lot of people have been shut off.
6 And so some of them are still scared it's going
7 to shut off now during this pandemic. It's
8 really heartbreaking.

9 MR. DASENT: Thank you, again.

10 MR. LIANG: Do we still need the breakout
11 room since Ms. Brown-Waters decided to put her
12 information in the chat?

13 MR. DASENT: If we're having difficulty
14 why don't we resolve it by either phone or
15 e-mail.

16 I'd just like to speak with her, if we
17 can. I think that's the personable way to deal
18 with this.

19 MR. LIANG: Okay. Sorry for the technical
20 difficulties everyone.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: You okay,
22 Steven?

23 MR. LIANG: Yeah. Should we move on to
24 the next person?

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yeah. Is there
2 somebody else that wants to testify? I don't
3 see anybody raising their hand.

4 Is there anybody else who wishes to make a
5 statement?

6 (No response.)

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I guess that
8 takes us to the to end of this portion of the
9 public hearing.

10 Mr. Dasent, did you have anything further
11 you wish to say?

12 MR. DASENT: Yeah. We're reconvening at
13 six. So if someone has joined us and maybe
14 would like to speak, I'm hoping they'll join us
15 at six. And we're happy to hear from them.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Ballenger
17 or Ms. Scott?

18 MS. SCOTT: Thank you, everyone -- I think
19 I heard someone.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I think I heard
21 someone.

22 MS. ORTIZ: Yes, you did. But let her go,
23 because I already spoke. I just want to
24 inquire about something.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm not quite
2 sure who this is, but go ahead.

3 MS. ORTIZ: Hello?

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Hello?

5 MS. ORTIZ: You can go ahead. I can speak
6 after you, because I had spoke earlier. It's
7 just a suggestion.

8 MS. SCOTT: Oh, okay.

9 I just wanted to thank everyone for their
10 testimony and echo what Mr. Dasent has said.

11 And to, also, again, mention that our --
12 the experts that the Public Advocate have on
13 board will be submitting their testimony and
14 recommendations this upcoming Monday. And it
15 will be available on the Rate Board website.

16 And that if you have any questions, please
17 reach out to the Public Advocate or if you
18 questions that would be better for Mr. Dasent,
19 please do that, as well. Thank you.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Now, Ms. Ortiz,
21 did you say you had a quick question or
22 comment?

23 MS. ORTIZ: Yes.

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: You've already

1 had your chance here, but --

2 MS. ORTIZ: I know.

3 What I'm asking is, with the
4 infrastructure with all of these new
5 developments, couldn't the Water Company attach
6 something to these new developments when these
7 problems happen, like the water main, the
8 flooding that like they had in Manayunk and all
9 over the City, Graduate Hospital area -- could
10 they get money from that, from the developers?

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Dasent, why
12 don't you get back to Ms. Ortiz and address her
13 concerns about the development.

14 MR. DASENT: Okay. I'm happy to do that.

15 I'm hoping that I have -- I'm looking back
16 at my notes -- I wrote down your e-mail,
17 Ms. Ortiz.

18 MS. ORTIZ: Mm-hmm. How about ESW? Could
19 I get it from them?

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.

21 MR. DASENT: Sure. Or leave it in the
22 chat -- if you leave it in the chat, I'll get
23 back to you.

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: She's connected

1 by phone. I'm not sure she can do a chat.

2 MR. DASENT: Steven might be able to tell
3 our contact information, in which case I can
4 get it from you.

5 MR. LIANG: Yeah.

6 MR. DASENT: I'll reach out to you after
7 the meeting to help her public privacy
8 interest.

9 MS. ORTIZ: Thank you.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: All right then.
11 If there's nothing fourth further, we'll
12 adjourn this hearing and we'll reconvene at
13 6:00 this evening for the next public hearing
14 for this case. Thank you all.

15 MR. DASENT: Thank you.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I appreciate
17 you taking the time and I assure you that your
18 concerns have been heard and will be addressed.

19

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21 (Whereupon the hearing concluded at 2:43 p.m.)

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

I, hereby certify that the proceedings 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

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