

Phila Water Rate Board
3/23/2023 3:00 p.m.

PHILADELPHIA WATER, SEWER, AND STORMWATER
RATE BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, March 23, 2023
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TIME: 3:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Zoom Teleconference

HELD BEFORE: HONORABLE MARLANE R. CHESTNUT,
Hearing Officer

LEXITAS LEGAL - PHILADELPHIA
54 FRIENDS LANE, SUITE 16
NEWTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA 18940
(215) 504-4622 FAX (215) 504-7155

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Good afternoon,
2 everybody. Thank you very much for attending this
3 hearing. My name is Marlane Chestnut, and I'm the Hearing
4 Officer who is handling this rate proceeding. This is one
5 of four public hearings that have been scheduled by the
6 Philadelphia Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Rate Board --
7 that's the Rate Board -- to give the Board a chance to
8 hear directly from you concerning the Philadelphia Water
9 Department's proposed rates and charges for fiscal year
10 2024 and 2025.

11 The Rate Board is an independent body that was
12 established to set rates and charges for water and sewer
13 service in Philadelphia. As part of its mandate to
14 conduct an open and transparent examination of the
15 proposed rates, the Board hired Community Legal Services
16 to act as the Public Advocate in this case and selected me
17 as Hearing Officer to ensure that the hearing process is
18 conducted in a fair, impartial, and expeditious manner.

19 There is a court reporter who is -- who will
20 produce a stenographic record of this hearing, so please
21 be sure to speak slowly and carefully. And if there are
22 more than one of you together, please identify yourself so
23 she knows.

24 The transcript of this hearing, as well as all

1 transcripts and other documents produced in this
2 proceeding are posted on the Rate Board's website. If you
3 go to the Rate Board's website and look under the rate
4 proceeding tab, look down the left, and the item is listed
5 as the 2023 General Rate proceeding.

6 There are other rate proceedings listed there
7 for other time periods like last year's rate proceeding
8 and this year's TAP are. But the one that's related to
9 this case is the 2023 General Rate Proceeding.

10 Now, before we get to hearing from you, I will
11 introduce representatives from the Water Department and
12 the Public Advocate and let them give you -- and they can
13 give you an overview of their roles in the filing and
14 their positions.

15 Mr. Dasent or Mr. Shultz? Do you want to say
16 something for the Water Department?

17 MR. DASENT: Mr. Shultz will be leading us
18 today.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Mr. Shultz?

20 MR. SHULTZ: Good afternoon, everyone. Glen
21 Abrams, on behalf of the Philadelphia Water Department,
22 will be making an introductory statement. So with that
23 very brief introduction, let me hand it over to you, Glen.

24 MR. ABRAMS: Thank you. Good afternoon,

1 everyone. My name is Glen Abrams. I'm Deputy
2 Commissioner of Communications and Engagement at the
3 Philadelphia Water Department. And today I am speaking on
4 behalf of the department in this proceeding.

5 We first want to thank you all for joining the
6 hearing to share your views about the rate -- the proposed
7 rate increase that the Water Department has filed with the
8 Philadelphia Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Rate Board. The
9 Water Department provides water, sanitary, sewer, and
10 stormwater services to residential, commercial,
11 industrial, and institutional customers within the city.

12 These services are essential and are the
13 foundation of public health in Philadelphia. We have
14 recently requested an adjustment in rates and charges so
15 that we will have sufficient resources to continue current
16 and planned programs, and to pay significantly increasing
17 operating costs in fiscal years 2024 and 2025. Additional
18 revenues are needed to ensure that clean water is
19 delivered as safely and reliably as possible and that
20 wastewater treatment and stormwater management services
21 meet your needs.

22 If the Rate Board approves the Water
23 Department's full request, a typical residential customer
24 using 450 cubic feet, or 3,366 gallons of water per month

1 would see their bill increase by about 11.8 percent in
2 fiscal year 2024 and 8.3 percent in fiscal year 2025, or
3 approximately \$8.16 per month beginning on September 1,
4 2023, and an additional \$6.45 beginning on September 1,
5 2024.

6 As explained in the Department's testimony, rate
7 relief is necessary now to sustain our operations. The
8 Department needs additional revenues to pay significant
9 increases in operating expenses. Costs for labor,
10 chemicals, materials, and supplies are rising, along with
11 increased costs for regulatory compliance combined with
12 capital program needs. PWD also continues to invest in
13 much needed upgrades to critical water and wastewater
14 infrastructure.

15 All projects planned for fiscal years 2024 and
16 2025 are critical investments to ensure the utility can
17 support its operations and continue to provide safe and
18 reliable service to current and future customers with a
19 well-maintained water and wastewater system you can count
20 on.

21 One of the ways PWD is working to save customers
22 money and reduce costs is by applying for low-interest
23 loans from state and federal sources to lessen the burden
24 of capital program costs. We are also pursuing grant

1 opportunities where feasible. PWD has been successful in
2 its application for federal support for water system
3 upgrades as announced by President Biden on February 3rd.

4 PWD also worked with the Department of Revenue
5 and other city partners to help our customers achieve
6 nearly \$14,000,000 in debt relief from water bills since
7 January 2022, by working to connect people with the
8 Temporary Low-income Household Water Assistance Program
9 created by the federal government in response to the
10 COVID-19 pandemic. We are currently campaigning in
11 Harrisburg and Washington, DC to make a program like this
12 available in the future.

13 Finally, we want you to know that Philadelphia
14 has robust and comprehensive customer assistance programs
15 which help low-income customers pay their bills, including
16 the Tiered Assistance Program, or TAP, the senior citizen
17 discount, and other programs that are more flexible than
18 ever. If you are experiencing hardship, we want to help.
19 You can use one application for TAP, the senior discount,
20 or other programs available to assist households.

21 These programs are accessible through our
22 website at www.phila.gov/waterbillhelp or by calling
23 (215) 685-6300 Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and
24 5:00 p.m.

1 I would also note if you have specific billing
2 questions or other service issues that you would like
3 assistance with, please let us know and we will have a
4 customer service representative contact you as soon as
5 possible. You can use the chat function to identify
6 yourself or let us know that you would like to speak in a
7 breakout room to exchange contact information or receive
8 information.

9 Today we have Saterria Kersey from PWD Public
10 Affairs and Lakisha Gaymon-Foreman from the Water Revenue
11 Bureau that are available to provide assistance. But
12 please do not share any personal account information in
13 the public chat.

14 Now, the purpose of today's session is to hear
15 from you, our customers. We appreciate you taking the
16 time to share your views with us today, and we look
17 forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you, Mr.
19 Abrams.

20 Mr. Ballenger, did you want to make a statement
21 on behalf of the Public Advocate?

22 Oh, Ms. Price, are you going to do it?

23 MS. PRICE: Yes. Good afternoon. Hello,
24 everyone. My name is Joline Price. I'm an attorney at

1 Community Legal Services, and we serve as Public Advocate
2 in this case. I wanted to explain to you what that means
3 and encourage you to reach out if you have any questions.

4 In rate cases heard by the Public Utility
5 Commission, agencies such as the Office of Consumer
6 Advocate and the Office of Small Business Advocate
7 participate to represent the interests of residential or
8 small business customers. These agencies are funded by
9 annual assessments that all of the utilities pay. This
10 allows the agencies to do things like hire witnesses to
11 help thoroughly investigate the utility's request for
12 higher rates.

13 Philadelphia Water Department is not regulated
14 by the Public Utility Commission, so those agencies don't
15 participate in our rate cases. Instead, the City has
16 created an analogous position, and that is the Public
17 Advocate. The Public Advocate's job is to represent the
18 interests of residential and small business customers by
19 investigating PWD's proposed rate increase and
20 challenging, if appropriate, the assumptions that underlie
21 it.

22 CLS serves as Public Advocate pursuant to a
23 contract which requires us to independently and forcefully
24 represent the interests of approximately a half million

1 customers. This is what we have done, and that is what we
2 will do. The CLS attorneys will work with the expert
3 witnesses we have retained, and we will submit written
4 testimony and participate in technical hearings and
5 briefing to inform the Board of what we think the Board
6 should do. We welcome your input today because the
7 information provide -- you provide to us can help inform
8 us and our experts.

9 What have your experiences with your water bill
10 been like? How would a higher bill impact your family?
11 Do you have any concerns about customer service or other
12 operations of the Water Department? If you have any
13 questions or would like any assistance following this
14 public input hearing regarding PWD's proposed rate
15 increase, please call us at 215-227-9988 or email
16 publicadvocate@clsphila.org.

17 This is not your only opportunity to be heard.
18 After the hearings today, you can submit any information
19 to the Board that you think it should have before making a
20 final decision, and we would be happy to help you with
21 that. I also just wanted to let everyone know that we
22 have a Spanish interpreter available on the line or here
23 with me if anyone needs it. (Spanish language spoken.)
24 Thank you, and please know that your voices here today

1 will be heard by all involved.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you, Ms. Price.
3 I'd also like to note that also participating in this
4 proceeding are the Philadelphia Water Revenue Board, which
5 is the agency that actually does the billing and
6 collections on behalf of the Water Department, PECO, a
7 group of large users known collectively as the
8 Philadelphia Large Users Group, and two individuals,
9 Michael Skiendzielewski and Lance Haver, who are appearing
10 on their own behalf.

11 Mr. Haver, did you want to make a brief
12 statement?

13 MR. HAVER: Yes, I do. My name is Lance Haver.
14 I'm not a lawyer, but like many people, I'm a ratepayer
15 who is fed up with the constant water rate increases and
16 angry. Angry that the Water Department, instead of doing
17 what 14 members of City Council urged them to do, and
18 which is something they can do, withdraw this rate
19 request, and seek available federal, state, and city
20 funding before they try and reach into our pockets and
21 grab more of our money.

22 I have been a participant in this and in
23 previous rate cases. I urge everyone today to tell your
24 stories and demand that the Water Department do everything

1 it can to innovate, cut costs, and find other sources of
2 funds, other than our wallets. But I want to warn
3 everyone, don't be confused by what is happening. The
4 Water Department doesn't expect to get what it has asked
5 for. It's a game it plays that allows the Public
6 Advocate, the Hearing Examiner, and the Rate Board to
7 claim they have done something to help us by cutting some
8 of the rate increase.

9 While the Water Department may not be looking
10 out for us, it's not run by stupid people. They know that
11 politically they cannot get everything they ask for, so
12 they ask for more than what they want and are very happy
13 with what they've gotten. The body that makes the
14 decision how much more the Water Department will reach
15 into our pockets and take is the Philadelphia Water Rate
16 Board. It has five members. Two of those members are
17 real estate developers. Two ran utilities. One is the
18 former Water Commissioner who is judging if the staff she
19 hired is making the right decisions. And the other
20 utility manager is a former chief legal counsel for
21 Philadelphia Gas Works. She has never opposed a rate
22 increase. There's only one consumer representative on the
23 Board. This Business and Utility Control Board hires the
24 Hearing Examiner, and hires and controls the Public

1 Advocate.

2 Don't be confused as to the role of the Public
3 Advocate. As the business dominated board itself wrote,
4 the public is not the client of the Public Advocate. The
5 Public Advocate was hired by the Rate Board and answers
6 only to the Rate Board. The ratepayers have no control
7 over the positions the Public Advocate takes. And in the
8 previous rate case, the Public Advocate agreed to give the
9 Water Department not one, but two consecutive rate hikes.
10 And then the Public Advocate, by that corporate controlled
11 Rate Board, the Public Advocate, after agreeing to the two
12 rate hikes, was given not one, but two contract renewals.

13 And understand, that the business dominated Rate
14 Board hires the Hearing Examiner, who has directed those
15 of us opposing the rate increase, to use a spreadsheet to
16 make our arguments. Nowhere on that spreadsheet are there
17 lines for cost savings through combining services with
18 PGW, or cost savings through innovation. And there's no
19 line on that spreadsheet to consider if the Water
20 Department collects from those who can pay, nor how many
21 people will no longer be able to pay if the rates are
22 increased.

23 Yes, the Hearing Examiner has said, I can raise
24 those issues separately, but the fact is that they are

1 using a spreadsheet that does not include cost savings,
2 innovations, water collections, or ability to pay, and
3 that is simply wrong.

4 The only way for us to force the Water
5 Department to cut costs and seek funding from COVID
6 dollars available to -- is for us to demand it. We cannot
7 stop the Public Advocate from settling this case as he did
8 in the last case. We cannot force the Hearing Examiner to
9 change the spreadsheet to include all issues, not just the
10 issues the Water Department wants considered. For
11 example, there's no place on the spreadsheet to ask the
12 question, why does the Water Department have to have its
13 headquarters in Center City? Why don't they move to less
14 costly real estate?

15 If we are to be successful at forcing the Water
16 Department to cut costs, innovate, and find other sources,
17 we have to demand it and ask our elected officials, as I
18 am doing, to join us in fighting this outrageous proposal.
19 Council has said there's money. We all know there's
20 money. We all know the Water Department has not issued a
21 single cost-saving strategy, and we should demand that
22 they do so before they ask for a rate increase.

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you finished?

24 MR. HAVER: Yes, I'm finished.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you. Okay.
2 Let me give you a brief overview of the process. The Rate
3 Board's regulations provide that the Rate Board's review
4 of this department's filing has to be completed within 120
5 days from the date of the formal notice, which is the
6 filing that contained all the statements and the exhibits
7 and documents relating to the proposed rates and charges.

8 Now, this filing contains a substantial amount
9 of documents, like I said, statements, exhibits,
10 documents, all kinds of things. But it's all posted at
11 the Rate Board's website, and it's listed under the formal
12 notice tab. The other participants are using this time to
13 examine that filing, and they have been engaged in asking
14 questions for the company, requiring the company to
15 support its request.

16 That's listed under discovery, and that contains
17 information requests that have been sent by participants
18 such as the Public Advocate to the Water Department and
19 asking for further information and further support. Those
20 questions and the answers are provided on the website. So
21 if you want to take a look, feel free.

22 After that process, the Public Advocate and the
23 other non-Water Department participants will file their
24 own testimony with their own recommendations as to what

1 should be done with respect to the proposed rates and
2 charges. That will contain their opinion about should
3 there be an increase, and if so, how much should that
4 increase be? Then everybody has a chance to respond to
5 everybody else's testimony with another round of
6 testimony. What are called technical hearings on that
7 written testimony will be held between May 2nd and May
8 5th.

9 Each side will present its witness and experts
10 for cross-examination and on-the-record proceedings. The
11 actual dates will be posted on the Rate Board's website,
12 and those hearings will be conducted virtually. You are
13 welcome to attend or observe, I guess, as it may be.

14 Now, after those hearings, each participant has
15 the opportunity to file a written summary of its position
16 called a brief. I expect that my report containing my
17 recommendation as to the proposals, and I do want to make
18 it clear that the company does have -- the Rate
19 Department, excuse me -- has an opportunity to amend its
20 filing in response to testimony that may be filed by the
21 participants. So, whatever the final positions of the
22 participants are, I will review them and make a
23 recommendation in a written report that I hope will be
24 issued by mid to late May.

1 Then the Rate Board will consider that report as
2 well as the other -- I'm sorry, let me back up. After I
3 do my report, the participants will have an opportunity to
4 comment on that, and then the Rate Board will consider my
5 report and the other the participants submissions. And it
6 will decide this case probably mid -- early to mid-June,
7 and hopefully with a final order by June 21st.

8 As I stated earlier, every order, every document
9 produced in this case is at the Rate Board's website under
10 the 2023 General Rate Proceeding tab.

11 Now, with respect to this hearing, first, thank
12 you so much for taking the time to attend this. I can't
13 express how important it is for the Rate Board to hear
14 directly from you because you are the ones who are
15 directly affected by the Rate Board's decision.

16 Sometimes in the rate making process, we tend to
17 talk about the rate -- ratepayers or the rates as classes.
18 We forget that sometimes the class is made up of actual,
19 real people who have real lives. That's why it's very
20 important to put a face to you and realize that the impact
21 of the Board's decision has an impact on people's actual
22 lives. Water is a necessary service. We all know that.
23 And it's important to understand what the impact of these
24 decisions will be.

1 The Rate Board's regulations require that these
2 public hearings be held early in the process so that the
3 participants have an opportunity to consider the testimony
4 produced here and reflect it in their -- in the testimony
5 that they file.

6 Now, in terms of how I will conduct this
7 hearing, I will call on people who have registered. If
8 you have not registered and want to comment, that's fine.
9 You can either -- we'll get to you today if there's time.
10 If not, there's another session scheduled at 6:00 this
11 evening. Everyone will have a chance to make a statement
12 if they wish, or you can send a letter or an email to the
13 Rate Board.

14 We've received numerous, I guess, well over 30
15 at this point, whereas of a couple of days ago. I'm not
16 sure where we are now. And again, they are all posted
17 also. And I can also assure you that I read each and
18 every one of them.

19 When it is your turn, I will call your name and
20 Steven will unmute your microphone or telephone. I will
21 ask your name, if you're a customer of the Water
22 Department, and if you are appearing on behalf of a group
23 or not. Please confine your remarks to the issue in this
24 proceeding, which are the proposed rates.

1 If you have an individual billing or other
2 problem, that's fine. We can direct you to either a
3 breakout room or you can contact somebody from the Water
4 Department directly and to see if we can get -- and see if
5 we can get your issue resolved. But as Mr. Abrams said,
6 don't give us any personal information on the public
7 record concerning your account. Wait and talk to the
8 company directly or the Public Advocate. They also have
9 resources that can help.

10 If you have a question about the rate proceeding
11 and we can answer it briefly, we will. Otherwise, Mr.
12 Dasent or Mr. Shultz will get back to you or Mr. Ballenger
13 from the Public Advocate's office. They can provide
14 additional information if you would like that.

15 Now, if you haven't registered and want to make
16 a statement, please raise your hand, and we will get to
17 you. Now, to raise your hand in Zoom, look for a hand on
18 the bar that contains the Zoom control. So my computer,
19 which is a desktop, it's on the bottom, and it says
20 reactions. And if you go on reactions, you get some hand
21 signals, and one of them would be a raised hand. Now, I'm
22 not sure what device you're using, but there must be
23 something similar.

24 If you're participating telephonically, you can

1 raise your hand by hitting the star button and then nine.
2 Now that will raise your hand. Now, I'm not going to
3 impose a time limit because -- unless it looks like we
4 really don't have enough time to finish and get to
5 everybody, but please be respectful of other people.

6 After your statement, I will ask the
7 participants if they have any clarifying questions for
8 you. Now, these questions are to clarify or perhaps
9 provide help to you if you've identified a problem. But
10 this is not cross-examination, and it's not for the
11 purpose of putting you on the spot. After you're done,
12 you're welcome to stay but you certainly don't have to.

13 Now, before we get to hearing from you, I have a
14 couple of comments that I would like to make. While the
15 primary reason for having these public hearings, of
16 course, is to hear from you, there's a secondary reason,
17 and that's to make sure you understand the process and
18 have confidence in it. I want you to feel comfortable
19 that the company's filing is being scrutinized very
20 carefully and everybody's arguments are going to be
21 thoroughly examined.

22 The fact that a spreadsheet is used to calculate
23 the revenue impact doesn't mean that issues can't be
24 raised by any party. I expect them to be raised in the

1 testimony and they'll be considered. But the spreadsheet
2 is just a device to calculate the numbers, and nobody has
3 to use it. The Rate Board is required to use it to do its
4 calculations in terms of coming up with the final numbers,
5 but a participant does not have to.

6 Now, one of the other issues I wanted to bring
7 up was the role of the Public Advocate. And it's
8 absolutely correct that you, the public, are not clients
9 of CLS, which has been retained -- which is acting as the
10 Public Advocate in this case. They're not your lawyers,
11 and you're not their clients. That's a whole different
12 type of relationship. What they are is your advocate.
13 That's why the term is Public Advocate. That's why in PEC
14 hearings, the offices that were referenced by Ms. Price
15 are the Office of Small Business Advocate, the Office of
16 Consumer Advocate. There is no legal relationship.

17 Being a client of a lawyer is a whole -- has
18 obligations and responsibilities that are something
19 completely separate. What has been done here, CLS has
20 been hired to act as the Public Advocate in terms of
21 representing the interest of the public as a group, and
22 that is what they are charged with doing.

23 Now, another thing I wanted to mention is me.
24 Why was I retained by the Rate Board? Well, I want to

1 assure you that I do have the qualifications to hear this
2 case and make competent recommendations. I have a quarter
3 of a century experience as an Administrative Law Judge for
4 the Public Utility Commission. In that capacity, I heard
5 hundreds of rate cases, different utilities around the
6 state. That's a quarter of a century where I have been
7 dealing with these types of issues and balancing the
8 competing public interest involved.

9 There is -- prior to that, I had 10 years of
10 experience directly involved in the -- in the utility
11 process -- the regulatory utility process. I was an
12 assistant counsel in the law bureau representing the
13 public interest for, I don't know, maybe eight or nine
14 years. I was an assistant consumer advocate in the Office
15 of Consumer Advocate for several years, representing the
16 interest of the residential ratepayers.

17 And after I retired from the Public Utility
18 Commission, they asked me to stay on for a year and work
19 on the backlog of customer complaints that they had. Now,
20 I heard literally thousands of customer complaint cases in
21 my career as a PUC ALJ. A lot of them involved ability-
22 to-pay. Now, when I was asked to stay on and clear up the
23 backlog, they were all ability-to-pay cases. And most of
24 my work has been in Philadelphia because that's where I'm

1 located.

2 So I'm very, very familiar with the difficulties
3 faced by residents of Philadelphia, I really am. And I
4 can tell you it's heartbreaking to hear a lot of these
5 cases. There's a difference between people who are
6 willing to pay for their service and people who are not.
7 There's an ability to pay and there's a willingness to
8 pay. And the hardest cases are where people want to pay
9 and can't.

10 And that brings me to my final point, which is I
11 don't want you to think of this as an adversarial process
12 because it isn't. The customers and the company, they
13 want the same thing, which is decent, safe, adequate
14 service at affordable rates. Now exactly where that is,
15 is what we're looking at.

16 But you're on two sides of a river and the way
17 that I visualize it is you meet on a bridge. Because I
18 can tell customers that from my experience, utilities
19 don't want to have rates so high their customers can't pay
20 it. They don't want to have to spend their time on
21 collections. They'd rather go after the people who won't
22 pay but can. And customers, you want to be sure that the
23 Water Department has sufficient resources to give you the
24 service you deserve of this essential resource which is

1 safe, adequate service.

2 I think we've seen other situations where, for
3 whatever reasons, people weren't given safe water service,
4 and we see the impact it has. So anyway, I just wanted to
5 ask everybody to kind of keep that in mind that this
6 really isn't adversarial. We all want the same thing,
7 which is to get to that spot where everybody's interests
8 are advanced.

9 And again, I will repeat, this is not a legal
10 process. It's not even a quasi-legal process the way the
11 PUC does it. We've tried to make this as informal, and
12 welcoming, and open as possible. You'll notice that I
13 refer to participants, not parties. Testimony is not
14 sworn, so please feel free to contribute, and please feel
15 free to update your understanding of where this case is
16 going.

17 And I know everybody's got lives, and I know
18 time is always -- always an issue. But if you have a few
19 minutes and want to see what's going on in the case, go to
20 the Rate Board website. And I'll give you the address for
21 that, which is [www.phila.gov/departments/water-sewer-](http://www.phila.gov/departments/water-sewer-stormwater-rate-board)
22 [stormwater-rate-board](http://www.phila.gov/departments/water-sewer-stormwater-rate-board). Actually, it's easier probably
23 just to google it. Okay. But that's the rate side.

24 And if you have any questions about anything or

1 you have concerns, look at the documents themselves and
2 the orders, and you can make your own mind up. Okay?
3 Sorry for going on, but I do want to take the opportunity
4 here, since you're here, to express my thoughts.

5 Okay. Now, let's go on to why we're here, which
6 is hearing from people in the audience. I note that there
7 are -- let me see -- were -- okay.

8 MR. LIANG: There were four people that raised
9 their hands. I --

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: But I'm looking at
11 the list, and the person who had signed up was Deborah
12 Paul (phonetic). Is she here? I don't see her name.

13 Deborah Paul, are you there? Okay.

14 Then, Steven, do you have, like, an order of
15 people?

16 MR. LIANG: Yes. First person is Tammy.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Tammy?

18 MR. LIANG: Yes.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

20 MS. WOODS: Hi there. Thank you.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Hold on a second.

22 Hold on a second. Let's get some preliminaries first.

23 Could you please give and spell your name for the record?

24 MS. WOODS: Oh, I thought you could see it.

1 T-A-M-M-Y.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And your last name?

3 MS. WOODS: Is that necessary?

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes.

5 MS. WOODS: W-O-O-D-S.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. And are you a
7 customer of the Philadelphia Water Department?

8 MS. WOODS: Yes. Yes, I am.

9 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are you appearing
10 on behalf of a group or for yourself?

11 MS. WOODS: Well, I -- both. It's for the City
12 of Philly. I mean -- I mean, I feel it's for everybody
13 that pays water as a citizen here in Philly. I don't know
14 how to respond to that. Is that correct?

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well, I was more
16 specific if you're appearing on behalf of like an
17 organized group or a union or --

18 MS. WOODS: No. No, no, no, no.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I just wanted to make
20 sure if you were --

21 MS. WOODS: Just as a resident -- as a resident
22 here.

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yeah, that's fine.
24 Go ahead, then, please.

1 MS. WOODS: Okay. I only have one thing to say
2 that I'm very disturbed about, and I don't even know --
3 because half of my circle of friends and family didn't
4 even know because they pay online, and they don't have a
5 hard copy of their bill anymore, like the old school days.
6 But long story short, I want to know why they charge
7 stormwater, and I feel that they should get rid of that.
8 That would save almost \$20 a month. That's a lot.

9 So they've been doing that for, I think, close
10 to 10 years, or you could tell me how -- someone can tell
11 me. But if they alleviate -- get rid of the stormwater
12 fee that I don't know if anyone -- because it's not usage
13 fee. It's not usage. It's a stormwater fee that they
14 didn't have since I've been alive on this Earth. And I
15 feel that they should get rid of that because that would
16 save residents almost \$20, close to \$20 a month. And
17 that's how I feel. I'm disgusted about that.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Mr. Shultz, do
19 you want to give a brief response to why the stormwater
20 charge is there?

21 MS. WOODS: Excuse me. Just one more question.

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.

23 MS. WOODS: They didn't have it all our lives,
24 and it's not usage, and why should we pay a fee to water

1 running down the side of the building through a drain?

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Mr. Shultz can
3 explain to you why that charge is there, okay?

4 MS. WOODS: Okay.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Because you're right.
6 It's not -- I've been here forever.

7 MS. WOODS: I just -- well, I just want to know
8 -- I just want to know also why all of a sudden, after
9 centuries, did they add that bill? Thank you.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure. Mr. Shultz, do
11 you want to explain or maybe Ms. Price? Probably Mr.
12 Shultz.

13 MR. SHULTZ: I'll try to go briefly, and Ms.
14 Price or others can supplement if I misspeak. So you are
15 correct, you know, that stormwater tends to go into
16 drains, and there's costs related to maintaining those
17 drains and getting that stormwater away from where it's
18 fallen on your property, someplace where it can be picked
19 up correctly and handled.

20 Those costs have been treated in different ways
21 over the last century, and in an effort of transparency,
22 the stormwater costs have been separated from other costs.
23 It now appears a line item on the bill and represents the
24 cost that the department incurs in helping get rid of

1 stormwater from the various properties and to take care of
2 it.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Price, did you
4 want to add something to that?

5 MS. PRICE: No. Actually, I don't think so.
6 But I just really appreciate -- I appreciate you for
7 testifying today. Thank you.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Tammy, you understand
9 that really it's just breaking out costs -- the way I
10 understand it, because this is before my time --

11 MS. WOODS: No. It's -- to me, it's just
12 another way to receive funds as well.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. You were
14 paying for this -- for this before, but now it's been
15 separated out, is the way I understand it.

16 MS. WOODS: No. It's -- to me, it's more money.
17 It's more than what the average bill used to be, because I
18 think it's \$15 to \$18 a month or something like that more.
19 So it's -- and I was wondering, the advocate, the one I
20 forget her name that just said thank -- would she be able
21 to put her information at the end or somewhere where I can
22 view it? So we can view it since she's an advocate. I
23 forget her name that was just on the screen.

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Price?

1 MS. WOODS: Yeah.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I think she needs to
3 get unmuted, but -- but absolutely. With respect to your
4 question, before we get to her -- before we get -- perhaps
5 if you'd like more explanation about the stormwater
6 charge, Mr. Shultz or Mr. Dasent could send you some
7 information if you'd like. Okay?

8 MS. WOODS: Well, I already talked to the
9 department twice in the past year and actually one of --
10 actually, they actually added to renters fee. Like,
11 someone who rents should not be liable for that fee
12 because it's not the usage. So that's another issue. It
13 should -- it's only for someone who owns property. To
14 that gentleman that just spoke, I forget his name as well,
15 but I mean -- there's always been --

16 (CROSSTALK.)

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms. Price could give
18 -- could give you her information, and you could talk
19 directly with her at some point, or her office.

20 MS. PRICE: Yeah. So mentioned earlier, and I
21 think Steven put it in the chat as well. You can reach
22 out to all of us at publicadvocate@clsphila.org or the
23 number is (215)227-9988. You can leave us a voicemail,
24 and we'll get back to you.

1 MS. WOODS: 277 what?

2 MS. PRICE: 227-9988.

3 MS. WOODS: Are you saying 277 or 22?

4 MS. PRICE: 227.

5 MS. WOODS: And then what?

6 MS. PRICE: 9988.

7 MS. WOODS: Thank you very much.

8 MS. PRICE: Feel free to reach out to us.

9 MR. HAVER: I'd like to ask you a clarifying
10 question.

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well, I'm not sure if
12 she's finished here yet.

13 Are you finished?

14 MS. WOODS: Yes. Thank you. Because it doesn't
15 matter because they're going to make a bill, a bill
16 anyway, but thank you. I appreciate it. Thank you.

17 MR. HAVER: I would like to ask a clarifying
18 question.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.

20 MR. HAVER: Are you suggesting that the
21 stormwater costs should be paid for out of the tax rates
22 of the City rather than out of the individual water bill?

23 MS. WOODS: Me?

24 MR. HAVER: Yes. Are you saying that --

1 MS. WOODS: I don't think -- I don't -- what I'm
2 saying is I've read about it, and people haven't read
3 about it. There shouldn't be any fee, because I know
4 people that live in other states that don't have that fee.
5 It's ridiculous to be charged for water that goes under
6 wherever it goes. I mean --

7 MR. HAVER: If there is -- if there is any cost
8 for processing that water, are you suggesting it should be
9 the responsibility of the City and not the responsibility
10 of the individual homeowner or ratepayer?

11 MS. WOODS: Or whoever is wealthier than me,
12 yes. Okay?

13 MR. HAVER: Thank you.

14 MS. WOODS: Absolutely. Because that would
15 bring down the cost of the water bill, period mark.

16 MR. HAVER: Thank you for your time.

17 MS. WOODS: Thank you.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Thank you very
19 much, Tammy. We appreciate your comments.

20 MS. WOODS: I appreciate it. Thank you so much.
21 Thank you.

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And again, reach out
23 to the Public Advocate or the company --

24 MS. WOODS: Yeah. I have her --

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: -- for further
2 concerns about your bill.

3 MS. WOODS: Thank you. I appreciate that.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: They can help you
5 with that.

6 MS. WOODS: Thank you.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure. There were
8 people who signed up to speak but didn't specify when, so
9 it occurs to me that maybe I should go through that list
10 to see if any of these people are here. One is Aaron
11 Horton (phonetic). Another is Kathy Bennet (phonetic).
12 Jennie Dennis (phonetic). Ninian Hibbert (phonetic).
13 Okay. Then we'll go to people raising their hands.

14 Steven?

15 MR. LIANG: Is Harvey --

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm sorry. Where are
17 we?

18 MR. LIANG: Harvey and Jen Chanin.

19 MR. CHANIN: Just Harvey. Thank you.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

21 MR. CHANIN: Appreciate it. Although my better
22 half is sitting next to me. She told me to say it. I'll
23 be speaking today. Thank you very much.

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Could you

1 please spell your name for the record?

2 MR. CHANIN: Sure. H-A-R-V-E-Y. Chanin, C-H-A-
3 N-I-N.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are you a
5 customer of the Philadelphia Water Department?

6 MR. CHANIN: Yes. My entire life, yes.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are you speaking
8 on behalf of a group or for yourself?

9 MR. CHANIN: Well, I am speaking for all of the
10 children and their families that I've had the good fortune
11 of working with as a teacher and a counselor in the
12 last -- for 30 years. So, yeah, I'm speaking for them
13 mostly.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Go ahead, Mr.
15 Chanin.

16 MR. CHANIN: All right. Thank you so much.
17 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this
18 afternoon. I am a retired Philadelphia School District
19 teacher and counselor who has lived in Philly my entire
20 life. I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact
21 rising utility rates, water, electric, and gas have on the
22 quality of life of the low-income children and their
23 families I have had the pleasure to work with for 30 years
24 in Philly.

1 Water rate increases of approximately 21 1/2
2 percent in the City, with a poverty rate of approximately
3 23 percent, in addition to inflationary pressures and
4 deteriorating safety net programs, will further harm most
5 Philadelphia families. Philly ranks among the nation's 10
6 neediest cities. One in five Philadelphia residents,
7 disproportionately black and Latino households have had
8 their water disconnected at least once since 2012 as a
9 result of falling behind on their water payments.

10 Pandemic safety net programs that have kept low-
11 income Philadelphians out of poverty have ended or will
12 terminate in the near future, such as the child tax
13 credit, unemployment insurance, and cuts in SNAP. In
14 addition, fast rising prices for gas, food, and most
15 everything else is hitting low-income households the
16 hardest.

17 Federal interest rate hikes make it harder to
18 borrow money or get credit. As household energy and clean
19 water uncertainty increases, young children are
20 experience (sic) an increase in reported poor health,
21 hospitalizations, and developmental risks. Economic
22 hardships contribute to chronic stress, mental health
23 disorders such as anxiety and depression.

24 PWD always outperforms its projections. In

1 2022, this meant higher than projected debt service
2 coverage and higher capital spending. Why didn't
3 PDW (sic) save all its unanticipated net revenues instead
4 of spending them? Why isn't the City helping PWD using
5 ARPA funds to prevent a need for rate increases? Finally,
6 participation rates in PWD's assistance program have not
7 gone up enough.

8 What is the City doing to help? That's it. Thank
9 you so much. I appreciate it.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well, you raised a
11 lot of very good questions.

12 MR. CHANIN: Thank you.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Not sure they're
14 really capable of being answered here and now, but would
15 you like a response to them?

16 MR. CHANIN: I do.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: All right, then.
18 Either the Public Advocate or the Water Department, I
19 expect to respond to Mr. Chanin with a response to his --
20 to the questions that he's raised.

21 Ms. Price, is that okay? You can nod.

22 MS. PRICE: I mean, I would just say, you know,
23 thank you for your testimony, and I think those are good
24 questions that we hope to explore in the -- with our

1 experts in the upcoming expert testimony.

2 MR. CHANIN: Okay.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Shultz?

4 MR. SHULTZ: I agree. They're very good
5 questions, and I think they're being explored at the
6 proceeding as we're going forward.

7 MR. CHANIN: Thank you.

8 MR. HAVER: I'd like to ask some clarifying
9 questions. Mr. Chanin, are you saying that you would
10 rather see the Water Department cut costs as opposed to
11 raising rates?

12 MR. CHANIN: Yes. I would --

13 MR. HAVER: Are you saying that you would rather
14 see the Water Department withdraw the rate increase and
15 try and get money from the state, federal, and local
16 government rather than raise rates?

17 MR. CHANIN: Yes.

18 MR. HAVER: Are you saying that you believe the
19 Water Department should look to move its headquarters out
20 of Center City and combine services with PGW so it can
21 save rates, save money, and save -- and make the rate
22 increase unnecessary?

23 MR. CHANIN: That would be most helpful, yes.

24 MR. HAVER: Thank you.

1 MR. CHANIN: You're welcome.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. I'm not even
3 going to get into that, but okay. Thank you very much,
4 Mr. Chanin.

5 MR. CHANIN: Thank you.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Steven, do you have
7 somebody who's next?

8 MR. LIANG: Next would be, Qiana Shedrick,
9 please?

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Because I see there's
11 a telephone caller with a hand up, too.

12 MR. LIANG: Yes.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm sorry. Where are
14 we now?

15 MR. LIANG: Qiana Shedrick.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Where is -- oh,
17 sorry.

18 MS. SHEDRICK: Yes, good afternoon. I'm here.
19 Can you hear me?

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I can. I can.
21 Sorry, I had trouble finding you. First off, could you
22 please give and spell your name for the record?

23 MS. SHEDRICK: Sure. Qiana, that's Q-I-A-N-A.
24 Last name Shedrick, S-H-E-D-R-I-C-K.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And, Ms. Shedrick,
2 are you a customer of the Philadelphia Water Department?

3 MS. SHEDRICK: I am.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you appearing on
5 behalf of any group or organization?

6 MS. SHEDRICK: Myself and my neighbors.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. That's fine.

8 MS. SHEDRICK: Okay, great. Thank you.

9 So my name is Qiana Shedrick, and I'm a
10 community agent for change in my upper North Philadelphia
11 community, specifically the 11th Ward. I'm currently
12 running -- I'm sorry -- I'm currently running third on the
13 ballot for City Council at-large, and I wanted to speak
14 during today's hearing on behalf of myself and my
15 neighbors.

16 Currently, there's more than 50,000 residents in
17 Philadelphia that are eligible for water shut off. And
18 last year, the City instituted what they believed to be
19 more protections for residents. However, when you ask
20 those on the front lines, it caused greater issues.

21 Last year, the shut off limit was raised to
22 \$1,000, and the restoration fee was raised to about \$105.
23 If a person falls behind on their bills, they have to pay
24 at least half the restoration fee. And if a resident

1 isn't already able to afford the water bill, how would one
2 be expected to pay the restoration fee? And this is
3 nearly about 100 percent increase from the previous year's
4 restoration fee, which was about \$60.

5 Also, last year, the Water Department and
6 Philadelphia residents benefited from COVID relief in
7 terms of certain grants. And I was wondering if the Water
8 Department and other water utilities have requested more
9 state and federal funding so residents can gain and
10 receive these grants to assist them with these increasing
11 rates?

12 And lastly, from my understanding, the Water
13 Department's offices are currently under renovation. And
14 I was wondering if there's been any internal budget cuts
15 to reduce the cost for Philly residents, which actually
16 includes Philadelphia residents? So I do believe that
17 Philly's infrastructure needs improving. However, with
18 the increasing costs everywhere around us nationwide,
19 literally, how does the Water Department believe that this
20 is the best time to increase rates to the residents is my
21 general question?

22 I just wanted to thank you today for giving a
23 platform for residents to speak and be heard and ask
24 questions. And thank you.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you, Ms.
2 Shedrick. I think you do raise good points that really do
3 affect everybody. Does anybody have any questions or
4 questions for Ms. Shedrick?

5 MR. HAVER: I'd like to ask Ms. Shedrick, are
6 you satisfied with the response to the question about
7 office renovations? Because I didn't hear anyone answer
8 that question. I thought you asked, are they currently
9 renovating their offices?

10 MS. SHEDRICK: Yeah. I didn't hear a response
11 to that, and I heard there was a question or suggestion
12 about co-locating, so I thought there was some synergy
13 there.

14 MR. HAVER: All right. But would you like your
15 --

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Is your question, are
17 they renovating their office?

18 MR. HAVER: That was her question, yes.

19 MS. SHEDRICK: Yes. Well, I understand that the
20 offices are currently under renovation, and I was
21 wondering if there's been internal budget cuts to reduce
22 the cost, or, you know, how are those renovations being
23 paid for?

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Mr. Shultz,

1 maybe you could prepare a response for Ms. Shedrick about
2 that, and get back to her?

3 MR. HAVER: Couldn't we hear today whether they
4 --

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm not sure he's in
6 a position -- if he can answer, sure.

7 MR. HAVER: Are the offices being renovated?

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm not sure he's
9 able to answer that. Mr. -- can you, Mr. Shultz?

10 MR. SHULTZ: I do not know the answer to that
11 specific question.

12 MR. HAVER: And Mr. Dasent doesn't know either?
13 And no one from the Water Department who's on this hearing
14 knows?

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well, that wasn't the
16 purpose of this hearing. It was to hear from people about
17 their -- their pending rate increase.

18 MR. HAVER: She asked a question.

19 (CROSSTALK.)

20 MR. DASENT: We can provide that answer.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Stop. Mr. Haver,
22 please don't interrupt me. Okay? The court reporter
23 can't take down more than one person speaking at a time.

24 Now, to get a response to your question, which I

1 think requires a little bit of work. But that's a
2 legitimate question, obviously.

3 MS. SHEDRICK: Mm-hmm.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: How about if Mr.
5 Shultz or Mr. Dasent gets back to you?

6 MR. DASENT: We will provide an answer.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.

8 MS. SHEDRICK: Right. Just thinking that these
9 are basic questions that we should have the answers to,
10 that the people should have the answers to, and just at a
11 city level looking, you know, we need to get to the bottom
12 of what's happening with our agencies and make sure that
13 there's transparency and clarity there. So thank you for
14 your time.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you. Okay.
16 Steven?

17 MR. LIANG: Next is John.

18 MR. MOSSER: Hi. Good afternoon. My name is
19 John Mosser, M-O-S-S-E-R. I'll try to be as brief as
20 possible. Going back --

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Wait, wait. Let
22 me -- let me ask you a few questions first. Are you a
23 customer of the Philadelphia Water Department?

24 MR. MOSSER: Yes. Yes, I am a residential

1 customer. Okay?

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are you appearing
3 on behalf of a group or organization or for yourself?

4 MR. MOSSER: Just for myself.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you.

6 MR. MOSSER: And this is the first time I've
7 participate in something like this, in this nature.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you, Mr.
9 Mosser. Go ahead.

10 MR. MOSSER: First of all, going back to the
11 last issue of the offices being renovated, nobody from the
12 Water Department can tell if their offices are being
13 renovated, and yet they're attending this meeting? That
14 suggests to me that, A, they're working from home, and B,
15 if their offices are being renovated, why? If they're
16 working from home, then why? If they're working in the
17 office, they don't know that their own office is being
18 renovated? I find this appalling. Okay?

19 Going back, again -- I'll try to be brief. I
20 appreciate Mr. Lance Harper's (sic) statements and Mr.
21 Harvey's statements about customer service. And I'm,
22 what, the third person here in a matter of 60 minutes to
23 speak. We spent over 30 minutes with listening to who all
24 the participants were, and some of them took an exorbitant

1 amount of time. I think these limits -- there should be
2 limits on how long they should be able to speak -- to give
3 the people that are here time to express their views.

4 My concern is this, as a financial analyst for
5 the US Department of Homeland Security, I always felt that
6 rather than asking for more money was to live within our
7 means, live within our budget. And I will sit here and it
8 can be -- it's well documented that when I was in charge
9 of the fiscal budget for Homeland Security in the
10 Philadelphia area, I always came in under budget because
11 we found ways to cut money not to spend it, but to cut it.
12 And my question is this. What is the Water Department
13 doing to live within their budget, to cut expenses, to be
14 judiciary responsible? And that's all I have to say,
15 because I don't want to take up somebody else's time.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you. And I can
17 tell you that, that is something we look at in these
18 cases, is whether just because there's a claim for an
19 expense, maybe that isn't justified. Maybe, you know, I
20 don't want to get into too much, like, detail here, but we
21 are looking at the necessity for any kind of increase in
22 expense categories. But yes. Does anybody have any
23 questions for Mr. -- any clarifying questions for Mr.
24 Mosser?

1 MR. HAVER: I just want to assure you, sir, that
2 I will file -- follow up on your comments by filing a
3 formal discovery, asking specifically what cost savings
4 the Water Department has projected, and what cost savings
5 have they looked at and they've rejected, so we can get to
6 an understanding of your -- get to an understanding, so we
7 can answer your question.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Anybody else?

9 MR. DASENT: I just like to say that we'll
10 provide information concerning any repairs, renovations
11 going on in the building that is occupied by the Water
12 Department. And we do use low-cost loans and grants to
13 fund our capital expenditures as a way to cut borrowing
14 costs. And we're cutting spending in other areas as
15 indicated in the filing. And we're happy to answer any
16 other questions that Mr. Haver may have. Thanks.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Good.

18 MS. PRICE: And I just wanted to say that we
19 have -- if you look through the record, we have asked some
20 discovery, and there are some responses already regarding
21 cost savings. So if you do go to look at the formal
22 discovery. That is something that we're looking at as the
23 Public Advocate.

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay, Mr. Mosser?

1 MR. MOSSER: Yes. That's fine. I said my
2 piece. Thank you.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank you. Okay.
4 Steven?

5 MR. LIANG: Next is William Phillips, but it
6 doesn't look like he's still here.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: How about this phone
8 number?

9 MR. LIANG: Yes. The phone number was next
10 after Mr. Phillips.

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Oh, okay. Why don't
12 we find Mr. Phillips then?

13 MR. LIANG: I think he may have left.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

15 MR. LIANG: So I'm asking the phone number to
16 unmute.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Right. I think you
18 have to unmute yourself by hitting star -- what is it,
19 star six? Make sure I got this right. It's star six,
20 person with a phone number 1-267, etc., so then we can
21 hear you. 1(267)290-8588, if you'd like to unmute
22 yourself?

23 Okay. We'll give them a chance maybe to -- we
24 can come back to them when they are able to do that?

1 MR. LIANG: Okay.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay, Steven.

3 MR. LIANG: They were the last person on my
4 list.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Is who?

6 MR. LIANG: The phone number was the last person
7 on my list.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Oh, okay. Then is
9 there anybody else who hasn't spoken but wishes to make a
10 statement. Raise your hand, if you can. I don't see any
11 hands raised. How about Tammy? I think you've already
12 made a statement, but did you have something else you
13 wanted to say?

14 Steven --

15 MS. WOODS: Hi. May I just ask you, I didn't
16 hear your name or title -- position title, please?

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: My name is Marlane
18 Chestnut, C-H-E-S-T-N-U-T.

19 MS. WOODS: Marlane Chestnut?

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: M-A-R-L-A-N-E.

21 MS. WOODS: Oh, A-N-E, okay. Chestnut like
22 Chestnut Street?

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Like Chestnut Hill.

24 MS. WOODS: Oh, Chestnut Hill.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I wish.

2 MS. WOODS: I wish too. And what's your
3 position title?

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: My position is
5 Hearing Officer.

6 MS. WOODS: Oh, you're the Hearing Officer.
7 Which organization do you work for?

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: The Rate Board.

9 MS. WOODS: The what board?

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: The Water Rate Board
11 that makes the decision about the --

12 MS. WOODS: Oh, thank you very much.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Of course.

14 MS. WOODS: I appreciate it. That's it.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

16 MS. WOODS: Thank you.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.

18 I think at this point we'll just unmute anybody
19 and see if anybody wants to speak up to make sure that --

20 MR. RAZAK: I have a question.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.

22 MR. RAZAK: So the water rates are going up --

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Could you -- wait,
24 wait. Let me just clarify. Do you have a question, or do

1 you want to make a statement?

2 MR. RAZAK: I have a question.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

4 MR. RAZAK: Not a statement. So water rates are
5 going up and water sewer bills are going to go up. Are
6 they going to improve water quality for Philadelphia or
7 not?

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I don't know.

9 MR. RAZAK: The water is not good.

10 THE REPORTER: Can the court reporter ask who's
11 speaking?

12 MR. DASENT: Thank you.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yeah. Could you
14 please give your name for the court reporter?

15 MR. RAZAK: Sure. My name is Usman Razak. I'm
16 a resident of Philadelphia.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Can you spell that,
18 please?

19 MR. RAZAK: Sure. That is U-S-M-A-N. And the
20 last name is Razak, R-A-Z-A-K

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: R-E-Z-H-K?

22 MR. RAZAK: R as in Romeo, A as in apple, Z as
23 in zebra, A as in apple, K as a kite.

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Got it. Sorry. I'm

1 old -- you know.

2 MR. RAZAK: No, that's fine. There's nothing
3 wrong with it.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Razak, I'm not
5 sure if there is kind of a water quality issue where this
6 is, but maybe, maybe somebody has a response to that.

7 MR. ABRAMS: I'm happy to respond. I'll put in
8 the chat the link to our latest water quality report. But
9 the water quality standards in Philadelphia meet or exceed
10 all federal and state standards, and we're constantly
11 monitoring our water to assure that it meets and exceeds
12 those standards.

13 We're also investing -- continually investing in
14 our drinking water system, our conveyance distribution
15 system, and we're launching a 25-year plan, our water
16 revitalization plan, to reinvest in this critical
17 infrastructure. So there's quite a bit going on right
18 now, but I can assure you that we have very high-quality
19 water here in Philadelphia.

20 MR. RAZAK: Can I speak now?

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Of course.

22 MR. RAZAK: So you think you have a high quality
23 of the water? The water is coming from the tap. You
24 cannot drink. I have tested. I have sent a couple of

1 different companies, and they say you should not drink
2 water from your tap. And because of my health, even I
3 have an issue with my health because I cannot drink a
4 water from a tap. And I have to purchase it from outside.
5 And you're raising a water rate. Why you raising it? If
6 you're increasing the rates, you should be making an
7 improvement as a water quality. And you say it's a
8 standard. If this is a standard that a person cannot open
9 the tap and drink from it -- I don't believe so. This is
10 the standard of any country.

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr. Razak, do you
12 want your water tested?

13 MR. RAZAK: Yes, I have. I got about a month
14 ago, I got it tested from even a Home Depot. They have a
15 kit. You can send it to them, and I even got a call back
16 from them. They say you should not drink from your water.
17 You can even -- don't use it for your -- like, a -- for
18 washing your -- what is that called -- your stuff. Just
19 you should put some filter in. It is very hard water.
20 It's a -- not a -- have some kind of stuff in it. So I
21 got tested a couple of times.

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well, you know, the
23 Rate Board doesn't have any jurisdiction over the quality
24 of service that the Water Department provides. The Rate

1 Board really can only address the proposed rates. But it
2 seems to me that you have a water quality service issue.
3 So I would suggest that the company reach out to you
4 directly to see what they can do.

5 MR. DASENT: Yes, we'd be happy to.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Is that okay with
7 you, Mr. Razak?

8 MR. RAZAK: That's okay with me. And reason of
9 -- one more last question. Why the rates are going up?
10 Can I know that reason?

11 MR. DASENT: Sure. Your Honor, please?

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well...

13 MR. DASENT: One of the components of what we're
14 doing is to -- is because of the increase in chemical
15 costs. Chemical costs are used for water treatment, for
16 wastewater treatment. All the things that you're
17 interested in, in terms of improving water quality are
18 tied to some of the inflationary increases we must meet to
19 continue to provide good service for all customers. And
20 for you in particular, we'd like to reach out to make sure
21 your service is also not only adequate, but, you know, the
22 quality of service we expect for all our customers. Thank
23 you.

24 MR. RAZAK: I get it. Okay. So I will --

1 follow-up question. I get it. Like, you are raising up
2 because the costs went higher because of the inflation
3 high. So what about the person who have a low-income?
4 Are you guys doing anything for them? Because there's a
5 lot of people who have a low-income who can barely afford
6 this right now bill, and you are increasing up more higher
7 rates. Right now, everybody in inflation, everybody in a
8 bad zone, and you're raising the rates. How are we going
9 to afford it? Should we stop using water?

10 MR. DASENT: No. But we can reach out also to
11 deal with that particular issue in terms of our TAP
12 program, senior discount program, other programs that are
13 available that you may be eligible for, and we'd be happy
14 to make sure that you're acquainted with those also. And
15 if you check in the chat, you'll see my address, Andre
16 Dasent. You'll also see contact information for the Water
17 Revenue Bureau. And we'd be happy to answer your
18 questions.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And I think the
20 Public Advocate can direct you to other resources. I
21 don't want to speak for you, but they have other non-Water
22 Department resources that may be of benefit, so perhaps
23 they could reach out to you as well.

24 MR. RAZAK: I appreciate that. Thank you.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure. We'll go back
2 to that phone number, 1267. Okay. We can't hear you if
3 you don't unmute yourself, but okay.

4 Does anybody else have anything else, then,
5 before we adjourn until, until this evening? No? Okay.
6 Well, thank you, everybody. It was really a very useful
7 and productive session. I appreciate everybody taking the
8 time to share your thoughts with us. So --

9 MR. RAZAK: Should I leave my email, like, and
10 my phone number here, to somebody contact me? Excuse me.
11 I'm sorry for cutting you off.

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Can you -- can use
13 the chat to do that?

14 MR. RAZAK: Sure.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Do you want to do it
16 publicly? I mean...

17 MR. RAZAK: No. I can put it on the chat. It's
18 fine.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay. Why don't you
20 do that?

21 MR. RAZAK: Thank you.

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: But do it quickly
23 because I'm going -- we're going to wrap up here, and I
24 think the chat goes away once this is over.

1 MR. RAZAK: I just did it. Hopefully you guys
2 get it.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay? Everybody has
4 the information they need from the chat before we finish
5 here?

6 MR. DASENT: Got it.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay, then. Thank
8 you very much. And I'll see some of you, I guess, at 6:00
9 this evening. Have a nice afternoon.

10 (Hearing concluded at 4:13 p.m.)

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

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

STACY L. RAUB

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