

1 CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
2 WATER, SEWER & STORM WATER RATE BOARD

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8 IN RE: Philadelphia Water, Sewer and Storm
Water Rate Board Public Hearing

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10 DATE: Wednesday, April 23, 2025

11 LOCATION: Zoom Teleconference

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13 Reported by: Jill Piper

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Job No.: 52967

1 ATTENDANCE

2 MARLANE CHESTNUT, HEARING OFFICER

3 ROBERT BALLENGER, PUBLIC ADVOCATE

4 DELAND BRYANT, PANEL MEMBER

5 BROOKE DARLINGTON, CITY OF PHILADELPHIA WATER
REVENUE BUREAU

6
7 ANDRE DASENT, ATTORNEY FOR PHILADELPHIA WATER DEPT

8 ADRIANA GONZALEZ, ATTORNEY FOR CITY OF
PHILADELPHIA WATER REVENUE BUREAU

9 GLEN ABRAMS, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND ENGAGEMENT

10
11 NEAL SELLERS, ATTORNEY FOR PHILADELPHIA WATER DEPT

12 LANCE HAVER, PANEL MEMBER

13
14 MICHAEL SKIENDZIELEWSKI, PANEL MEMBER

15 ELLE S., CUSTOMER

16
17 CLARIBEL NUNEZ, CUSTOMER

18
19 ALEXA JOSAPHOUITCH, CUSTOMER

20
21 ANGIE CARRION, CUSTOMER

22
23 PASTOR ANDREW ANKAMAH, CUSTOMER

24

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2 PROCEEDINGS

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4 MR. BRYANT: I broke this letter so
5 I don't see anything. So I'm not really sure
6 Mr. Abrams is a panelist -- Oh, Andre's here,
7 okay. If there's someone I missed as a
8 panelist, please let me know, and I will give
9 them panelist's rights.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I don't
11 see anybody that I recognize that should be -
12 - okay. Before we actually get started, let
13 me -- let me mention that this is perhaps a
14 different version of Zoom than you may be
15 used to.

16 The Rate Board determined that we
17 needed a more robust security to deal with
18 potential disruption, so we're using this
19 Webinar version and participants are
20 classified as panelists or as attendees.
21 Panelists could be seen or heard as well as
22 speak, and attendees can hear but not be seen
23 or heard. I'll explain later what this means
24 in terms of people testifying, okay?

1 So let's get started. Good
2 afternoon, everybody. My name is -- thank
3 you so much for taking the time to attend
4 this public hearing being held to address the
5 Philadelphia Water Department request to
6 increase its rates for service.

7 My name is Marlane Chestnut, that's
8 M-A-R-L-A-N-E C-H-E-S-T-N-U-T. And I've been
9 selected by the Philadelphia Water, Sewer,
10 and Storm Water Rate Board to oversee the
11 hearing process and to write a recommendation
12 for the Rate Board to consider with respect
13 to this rate request.

14 The Rate Board's members, none of
15 whom are paid, are appointed by the Mayor and
16 approved by City Council to independently
17 review and set the rates charged for Water,
18 Sewer, and Storm Water service in
19 Philadelphia. There is a court reporter who
20 will produce a stenographic record of this
21 public hearing, so please be sure to speak
22 slowly and clearly.

23 The transcript for this hearing and
24 the other public and technical hearings, as

1 well as all the documents produced in this
2 proceeding, will be posted on the Rate
3 Board's website. Under the Rate proceedings
4 tab and the section that says, "2025 General
5 Rate Proceeding."

6 That's [phila.gov/departments/water-](http://phila.gov/departments/water-sewer-storm-water-rate-board)
7 [sewer-storm-water-rate-board](http://phila.gov/departments/water-sewer-storm-water-rate-board), or to make it
8 easier, you can Google it, just fill out
9 Water board, or you can hit phila dot gov,
10 and you'll get a search bar and it'll say
11 departments at the top of the screen, and you
12 can type sewer in the search bar. And then
13 choose the Rate proceedings tab.

14 As you're aware, on March 31st,
15 2025, the water department filed a formal
16 notice of intent to raise rates for water,
17 sewer, and storm water service in
18 Philadelphia, on September 1st, 2025, and
19 again on September 1st, 2026.

20 The amount of the increase for
21 individual customers varies with your usage.
22 But if the water department is permitted to
23 recover all of its requested increase, and
24 for a typical customer not receiving the

1 senior discount, or other discounts for
2 service, it is projected that the monthly
3 bill will increase from approximately \$82 to
4 \$91 in September 2025, and then from \$91 to
5 approximately \$97 per month, in September
6 2026.

7 At this point, the participants to
8 the proceeding are the water department, the
9 water revenue bureau, which is a part of the
10 City's department of revenue which does the
11 billing and collection for the water
12 department and also administers the
13 department's customer assistance programs. A
14 public advocate whose role is to represent
15 the interest of residential and small
16 commercial customers, a group of large
17 customers, and two individual customers.

18 We have had a pre-hearing
19 conference to address procedural issues and
20 to adopt a schedule. In May, we will have
21 what are called technical hearings to examine
22 the statements and exhibits submitted by the
23 participants, which I will consider and use
24 to develop my report containing my

1 recommendations for the Rate Board.

2 You're welcome to observe these
3 hearings. Links will be posted on the Rate
4 Board's website. The Rate Board will
5 consider my report as well as the positions
6 of the participants and make its decision in
7 July. Again, all transcripts and documents
8 are posted to the Rate Board's website under
9 the 2025 general rate proceeding tab.

10 In terms of how I will conduct this
11 hearing today, I will first call on people
12 who have registered. If you have not
13 registered and want to comment, that's fine.
14 We'll get to you.

15 Everyone will have a chance to make
16 a statement if they wish. Or you can send a
17 letter or a comment by email to the Rate
18 Board at waterrateboard at phila dot gov.
19 That's waterrateboard altogether with no
20 hyphens, no spaces, then the at symbol, then
21 P-H-I-L-A, dot G-O-V, anytime between now and
22 the close of the record on May 28th.

23 We will post all these email
24 comments on letters of the 2025 general rate

1 proceeding tab. I can assure you that the
2 written comments as well as the oral comments
3 given today, will be included in the record
4 of this proceeding and will be considered by
5 me and the Rate Board.

6 When it is your turn, Deland will
7 change your status from attendee to panelist.
8 This means you can be seen as well as heard.
9 You need to accept that, and Deland will
10 change your status, and he will unmute your
11 telephone or microphone. Please be aware
12 that there is the build delay for that to
13 happen, so please be patient.

14 I will ask your name and if you are
15 a customer of the Philadelphia water
16 department. Please try to confine your
17 remarks to the subject of this proceeding,
18 which is the rates proposed for fiscal year
19 2026 and fiscal year 2027.

20 If you have a question about the
21 proposed rates, if we can answer it briefly,
22 we will. Otherwise, someone will get back to
23 you with additional information. If you have
24 a service or other individual billing issue,

1 please contact the department or the public
2 advocate directly and I'll ask them to
3 provide the information for you to do so.

4 After your statement, you may be
5 asked brief questions for the purpose of
6 clarification by me or any of their
7 participants here. If you have not
8 registered and want to make a statement,
9 raise your hand and we'll get to you. To
10 raise your hand, look for a hand on the bar
11 that contains the zoom controls for
12 reactions, and select a raised hand. If you
13 are participating by telephone, by dialing
14 in, hit the store button, then the number
15 nine to raise your hand.

16 I won't impose a time limit at this
17 point, but please try to limit yourself to no
18 more than five minutes to ensure that we do
19 hear from everyone. After you're done,
20 you're welcome to stay, but you certainly
21 don't have to. You're free to leave at any
22 time.

23 And I should add that we will not
24 tolerate disruptive behavior. Although I'm

1 sure nobody here will do that. But please be
2 advised that if you do, we will not hesitate
3 to block you visually or mute you, if
4 necessary.

5 Again, thank you for taking the
6 time to participate today, especially when
7 it's such a beautiful day outside. I also
8 want to thank the customers who took their
9 time to send their comments by letter or
10 email. I assure you that every one of these
11 is read, and it is important that the Rate
12 Board hear directly from you, the people who
13 will be directly affected by any change in
14 rates.

15 Now before hearing from the members
16 of the public, I'll ask the water department,
17 the public advocate, and any formal
18 participant who wishes to do so -- to
19 introduce themselves to you. And to make a
20 very brief statement concerning their, their
21 interest in this proceeding.

22 After that, I would ask if there
23 are any public officials here who wish to
24 make a comment, and then I will open this

1 hearing to members of the public. Okay.

2 Then I guess we'll start from hearing from
3 the water department, Ms. Darlington.

4 MS. DARLINGTON: Good afternoon,
5 Madam Hearing Officer, and good afternoon to
6 all the attendees today. My name is Brooke
7 Darlington. I serve as outside counsel of
8 the water revenue bureau, which as the
9 hearing officer said, is a part of the
10 revenue department who handles the billing
11 and collection of revenue for the water
12 department.

13 Serving with me as counsel for
14 revenue bureau is Adriana Gonzalez, and for
15 the water department, Andre Dasent, and Neal
16 Sellers. Today there's also customer service
17 representatives available, so if you have an
18 individual issue, please let us know and we
19 can exchange your contact information so they
20 have time to fully address your issue now.

21 Now I'll turn it over to Glen
22 Abrams, who's the deputy commissioner for
23 communications and engagement for PWD to
24 explain more about the rate proceeding.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Before
2 you do that, why don't you provide some
3 contact information for the public. An email
4 address?

5 MR. DASENT: You are free to use
6 mine, Brooke. It's andre.c.dasent@gmail.com.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
8 I'm sure we'll be hearing that again.

9 MR. DASENT: Yes.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
11 Mr. Abrams?

12 MR. ABRAMS: My name is Glen
13 Abrams, and I serve as deputy commissioner of
14 communications and engagement for
15 Philadelphia Water Department.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm
17 having trouble hearing you.

18 MR. ABRAMS: Okay. I'll speak
19 louder. Can you hear me now?

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Vaguely.

21 MR. ABRAMS: All right. Well, I
22 will try to speak as loud as I can. Is this
23 a little bit better? I'll get closer to the
24 microphone too. So sorry that I'm very

1 zoomed in here. But again -- today, I'm
2 speaking on behalf of the department in this
3 proceeding.

4 We first want to thank you all for
5 joining the hearing to share your views about
6 the rate increase request that the water
7 department has filed with the Philadelphia
8 Water, Sewer and Storm Water Rate Board.

9 The water department provides
10 drinking water, sanitary sewer, and storm
11 water services to residential, commercial,
12 and institutional customers within the city.
13 These services are essential and the
14 foundation of public health in Philadelphia.

15 We recently requested an adjustment
16 in rates and charges so that we have
17 sufficient resources to continue currents and
18 plan programs and to pay for significantly
19 increasing operating costs in fiscal years
20 2026 and 2027.

21 Additional revenues are needed to
22 ensure that clean water is delivered as
23 safely and reliably as possible, and that
24 wastewater treatment and storm water

1 management services meet your needs and the
2 needs of our shared environment, while also
3 meeting our regulatory requirements.

4 The water department recognizes
5 that any increase in rates can be a hardship,
6 especially right now. But this increase is
7 necessary to maintain essential services and
8 address the department's current and plan
9 projects. The water department is not a for-
10 profit corporation, and your monthly water
11 bill supports the work we do, not the city
12 budgets or taxes.

13 We are engineers, laborers,
14 scientists, customer service representatives,
15 and most importantly, neighbors, and fellow
16 consumers of the water every Philadelphia
17 depends on. When we request higher rates, we
18 only request what we project will be needed
19 in the coming years, and we show our
20 customers why we are requesting these amounts
21 through this public rate setting process.

22 You can find a slide presentation
23 on the Rate Board website that helps explain
24 why a rate increase is necessary at this

1 time. Finally, we want you to know that
2 Philadelphia has a robust and comprehensive
3 customer assistance programs which help low
4 income customers pay their bills, including
5 the tiered assistance program or TAP, senior
6 citizen discount, and other programs that are
7 more flexible than ever.

8 If you are experiencing hardship,
9 we want to help. You can use one application
10 for TAP, the senior discount, or other
11 programs available to assist households.
12 These programs are accessible through our
13 website at www.phila.gov/waterbillhelp or by
14 calling 215-685-6300, Monday through Friday
15 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

16 And as we noted, if you have
17 specific billing questions or other service
18 issues that you would like assistance with,
19 we ask that you email Andre Dasent and I will
20 give you his email. It's
21 andre.c.dasent@gmail.com. I will spell that
22 out. A-N-D-R-E, dot, C, dot, D-A-S-E-N-T at
23 gmail dot com.

24 Now, the purpose of today's session

1 is to hear from you, our customers. We
2 appreciate you taking the time to share your
3 views with us today, and we look forward to
4 hearing from you. Thank you.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Let me
6 mention that the presentation that Mr. Abrams
7 mentioned as being posted at the Rate Board's
8 website can be found under the public
9 hearings tab. If you go to the 2025 general
10 rate proceeding, it can -- it's there. Okay.
11 Then we'll turn to the public advocate, Mr.
12 Ballenger.

13 MR. BALLENGER: Good afternoon.
14 Thank you, Madam Hearing Officer. My name is
15 Robert Ballenger, I'm an attorney at
16 Community Legal Services. CLS has been
17 appointed to serve as public advocate in this
18 rate proceeding. The public advocate's job
19 is to independently represent the interests
20 of residential and small commercial customers
21 in receiving water services at just and
22 reasonable rates.

23 I'll be very brief. We simply want
24 to encourage everyone here today to share

1 your concerns about the proposed rate
2 increases by speaking out. If you're
3 uncomfortable speaking today and want to
4 provide your input in writing to the board,
5 as the hearing officer said, it will be
6 considered.

7 If you'd like any more information
8 about the rate proceeding, you want to learn
9 more about our work as public advocate, or if
10 you would like assistance providing
11 information to the board.

12 We can be reached directly by phone
13 or by email, our phone number is 215-227-
14 9988, and we have a dedicated email address
15 for this purpose, it's public advocate, P-U-
16 B-L-I-C-A-D-V-O-C-A-T-E, at C-L-S-P-H-I-L-A
17 dot O-R-G. Please don't hesitate to get in
18 touch and we look forward to hearing from
19 members of the public participating here
20 today. Thank you.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank
22 you. Mr. Haver, did you want to make a brief
23 statement?

24 MR. HAVER: Yes. My name is Lance

1 Haver. I'm a participant, and I am sorry to
2 deliver bad news to everyone who is taking
3 their time this afternoon, but these hearings
4 are false. The last six rate increases have
5 been agreed to by the water department, and
6 the man you just heard from, who said he
7 independently reviews something.

8 They make the decision to settle
9 behind closed doors. Please don't be fooled
10 by the words of the water department or the
11 public advocate. The public advocate does
12 not represent you. It does not have a client
13 relationship with the public.

14 The Water Rate Board hires the
15 public advocate. And the public advocate
16 only answers to the Water Rate Board, no
17 matter how upset you may be with the public
18 advocate settling a case and giving the water
19 department rate increase, after rate
20 increase, after rate increase, after rate
21 increase, after rate increase.

22 Only the Water Rate Board can
23 remove the public advocate, the public has no
24 control over that. The water department is

1 hiding the size of the rate increase. They
2 have filed not one proceeding, but two. They
3 want to raise the base rates, and they want
4 to raise what they call a surcharge for the
5 TAP program, the low income program that is
6 desperately needed.

7 The rate increase is not what the
8 hearing examiners just told us, but it's a
9 combination of this year's rate increase for
10 the base rates, next year's increase for the
11 base rates, and the increase in what they
12 call the surcharge. It's a 20 percent
13 increase. The hearing examiner is misleading
14 you, as she has done year after year after
15 year after year. This is not one rate case,
16 this is rerate cases. This year, next year,
17 and the TAP rates.

18 Here is the game. The water
19 department always asks for more than what it
20 wants. It then hires lawyers and
21 consultants, and even a hearing examiner is
22 hired. Then they have hearings like this
23 where they make belief it matters what we
24 say. But of course, we have no control over

1 the settlement. Because then in secret,
2 after we have these hearings -- now they call
3 it private, they don't say it's secret, they
4 say it's private.

5 Mr. Ballenger and Mr. Dasent, the
6 lawyer for the water department, and the
7 lawyer who's appointed by the Water Rate
8 Board get together and settle the case.
9 They've done this one time, two time, three
10 times, four times, five times, six times,
11 every time they have done it. And the
12 hearing examiner has agreed to this one time,
13 two times, three times, four times, five
14 times, six times, every time.

15 The only way that this can be
16 stopped is by our City Council people getting
17 involved. Hearing examiner is not going to
18 do anything for us. The public advocate
19 doesn't represent us, and Mr. Dasent is just
20 plain dishonest when he doesn't talk about
21 the three rate increases that are happening
22 simultaneously.

23 If you want to see how little the
24 water department actually cares about us,

1 consider this. They have hired seven
2 separate consultants to make the argument
3 that rates are too low. Not a single one of
4 those consultants has been tasked with
5 finding ways to save money, to cut costs, to
6 save us money.

7 And there's a very easy solution,
8 really, this simple. Philadelphia Gas Work,
9 which is also municipally owned, which also
10 retains Mr. Dasent, and the water department
11 have water and gas meters 20 feet apart in
12 most row homes. Yet there's two meter
13 readers --

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
15 Mr. Haver --

16 MR. HAVER: You did not stop anyone
17 else. This is an example of how unfair you
18 are. You did not stop anyone else, I am not
19 --

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT:
21 (indiscernible).

22 MR. HAVER: I am not taking more
23 time. I am taking less time than the water
24 department took, and yet you are interfering

1 my ability to testify.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: No. I
3 just like you to keep in mind the purpose of
4 this --

5 MR. HAVER: You are interrupting
6 me. Once again, you are showing how biased
7 you are.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

9 MR. HAVER: You did not interrupt
10 the water department. You are interrupting
11 someone who is saying that these hearings are
12 a false. Because you don't want that
13 exposed. If they were concerned, if the
14 water department was concerned with us, they
15 would hire a consultant to find ways to save
16 money.

17 They'd undergo a management audit,
18 not a financial audit that's done by the
19 controller, but a management audit to save
20 monies, and they would combine services with
21 a municipally owned gas works. Why are there
22 two meter readers, two billings, and two
23 collections departments when both are owned
24 by the City?

1 If you're concerned about this rate
2 increase, if you care about the burden of
3 rate increase, after rate increase, after
4 rate increase, right to be here today. But
5 the real thing is to call your council
6 person. The city owns the water department.
7 People we elect to office are responsible for
8 its operations.

9 Don't be fooled into thinking this
10 is equitable or fair. We are not represented
11 and will be decided behind closed doors in
12 secret negotiations, which they will say are
13 private.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Are you
15 done?

16 MR. HAVER: I am finished.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank
18 you. Okay. Then I guess we will hear from
19 the customers. Deland, do you want to get
20 that started?

21 MR. BRYANT: Yes, Madam Hearing
22 Officer. No one has raised their hand to be
23 heard at this time. If you want to make
24 another announcement about it.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes. If
2 you'd like to be heard, please raise your
3 hand by looking at the reactions. And
4 selecting the raised hand button, or if you
5 are on a telephone calling, I guess that's
6 what -- star nine, so that we can recognize
7 you. Nobody did sign up to speak this
8 afternoon. So --

9 MR. BRYANT: Madam Hearing Officer,
10 I received no emails today, as of right now.
11 Currently there are no emails for
12 participation.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: We
14 didn't have people send comments, but nobody
15 indicated they did want to testify today. So
16 we'll wait a bit and see if there's somebody
17 who wants to say something. Deland, can you
18 keep an eye on that?

19 MR. BRYANT: Yes.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Or if
21 anybody has any questions about the rate
22 filing that we can answer, we're here. While
23 we're waiting, I will again urge you to look
24 at the Rate Board's website. Under the --

1 under the rate proceeding tab, and look for
2 2025, and all the documents are there.

3 MR. DASENT: Judge Chestnut, if I
4 may, the company will provide, or the
5 department will provide a list of steps that
6 we've taken for outreach for these
7 proceedings indicating social media, blogs,
8 email, traditional print media, flyers.

9 Every step that we've taken to
10 advertise these hearings, and notify the
11 public that they're taking place will be
12 documented for the record.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

14 MR. DASENT: I would imagine, that
15 Mr. Ballenger for the public advocate will do
16 something similar as we have done in prior
17 years.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay --

19 MR. BRYANT: Madam Hearing Officer,
20 Mr. Skiendzielewski is joined, I made him a
21 panelist, you can address him if you like.

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr.
23 Skiendzielewski, did you want to make a
24 statement or reintroduce yourself?

1 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: There we go.

2 Can you hear me?

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes.

4 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Not a whole
5 lot to say after Mr. Haver's clear and
6 pointed and factual presentation. I just --
7 it's just overwhelming that the public is
8 kept on the sidelines with all these
9 procedures.

10 But what I want to do is come back
11 to a most egregious and horrific set of
12 circumstances of what I shared with the board
13 over and over and over again, regarding
14 integrity, professionalism, honor -- really
15 corruption, with regard to the counsel to the
16 board, Daniel CantÃ°-Hertzler. He warned me -
17 -

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay --

19 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: He warned --
20 I'm talking -- I'm talking --

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr.
22 Skiendzielewski --

23 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: I'm talking -
24 -

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr.

2 Skiendzielewski. Did you confirm --

3 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: You are not
4 going to interrupt me.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well.

6 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: You don't
7 want me to do a first amendment stuff no
8 matter where it is in neighborhoods. I can -
9 - I can guarantee you that. Even though Mr.
10 Hertzler told me I can't do that. Okay?

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

12 Mr. Skiendzielewski --

13 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: If you want
14 to say -- I'm talking -- I'm talking. You --
15 (muted).

16 MR. BRYANT: Madam Hearing Officer,
17 I just muted him. I don't know --

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: No, no.
19 It's really -- I don't even know what to say.
20 This has been addressed numerous times. It's
21 not appropriate, and it's especially not
22 appropriate to have comments about someone by
23 name. That's the objectionable part.

24 I mean, if you wanted to complain

1 about your treatment by the City, that's
2 fine. But you can't make these baseless
3 accusations about someone that happened years
4 ago. I'll just -- it's just not appropriate.
5 And you know that, Mr. Skiendzielewski,
6 because we've been through this many, many
7 times.

8 Now, if you have a comment about
9 the rate case, that's fine. I'd be
10 interested to hear it. Although you do have
11 the opportunity to provide testimony, and I
12 hope you avail yourself of that. But please
13 don't misuse this public hearing.

14 I really -- I hope you, you would
15 know better. And I really trust you to know
16 how to behave. And please don't disappoint
17 me, okay? Try to -- you can unmute him, and
18 we'll see about it.

19 MR. BRYANT: He's unmuted -- he can
20 unmute himself. He's unmuted.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
22 Okay. Well, does anybody else -- Deland does
23 --

24 MR. BRYANT: There's one other --

1 there's one more person.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

3 MR. BRYANT: E. E-S-S, I will
4 promote.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

6 Mr. or Ms. Ess, are you there? Did you want
7 to make a statement?

8 MR. HAVER: Are you talking to me?

9 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm
10 talking -- no. I am talking to Mr. or Ms.
11 Ess, listed on my screen is Ese.Ess. Who I
12 assume wanted to make a statement.

13 MR. BRYANT: They are unmuted, but
14 they're not -- they're not speaking.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: They're
16 not responding?

17 MR. BRYANT: I will put them back
18 on hold.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

20 MR. BRYANT: And you have, Mr.
21 Skiendzielewski.

22 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Hello?

23 MR. BRYANT: Hello.

24 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Hello? Can

1 you hear me?

2 MR. BRYANT: Yes. I can hear you.

3 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Okay. So I'm
4 back. Speaking with the panelists here. Is
5 that correct?

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes.

7 MR. BRYANT: Correct.

8 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: I have
9 multiple -- in numerous times send clear,
10 convincing evidence that your board counsel
11 has violated my first amendment rights. And
12 you feel comfortable, okay, complacent with
13 the fact that he's advising you? With regard
14 to your conduct -- the board's conduct.
15 Okay.

16 This will -- this is going to go --
17 we will take it up with the Supreme Court
18 this week. I'll send this -- I'll send it
19 regarding your conduct and activity as well
20 as your counsel's conduct and activity. And
21 there's numerous other city officials and
22 attorneys who have integrity, responsibility,
23 who have done absolutely nothing. I'm not
24 even going to submit another recusal request,

1 because it's pointless.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

3 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: It has no
4 value to you. You don't care about
5 integrity. Thank you very much for allowing
6 me put this on the record.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr.
8 Skiendzielewski, we are here to listen to
9 members of the public, okay? You have
10 presented this many times, you have the
11 opportunity to do it again. But that's
12 really not why we're here. And --

13 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Yeah. I know
14 why you're here. To do the people
15 (indiscernible) they're bidding.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
17 Mr. Skiendzielewski, this really isn't
18 getting anywhere. Deland, can you take care
19 of that?

20 MR. SKIENDZIELEWSKI: Okay. Thank
21 you. Don't worry. First amendment is always
22 around the corner. Thank you.

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank
24 you.

1 MS. ELLE S.: Hello?

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Hello,
3 can you identify yourself?

4 MS. ELLE S.: Yes. This is Elle S.
5 You just called on me, and I just had a
6 question.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Wait,
8 can you spell your name. Wait, wait. Can
9 you spell your name first, please?

10 MS. ELLE S.: Yes. It's E-L-L-E,
11 last name S. I didn't want to share my full
12 last name. But --

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
14 That's fine. Are you a customer of the water
15 company?

16 MS. ELLE S.: I am.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Go ahead
18 then, ma'am.

19 MS. ELLE S.: Okay. My question
20 is, if this is a hearing to justify or
21 substantiate the increase, I'm just wondering
22 why the analysis and whatever PowerPoint
23 would not be available here, shareable here
24 in this forum. So that people can, instead

1 of having -- making time here to hear
2 everyone, and then also going outside of this
3 forum to find out what the water department
4 is, you know, putting forth as justification.
5 Why not just have the information here within
6 the forum? I don't -- I don't understand
7 that.

8 MR. DASENT: Judge Chestnut?

9 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'll be
10 honest, this is the first time we've been
11 using this particular Zoom platform, and
12 perhaps we can share documents on it. But
13 certainly that's something to keep in mind.
14 So thank you for that.

15 But yes, I mean, most people want
16 to know a little bit more detail than a quick
17 slideshow. But, but no, we'll certainly take
18 that under advisement and see if we can do
19 that.

20 MS. ELLE S.: Are there going to be
21 more hearings?

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: There
23 will be another public input hearing this
24 evening, an in person one, 6 o'clock tonight

1 at the Zion Baptist Church at Broad and
2 Venango Streets. And then in May, we will
3 have technical hearings. Which you're
4 welcome to observe.

5 MS. ELLE S.: What would the
6 technical hearings entail?

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: That is
8 where the participant -- prior to May, the
9 participants put their positions in writing.
10 And at those hearings, the technical
11 hearings, those witnesses who prepare that
12 testimony are available for cross
13 examination. And that's what happens. We
14 develop a record of their testimony and their
15 positions on the issues.

16 MS. ELLE S.: Understood. I just
17 think it useful and helpful to have a full
18 forum with information instead of saying,
19 okay, here we want to do -- make these
20 increases. But go somewhere else and look at
21 what we said and whatever. I just don't
22 think that that is fair to the public.

23 It's not fair, especially, to any
24 elderly constituents that you may have who

1 may not know how to download information or
2 to -- the site to go to or have someone to
3 assist them. And I thought that that's what
4 I would be hearing, you know, or getting
5 information through this hearing.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well, I
7 think that is a good point, and I want to
8 look into that. But really, the purpose of
9 this is to hear from members of the public as
10 opposed to -- well, it's not -- we're here to
11 briefly answer questions, but we're here to
12 hear from you. But I understand your point,
13 and I think it's a good one. So we'll see
14 what we can do about that.

15 MR. DASENT: Judge Chestnut, I can
16 offer my email address and if I can be in
17 contact with Ms. Elle S. I can share the,
18 the PowerPoint with her directly and give her
19 a summary, as can CLS, for that matter, the
20 public advocate.

21 So that she can have more facts in
22 front of her. And perhaps that's a
23 convenient way without navigating the
24 Internet to get more information. I'm happy

1 to do that, let me give you my email address
2 again. It's Andre, A-N-D-R-E, dot C, like
3 cat, dot Dasent, D-A-S-E-N-T at gmail dot
4 com. And I can get that information in front
5 of you this afternoon.

6 MS. ELLE S.: At gmail, not at
7 phila.gov?

8 MR. DASENT: No. It's just gmail
9 for me. I'm outside.

10 MS. ELLE S.: Okay. You're a
11 consultant, or --

12 MR. DASENT: Well, I'm an attorney
13 in the private sector. Yeah.

14 MS. ELLE S.: Wonderful. Thank you
15 very much.

16 MR. DASENT: Sure.

17 MR. BALLENGER: And, if I may, just
18 briefly to address the process from our
19 perspective. Just to give you, kind of, a
20 little bit of an understanding of the way the
21 rate proceeding is structured. There's, sort
22 of, two tracks that we take in these cases.

23 One is to get as much information
24 as we can from members of the public. So

1 that we can be informed about the public's
2 concerns about proposed rate increases, about
3 service issues, and other things that come up
4 during rate increase cases that maybe we can
5 address and improve the way the city provides
6 water services and associated services to
7 customers.

8 And then there's the, sort of,
9 parallel track where we bring in our
10 consultants to examine the rate preceding
11 record, to test the assumptions that the city
12 has based on their future costs. Things
13 like, you know, the cost of chemicals, and,
14 you know, energy and things like that. That
15 are paid for through the rates and charges.

16 We look at all of those
17 assumptions. And then our consultants, our
18 witnesses, put their testimony on the record
19 so that we can go into the hearing room and
20 have a, a meaningful back and forth exchange
21 on the, the competing views of the different
22 witnesses.

23 We're not there yet. We're in the
24 process of framing that testimony. It'll be

1 filed next week, and I'd be happy to talk
2 with you, you know, at any point, Ms. Ess.
3 And you can just reach us at 215-227-9988.

4 But we have not yet completed our
5 testimony, so I can't tell you exactly what
6 our positions are going to be, but we are
7 looking to, to try to reduce the rate impact
8 as much as possible.

9 As long as we don't jeopardize the
10 department's ability to provide services. So
11 if you -- if you'd like to get in touch, Ms
12 Ess, you're more than welcome. Happy to talk
13 to you one on one.

14 MS. ELLE S.: Thank you. If I may
15 ask one more question. I'm sorry.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT:
17 Absolutely.

18 MS. ELLE S.: With the -- I guess,
19 for lack of better phrasing, firestorm and
20 hubbub with the HHS, and the call for
21 removing fluoride from the water department.
22 How does that affect, I mean, not necessarily
23 rate, but maybe rates. If there is some kind
24 of impending action to do so?

1 MR. DASENT: Judge Chestnut, if I
2 may, we can get back to you with a technical
3 person who knows about this issue, is
4 tracking this issue, and give -- can give
5 you, sort of, more -- an, an answer not from
6 a lawyer, but with more expertise.

7 And then we can post that at th,
8 the Rate Board website if you like, or if you
9 reach out to me, I can get the answer to you
10 directly as well as post it. The impact of
11 removing fluoride from the rates -- from the
12 water treatment and, and where we are with
13 that.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And I
15 don't think this actually happened yet. Has
16 it?

17 MR. DASENT: No.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I mean,
19 you haven't received the directive or --

20 MR. DASENT: No. Just Mr. Kennedy
21 has suggested, in the past -- Mr. Abrams
22 here.

23 MR. ABRAMS: Yes. Well, because we
24 do that at the request of the Department of

1 Public Health for the City of Philadelphia.
2 So this is not just a water department
3 decision, but also would involve the health
4 department. But, you know, we're monitoring
5 what's going on at the federal level. But to
6 your point, there have been no changes to
7 date.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Do you
9 have any other questions, Ms. Ess?

10 MS. ELLE S.: No. I just wanted to
11 --

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Because
13 the company and the public advocate both are
14 here and more than happy to answer any
15 questions you might have.

16 MS. ELLE S.: I think I have
17 exhausted my questions for now.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well,
19 thank you for taking the time. We very much
20 appreciate it.

21 MR. HAVER: I have a question. Is
22 there a minimum number of public participants
23 in the public hearings to meet the legally
24 required hearings?

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: My
2 response to that is, no.

3 MR. HAVER: If three people show up
4 that would meet the legal definition of a
5 public hearing, is your ruling?

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm not
7 making any ruling.

8 MR. HAVER: So would --

9 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm
10 telling you what I believe. Which is, no,
11 I'm not aware of any such thing. If you know
12 something, cite it. Give me a citation.

13 MR. HAVER: So you would -- you
14 would have to entertain a motion saying that
15 there is a legal requirement that a certain
16 percentage of people actually participate for
17 these hearings to meet the legal mandate?

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I don't
19 even know how to respond to that. If you
20 have some kind of authority, then present it.
21 I can't speculate. And I don't think that's
22 appropriate. If you have facts and law to
23 support a position, then present it. That's
24 fine.

1 MR. HAVER: But your personal
2 position is even if nobody shows up, it still
3 meets the legal mandate of a public hearing?

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I don't
5 have a personal position. It doesn't work
6 like that.

7 MR. HAVER: How does it work?

8 MR. DASENT: There is someone with
9 their hand up currently. A member of the
10 public who wants to speak. I think we should
11 move on and allow them to talk to --

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yeah.
13 Absolutely.

14 MR. BRYANT: Madam Hearing Officer,
15 the name is C -- the letter C and the letter
16 N, is what I have -- I will promote.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

18 MR. BRYANT: They have declined to
19 be a panelist. I will allow them to speak
20 now if they wish.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
22 Could you please give us your name?

23 MR. BRYANT: Go on.

24 MS. NUNEZ: Hi. Can you hear me?

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yes. We
2 can.

3 MS. NUNEZ: Okay. Hi. My name is
4 Claribel. I am -- I want to agree with Ms --

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Wait,
6 wait. Can you give us your name and spell
7 it, please?

8 MS. NUNEZ: Oh, Claribel, C-L-A-R-
9 I-B-E-L.

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
11 And your last name?

12 MS. NUNEZ: Nunez, N-U-N-E-Z.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm
14 sorry. N-U -- what?

15 MS. NUNEZ: N-U-N-E-Z.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
17 And are you a customer?

18 MS. NUNEZ: Yes, I am.

19 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
20 Go ahead, Ms. Nunez.

21 MS. NUNEZ: Yeah. I just wanted to
22 agree with Ms. E. I was actually trying to
23 go online to access some of the information,
24 and it's not really accessible, even for

1 myself, who I would say I'm pretty good at
2 navigating the Internet.

3 And I also wanted -- because it's
4 hard to like -- I know that the chat is off,
5 so I wanted to just also ask, what was the
6 email again for Mr. Andre Dasent?

7 MR. DASENT: It's Andre, A-N-D-R-E,
8 dot C, like cat, Dasent, D like David, A-S,
9 like Sam, E-N-T at gmail dot com

10 MS. NUNEZ: at gmail.

11 MR. DASENT: Yeah.

12 MS. NUNEZ: Okay. Thank you.

13 MR. DASENT: And happy to send that
14 to you, so you'll have it right there as an
15 attachment --

16 MS. NUNEZ: Yes. Thank you.

17 MR. DASENT: -- to your email.

18 MS. NUNEZ: And I, sort of, missed
19 a few at the beginning. Sorry, Mr.
20 Ballenger, can --

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT:
22 Ballenger.

23 MS. NUNEZ: Can you repeat what you
24 -- Ballenger, can you repeat what you -- who

1 you represent again?

2 MR. BALLENGER: Yes, ma'am. Happy
3 to. So, CLS, Community Legal Services, is a
4 nonprofit legal aid firm in Philadelphia that
5 has done utility advocacy primarily for low
6 income customers for many years. But we've
7 been appointed in this case to serve as the
8 public advocate.

9 Which is a position that requires
10 us to represent the interests of all of the
11 residential and small commercial customers as
12 a group. And the way we try to do that is by
13 ensuring that rates are no more expensive
14 than they need to be.

15 We try to preserve low rates to the
16 extent possible and ensure that the end
17 result is that rates and charges are just
18 unreasonable. That's the federal
19 constitutionally based standard for water
20 rates and charges.

21 MS. NUNEZ: Okay. And then you
22 were saying that the information on how you
23 came to that decision, that's what's not
24 available yet?

1 MR. BALLENGER: Well, we've done, I
2 think, 14 rounds of discovery so far with the
3 water department. All -- everything that we
4 do in this case goes on the record for the
5 Rate Board. So all of the discovery,
6 questions that we ask and all of the answers
7 that we get are going to be publicly
8 available if they're not already, I think
9 there's probably most of them are.

10 But yes, our witnesses, our
11 testimony is due next week in this case. And
12 so that's where we'll be making our, sort of,
13 counter presentation as to what we think
14 should happen and what we think the board
15 should decide when it comes to, you know,
16 judging whether or not the water department
17 is entitled to any rate increase.

18 MS. NUNEZ: Okay. Perfect. And
19 where do you say this information is
20 available at, again?

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: If you
22 go to the Rate Board's website.

23 MS. NUNEZ: The Rate Board's
24 website. Okay.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Right.

2 And under it, it says rate proceedings. And
3 the 2025 general rate proceeding is this one.

4 If you look at the listings along the left
5 hand side, it tells you different categories.

6 One of those is called information request.

7 And what that is, refers to is what Mr.

8 Ballenger was just talking about, where the
9 participants send written questions to each
10 other.

11 In this case, basically,
12 everybody's asking the water department
13 questions about the testimony and the filing
14 asking them to justify. For example, it'll
15 say, "At Schedule C1, provides supporting
16 work papers," or "On statement 35 provides
17 support for the statement."

18 So there have been a number of
19 rounds of these information requests that
20 have been sent by the public advocate, and
21 they -- and the answers are posted under that
22 heading.

23 MS. NUNEZ: Okay. Thank you so
24 much.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.

2 MS. NUNEZ: I just wanted those
3 things clarified. That's all for me. Thank
4 you.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank
6 you for taking the time. We very much
7 appreciate it, especially, so nice out. I
8 can see that there's some competition for
9 people sign.

10 MS. NUNEZ: Yeah.

11 MR. BRYANT: There is one hand out
12 there, officer. Name's Alexa, and I will
13 promote. Alexa has also declined. I will
14 unmute her and give her an opportunity to
15 speak now.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
17 Hi, Alexa?

18 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Hello. Can you
19 hear me?

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: We can.
21 Could give us, and spell your name, please?

22 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Absolutely, yes.
23 My first name is Alexa, A-L-E-X-A. My last
24 name is a mouthful, so buckle up,

1 Josaphouitch, J-O-S-A-P-H-O-U-I-T-C-H.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm sure
3 the court reporter appreciates you being
4 careful.

5 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: I try.

6 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are
7 you a customer of the company, Alexa?

8 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: I am. Yes.

9 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
10 Do you have any questions, or do you want to
11 make a comment?

12 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: I would say my
13 first question is, I'm a first time home
14 buyer. So this is also my first time, kind
15 of, going through an increase as such. And I
16 did also get a notice about like potential
17 increases for electricity.

18 So definitely just, kind of, wanted
19 to share concerns that, like, as a first time
20 single home buyer, living in an already
21 expensive city. It's already, kind of, hard,
22 and I don't want it to be harder. I've lived
23 in Philly my entire life. I absolutely love
24 it here.

1 But I'm sure if Mr. Ballenger has
2 any advice as to other programs I could
3 potentially be taking advantage of. But also
4 definitely just, kind of, wanted to use this
5 space to speak up for other first time home
6 buyers who potentially couldn't make in
7 person or the virtual meetings.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: You're
9 concerned about affordability?

10 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Yeah.

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And you
12 want to know if there are programs that could
13 help you? And maybe Mr. Dasent might be the
14 person to address that. They, they can get
15 some information about you and your
16 situation, and they maybe get back to you
17 about what you may be eligible for.

18 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Okay.
19 Absolutely. Yeah.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Would
21 that be okay?

22 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Yes. Thank you.

23 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.

24 Did you want to hear Mr. Dasent's email

1 address again?

2 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: No. I think I
3 caught it the last time. First name, middle
4 initial C, and then Dasent.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

6 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: And I guess
7 another concern would just be like if these
8 increases would be expected post 2026, or if
9 there's like post 2026 increases?

10 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well,
11 quick answer to that is that -- no. This
12 filing itself only addresses rates that will
13 be charged for the twelve-month period
14 starting September 1st, 2026 into 2027. Is
15 that answer --

16 MR. DASENT: Well, 2025.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Well, I
18 think she was asking about further, I mean.

19 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Yes.

20 MR. DASENT: That's correct.

21 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: We're
22 talking two rate periods here. The first is
23 fiscal year 2026, which starts September 1st,
24 2025, and --

1 MR. DASENT: Yes.

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: -- the
3 second is fiscal year 2027, which starts
4 September 1st, 2026. And they're not -- I
5 guess, technically they would be indefinite
6 if there's no change in them. But that's a
7 period that we're looking at in terms of this
8 filing. Does that answer your question?

9 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Yes, yes.
10 Thank you.

11 MR. BALLENGER: If I may -- excuse
12 me, Judge Chestnut. Most of the assistance
13 programs, Alexa, are income based, and so you
14 would have to apply for them. And I don't
15 know if that fits your circumstance or
16 situation. I'd be happy to talk with you
17 about the eligibility criteria.

18 For example, for the water discount
19 program, as well as for Pico's customer
20 assistance program, and PGW's customer
21 responsibility program. They're all
22 basically the same income level, eligibility.
23 But as a first time homeowner, I learned very
24 quickly to put in a good thermostat, smart

1 thermostat, if you can. Keep an eye your
2 usage on the water bill.

3 If you haven't already do set up an
4 account with water revenue, because they will
5 contact you if your water is running for more
6 than like 36 hours at a time. Which is
7 really helpful if you leave the garden hose
8 on an accident, as I found out. Some things
9 like that, I'd be happy to talk with you a
10 little bit more about.

11 But certainly, if you do qualify
12 for means tested programs, I can provide you
13 information directly on how to apply for
14 those, so please don't hesitate to get in
15 touch.

16 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Awesome. Thank
17 you so much. I appreciate your time today.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: No. We
19 appreciate you taking the time to talk with
20 us. Thank you. Did you have any other
21 questions or concerns? This is the best time
22 people are here.

23 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: No. I don't
24 think so.

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

2 MS. JOSAPHOUITCH: Thank you.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank
4 you. Deland, you have somebody else?

5 MR. BRYANT: Yes. You have a next

6 --

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

8 MR. BRYANT: You have the next
9 name, Pastor Andrew. Hold on, I'm going to
10 promote.

11 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr.
12 Andrew?

13 MS. CARRION: Hello.

14 MR. ANKAMAH: I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay --

16 MR. BRYANT: So right now we have,
17 I guess. Angel?

18 MS. CARRION: Oh, Angie.

19 MR. BRYANT: Angie, I'm sorry.

20 MS. CARRION: No worries. I just
21 had a really quick question --

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Wait,
23 wait. Before you do, ma'am, could you give
24 and spell your name for us, please?

1 MS. CARRION: Sure. It's Angie, A-
2 N, like Nancy, G-I-E.

3 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
4 And your last name?

5 MS. CARRION: Carrion, C-A-R-R-I-O-
6 N, like Nancy.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are
8 you a customer of the water department?

9 MS. CARRION: I am.

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

12 MS. CARRION: So I apologize if
13 this was already answered earlier. But my
14 question was, with -- so with regards to the
15 low income programs, will they change
16 accordingly as well? I'm thinking in terms
17 of like will the income limit to qualify for
18 such a program increase as well.

19 Especially if some folks, you know,
20 if their bill goes up, but their wages are
21 still the same, would they now qualify for a
22 program? If you don't have that information,
23 I understand, but I just thought I would ask.

24 MR. BALLENGER: I can weigh in on

1 that --

2 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Mr.

3 Ballenger, you can address that?

4 MR. BALLENGER: So there are a
5 couple of different programs that exist. But
6 for the most part, the programs use the
7 federal poverty income guidelines as sort of
8 the touchstone for eligibility. So every
9 year the federal government increases those.

10 Unfortunately, they still do not
11 really represent what is a living income for
12 the most part. But they do go up every year,
13 and so those get incorporated into the water
14 department's programs. So tiered assistance
15 program and the senior discount -- well, I
16 mean, I got ahead of myself.

17 The tiered assistance program as
18 well as the -- their hardship funds that are
19 available that are based on federal poverty
20 income guidelines, and their payment
21 agreement terms that are available based on
22 those guidelines.

23 Separately, there is a senior
24 discount program that the department has

1 proposed to increase. The, the, the
2 compensation limit for it based on cost of
3 living adjustments. Andre can correct me, if
4 I'm wrong about that.

5 MR. DASENT: No, no. That was --
6 it's a very good summation. And Brooke knows
7 even more than I do.

8 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Ms.
9 Darlington, is probably the one to speak to
10 this.

11 MR. DASENT: Yes, she is.

12 MS. CARRION: Great. Thank you so
13 much. And thank you for being transparent.

14 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: No. If
15 you have questions, I mean, seriously, you
16 will never have a better opportunity because
17 people are here and can direct you with
18 respect to your specific questions. I guess
19 your question was about is the income level
20 changing?

21 MS. CARRION: Right. Yeah.
22 Because I'm a new homeowner, and, you know,
23 the cost of living was very different when I
24 bought my home. And now things are steadily

1 increasing, whereas my wages are staying the
2 same. So now, seeing that this is going to
3 go up, it's just -- it's a little scary, it's
4 a little concerning.

5 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Sure.
6 How about if you, you know, get in touch with
7 the company and see if there's something that
8 you can be eligible for?

9 MS. CARRION: Yeah. I will consult
10 them.

11 MS. DARLINGTON: I would just echo
12 that the statute just tie most of the low
13 income programs to the federal poverty level,
14 which is set by the federal government. But
15 -- yeah, please feel free to reach out,
16 because there's also hardship programs.

17 There's -- where you could qualify
18 based on special circumstances, or perhaps
19 your income level is above the FPL threshold.
20 But you have, you know, another circumstance
21 in life, you lose a job, you take in, you
22 know, more people in your household. There
23 are other types of payment agreements and
24 programs that the Water Revenue Bureau has

1 available if you qualify.

2 So I would, you know, encourage you
3 to reach out to Mr. Ballenger, who can help,
4 you know, look out for your interest, or if
5 you have just, you know, want specific
6 information just about the city. You can
7 reach out to WRB as well.

8 So if you reach out to Andre, Andre
9 can put you in touch with the representatives
10 that -- we have a couple online today, but
11 without having the chat featured, it's harder
12 to share their information. So, yeah, feel
13 free to reach out and see if we can help you.

14 MS. CARRION: Thank you so much.
15 Yeah, that's really great to know.

16 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And do
17 you have the contact information for these
18 people?

19 MS. CARRION: I did write down the
20 email address for Mr. Andre Dasent. So I'll,
21 -- yeah, I'll be messaging him. Thank you.

22 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yeah.
23 Great.

24 MR. ANKAMAH: Can I ask a question?

1 MR. BRYANT: Yes. Hold on. So
2 Madam Hearing officer, Pastor Andrew is back
3 and he is up now.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Yeah.

5 MR. ANKAMAH: Okay. Thank you very
6 much, ladies and gentlemen.

7 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Hold on
8 -- hold on, just a second, Pastor Andrew.
9 Could you give us your name, please?

10 MR. ANKAMAH: First name is A-N-D-
11 R-E-W. Last name is A-N-K-A-M-A-H, Ankamah.

12 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And are
13 you a customer?

14 MR. ANKAMAH: Yes.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
16 Great.

17 MR. ANKAMAH: If -- I don't know
18 where to start. I have a bill here that
19 shows service charge of \$12.81, storm water
20 charge 177.52. I can attest to you that the
21 whole of this past winter that was very cold,
22 my water bill was higher than gas bill, and I
23 think that is wrong.

24 I know that the City needs to close

1 it's budget. I will be meeting the Mayor,
2 because there are other avenues that the city
3 is missing billions, not millions, billions
4 of US dollars.

5 I think the water department should
6 be very considerate. It's very, very
7 difficult, the, the, the facility that I'm
8 talking of is only -- the only occupant is a
9 church that I'm pastor of. Okay. And is
10 extremely difficult for service charge of \$12
11 and some water of 177. It doesn't make
12 sense.

13 So I think something has to be
14 done. It's not everyone who should be asking
15 for, you know, some special program to
16 decrease their bill. But I don't know how
17 the storm water -- one time we did a
18 community event, okay, on the -- on the
19 premises, 6624 Harvard Ford Avenue.

20 And a water department personnel
21 specialist came and I asked her, "Why is it
22 that the city is charging us storm water?"
23 She said, "Well, when the rain comes the
24 water drains and go somewhere." And I say,

1 okay.

2 Sometime there's no rain and we get
3 bill of the storm water. So I would like
4 some explanation about this, and for the City
5 to be very lenient, I'm not the only one.
6 It's very challenging economically for a lot
7 of people in this City.

8 And I think the City -- in fact, if
9 I'm not a pastor of a church, I'll probably
10 close the doors and just run somewhere else,
11 okay? Because the water bill has been very
12 exorbitant. That's all I have to say.

13 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: You're
14 concerned especially about the storm water
15 charge?

16 MR. ANKAMAH: Yes.

17 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: And how
18 high it is?

19 MR. ANKAMAH: Yes.

20 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: I'm not
21 sure there's anything you can do to lower it.
22 I'm not sure if there's -- are there ways to
23 do that?

24 MR. DASENT: Yeah. I'm not sure

1 based upon -- I'd like to see the particulars
2 of the billing for Pastor, to see if you're
3 eligible. Because some of this charge might
4 be for a facility that's eligible for the
5 charitable discount.

6 I'd like to, to know why it is
7 quite as high as it is. Are you a single or
8 duplex or a row home? That sort of thing
9 that just sort of gives you a clue as to why
10 this is as high as it appears to be.

11 But we have to look at the billing
12 situation that's presented. And if you reach
13 out to me, Pastor, I'll be happy to get you
14 to the, the folks at the water department
15 that, that can help you understand this
16 charge and figure out a way to navigate it.
17 If there's, either a discount or some program
18 that can help you in some way, shape, or
19 form. Without knowing more I can't be very
20 much more specific. But we will try to -- we
21 will try to help you.

22 MR. ANKAMAH: All right. Thank you
23 very much, sir. How do I contact you? What
24 number?

1 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Do you
2 have Mr. Dasent's contact information?

3 MR. ANKAMAH: No, I don't.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.
5 He's going to give you his email address,
6 okay?

7 MR. DASENT: Yeah.

8 MR. ANKAMAH: Thank you.

9 MR. DASENT: My email, Andre A-N-D-
10 R-E, dot C, like cat, Dasent, D-A-S, like
11 Sam, E like Edward, N-T at gmail dot com.

12 MR. ANKAMAH: I got it. Thank you
13 very much, everyone, for answering my
14 question. God bless you.

15 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Thank
16 you.

17 MR. ANKAMAH: Bye-bye.

18 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay
19 Deland, does somebody else want to make a
20 statement?

21 MR. BRYANT: Madam Hearing officer
22 I see no one could be recognized at this
23 time, either virtually or by email I have no.

24 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: Okay.

1 I'm looking -- I don't see anybody with their
2 hand up. Okay. Then I think it's probably
3 the time to adjourn this since there's nobody
4 who would like to make a statement or
5 comment.

6 Thank you everybody for
7 participating. And, again, the next public
8 hearing is tonight in person at the Zion
9 Baptist Church, Broad and Venango, I think
10 that's 3600 North Broad Street. And feel
11 free, if you're listening, to send comments
12 to the Rate Board at waterrateboard -- let me
13 see what it is, it's at waterrateboard, no
14 spaces, at phila, P-H-I-L-A dot gov.

15 Or I guess you could send a letter
16 at -- address it to the Water Rate Board here
17 of the City of Philadelphia Law Department
18 1515 Arch Street, 17th floor, Philadelphia,
19 Pennsylvania 19102. And I assume it will get
20 to the Rate Board, since the Rate Board does
21 not have an office of its own or employees of
22 its own, but that should reach us too.

23 Okay. Is there anything further
24 from anybody else then before we adjourn?

1 Okay. Thank you all very much. Go and enjoy

2 --

3 MR. DASENT: Thank you.

4 HEARING OFFICER CHESTNUT: -- it's

5 a lovely day.

6 (Proceedings concluded at 2:03 p.m.)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF DIGITAL REPORTER

2

3 I, JILL PIPER, a Digital Reporter and Notary
4 Public for the State of Pennsylvania, do hereby
5 certify:

6

7 That the foregoing proceeding hereinbefore
8 set forth was accurately captured with annotations
9 by me during the proceeding.

10

11 I further certify that I am not related to
12 any of the parties to this action by blood or
13 marriage, and that I am in no way interested in
14 the outcome of this matter.

15

16 IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my
17 hand this 23rd day of April, 2025.

18

19

20

Jill Piper

21

Jill Piper, Notary Public
Notary Commission RON/WA 20119135
Commission Expires: November 16, 2028

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