

Philadelphia Water, Sewer, and Storm Water Rate Board
Meeting Notes
8/26/15

Present:

Bernard Brunwasser, Chair
Lee Huang
Sonny Popowsky
Nancy Winkler
Frances Beckley, Esquire

Also Attending:

J. Barry Davis
Christine Knapp
Jon Davis
Jaclyn Rogers
Melissa LaBuda
Marie McNeill

Frances Beckley asked the Board to decide if they will need a hearing officer, a public advocate for residential customers, and an advocate for small business interests for the upcoming rate process. Funding for the positions will be provided by the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD).

Ms. Beckley reviewed the hearing officer's functions for the board members. The hearing officer will run the public and technical (expert testimony) hearings for the Board; act as a mediator in the event of a dispute between PWD and an organization or individual requesting information; write the Board's decision at the conclusion of the rate case. The board members decided in favor of hiring a hearing officer. Ms. Beckley will draft a Request for Proposal (RFP) and circulate the description of services among the board members for their review and approval. The RFP should be completed by the September 17, 2015 meeting. An expedited procurement may be requested so that a contract is conformed in time for the start of the rate case. Interviews for the hearing officer may be conducted at an upcoming Board meeting.

A public advocate for residential customers was discussed. Mr. Brunwasser believes there is an advantage to the Board hiring a public advocate. Mr. Popowsky stated that the public advocate should participate in an unbiased fashion representing all residential customers. Low income customers once had their own representation in rate proceedings. Eventually Community Legal Services (CLS) became the low income residential representative. Ms. Beckley said proposed Bill 140607-A will address the needs of low income customers.

Mr. Brunwasser does not think an advocate for small business interests is needed, and noted a similarity between small businesses and residential customers. Both groups can have small meters but some businesses pay storm water charges based on the size of their lot. The Board decided on an advocate for small users to represent residential customers and commercial customers with standard stormwater bills.

The Board also decided to hire their own expert to substantiate all the information from the upcoming hearings. An RFP will be written for these services and PWD will fund the contract.

Screen prints of the Board's website were distributed and reviewed. There were no requests for changes.

Ms. Beckley reported that the Residential Customer Assistance Legislation, Bill No. 140607-A, is not yet signed into law.