

Philadelphia Water, Sewer, and Storm Water Rate Board
Meeting Notes
4/26/17

Present:

Bernard Brunwasser, Chair
Sonny Popowsky
Lee Huang
Gemela McClendon
Ed Markus
Nancy Brockway (conference line)

Also Attending:

Marie McNeill
Tony Ewing
Debra McCarty
Scott Schwarz
Ji Jun
Sarah Stevenson
Susan Crosby
Melissa LaBuda
Jaclyn Rogers
Lance Haver
Lauren Curry
Daniel Sawyer
Danae Mobley
Andre Dasent
Rob Ballenger
Josie Pickens

Chairman Bernard Brunwasser introduced Board nominee Tony Ewing. Mr. Ewing is the Vice President of Leasing & Development at Liberty Properties, a Commercial Real Estate Development firm. Mr. Ewing's experience in ownership operations and his knowledge of green space, sewers and stormwater management will be beneficial when the Board discusses matters that impact commercial stormwater customers.

The Bond Rating Agency reports from March were reviewed. All three agencies rated the Philadelphia Water Department's (PWD's) outlook as stable with either an A1 or A+ rating. Melissa LaBuda, PWD's Deputy Commissioner of Finance, shared the annual review of water rates and charges. The report is part of the Five Year Financial and Strategic Plan submitted to City Council. Ms. LaBuda explained how bond sale proceeds are used for renewal and replacement or Capital Improvements. PWD makes use of PAYGO as much as possible.

Water Commissioner Debra McCarty reported on the implementation of the low income IWRAP/TAP program. Applications will be accepted starting July 1. Discounts will be applied beginning October 1. The Water Revenue Bureau (WRB) is hiring additional staff to handle the increase in workload. PWD is advertising heavily and holding town halls in various council districts. Some changes have been put into effect following mediation between PWD, WRB and Community Legal Services (CLS). Only one piece of identification is now required and landlords have 20 days to object to having a bill in the name of the tenant. Sonny Popowsky suggested that the Community Lawyering Clinic be notified about the change in requirements. Complications surrounding ownership and tenants' issues create challenges. CLS, PWD, and WRB will continue discussions to find workable solutions.

PWD and CLS submitted a Joint Proposal for improvements to rate regulations with suggestions for both special and general rate proceedings. A formal proposal to change the current regulations is required and the Board must take a vote. Lance Haver requested an opportunity for City Council to weigh in as

well. Nancy Brockway issued a memo on changes to procedural rules, which will be discussed at the next meeting.

An assessment of the Hearing Officer's 2016 Rate Case report led to suggestions for future rate proceedings. Mr. Ballenger believes a recommendation by the Hearing Officer would be helpful to narrow down issues. Scott Schwarz added that it's advantageous to include findings of fact and conclusions of law. Nancy Brockway contended that everyone was not in agreement about the issues in the last rate case.

Gemela McClendon is developing Requests for Proposals to hire a Hearing Officer, Expert/Advisor to the Board, and Public Advocate for the FY2019 proceeding. The contracts should be in place by Labor Day allowing services to begin on time. The Board has not decided if they will hire a Public Advocate for the next rate case. Mr. Ballenger argued in favor of a Public Advocate and believes it should be included in the regulations.

The next meeting is on June 15, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. in the City Planning Commission's Conference Room.