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PHILADELPHIA GAS COMMISSION
- - -
SUCH OTHER BUSINESS
- - -
Tuesday, April 25, 2023
10:15 a.m.

- - -
VIA ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCING
- - -

BEFORE: ROYAL E. BROWN, Acting Chairman
EVAN URBANIA
MICHAEL DRISCOLL
Commissioners

- - -
VERITEXT LEGAL SOLUTIONS
MID-ATLANTIC DIVISION
1801 Market Street - Suite 1800
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

1 APPEARANCES:

2

JAMES C. KELLETT, ESQ.
Deputy City Solicitor
3 LAURA ANTINUCCI, ESQ.
4 Assistant City Solicitor
Counsel to Philadelphia Gas Commission

5

ANDRE C. DASENT, ESQ.
6 Counsel to Philadelphia Gas Works
7 COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES, INC.
BY: ROBERT W. BALLENGER, ESQ.
8 Counsel to Public Advocate
9 EARTHJUSTICE
BY: DEVIN McDOUGALL, ESQ.
10 Counsel to POWER

10

11

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF PGC:

12

13

GEMELA N. McCLENDON, ESQ.
Executive Director

14

HEIDI L. WUSHINSKE, ESQ.
15 Hearing Examiner
16 ROSLYN BELL, ESQ.
Hearing Examiner

17

ANNA M. CORRADO ROWE
18 Senior Analyst
19 TIMOTHY MURTHA
Financial Analyst/Internal Auditor

20

21

22

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF PGW:

WILLIAM J. GALLAGHER
23 Vice President, Budget and Strategic
Development

24

1 PRESENT ON BEHALF OF PGC: (Continued)

2

KELLY DeLUSSE

3 Director, Resource Management

4 STEPHEN SCHUMMER

Manager, Budget Reporting

5

CARITA COUNCIL

6 Senior Budget Analyst, Finance

7 BHAVIN PATEL

Budget Analyst, Finance

8

MARY LYNN O'BOYLE

9 Administrative Assistant

10

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF GAS WORKS EMPLOYEES' UNION:

11

12 MIKE McDONOUGH

13

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC:

14

15 ELAINE FULTZ

16 EMILY DAVIS, Sierra Club

17 HARVEY CHANIN

18 JACKSON HART

19 JAMIR HUBBARD

20 JAN CHANIN

21 JORDAN TEICHER, Philly DSA

22 JULIE GREENBERG

23 KAREN MELTON

24

1 PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC: (Continued)

2 LIAM SACINO

3 LINNEA BOND

4 MITCH CHANIN, Reclaim Philadelphia

5 NADINE YOUNG

6 PAMELA DARVILLE, POWER Interfaith

7 PATRICIA LIBBEY

8 PETER FURCHT

9 RUSSELL HICKS, POWER CJJ

10 STEVE GREENSPAN, POWER CJJ

11 SUSAN SUNHEE VOLZ, Clean Air Council

12 WALTER TSOU, M.D., Physicians for Social
13 Responsibility

14 PRESENT ON BEHALF OF COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL:

15 THOMAS P. FORKIN, ESQ.
16 Chief of Staff

17 JACOB GOLDEN
18 Legislative Director

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1 ACTING CHAIRMAN BROWN: The next item
2 on the agenda is such other business as may
3 properly be brought before the Commission.

4 Is there any other business that is
5 to be brought before the Commission?

6 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Members of the
7 public, if you wish to speak at this time,
8 please use the controls in the Zoom window
9 to raise your hand. We will keep count of
10 that.

11 As I mentioned prior to the start of
12 the recording, you will have two minutes to
13 speak. At the 30-second remaining mark we
14 will let you know that you have 30 seconds
15 in hopes to give you a chance to wrap up
16 your comments. However, if you do go over
17 the two minutes, we are going to have to
18 stop you.

19 I will give you a few moments right
20 now -- we have three people who have
21 indicated that they wish to speak, four -- I
22 will give you a few more moments, just a few
23 more moments, to see if anybody wants to
24 speak.

1 Okay. Right now we have five people.
2 I am going to read the names out for the
3 record so Sue has them captured.

4 We have -- and we are going to go in
5 the order that I do call your name once I
6 finish reading these off -- first Mitch
7 Chanin, Peter Furcht, Nadine Young, Walter
8 Tsou, and Pamela Darville.

9 Sue, are you ready?

10 THE COURT REPORTER: I am.

11 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Okay.

12 We are going to begin with
13 Mr. Chanin. I am going to start your time
14 off. Please introduce yourself officially
15 for the record and you may begin speaking.
16 Your time begins now.

17 MR. CHANIN: Great. My name is Mitch
18 Chanin. I'm part of Reclaim Philadelphia.

19 Thanks for the opportunity to testify
20 today, though I wanted to say procedurally I
21 wish that members of the public could speak
22 before the vote that we're attempting to
23 comment on rather than after at future
24 meetings if that is possible.

1 So I'm very disappointed in the
2 decision. I'm disappointed that PGW is
3 putting forward what amounts to a
4 business-as-usual budget, capital budget.

5 I've been reading about the prospect
6 of billions of dollars of natural gas
7 infrastructure expenditures through this and
8 future capital budgets which will raise
9 costs for people who are already strapped
10 and struggling to afford their bills at the
11 same time that we're facing this
12 accelerating climate crisis.

13 I really appreciated POWER's
14 recommendation that PGW fully investigate,
15 report on, and discuss non-pipeline
16 alternatives to that expensive gas
17 infrastructure as a way to keep rates
18 affordable and also to address and begin
19 transforming PGW to be a constructive actor
20 in solving rather than exacerbating the
21 climate crisis, and I'm just extremely
22 disappointed that that hasn't happened.

23 I guess because the decision has
24 already been rendered, I would like to maybe

1 direct my hopes to Councilmember Driscoll --

2 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: 30 seconds.

3 MR. CHANIN: -- that we can address
4 this issue within City Council when Council
5 takes up the capital budget next.

6 Thank you very much.

7 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Thank you.

8 Next we have Peter Furcht, if you
9 could officially introduce yourself for the
10 record. Your time starts now.

11 MR. FURCHT: Hi. Peter Furcht,
12 Philadelphia resident, PGW ratepayer.

13 As Mitch just described, I also am
14 extremely disappointed in the Gas Commission
15 for allowing PGW to continue essentially
16 business as usual.

17 There's a climate crisis. Philly has
18 a 2050 carbon neutrality pledge. There's a
19 looming gas affordability crisis. There's a
20 prospect of PGW bankruptcy and hundreds of
21 lost jobs.

22 Why aren't you, the Commission, doing
23 everything in your power to steer PGW
24 towards reducing, not increasing,

1 infrastructure costs and gas sales?

2 Why aren't you doing everything to
3 push PGW to embrace, not avoid,
4 diversification, NPAs, and customer
5 efficiency measures?

6 Efficient customers are penalized
7 with WNA charges. NPAs are only a
8 halfhearted effort. PGW continues to invest
9 in new pipelines. Diversification and Level
10 3 emission efforts appear to be halfhearted
11 as well based on the totally uninformative
12 staff's report provided.

13 The budget you just approved ignores
14 the advice of industry experts and public
15 opinion. You all have your blinders on,
16 your ears covered. You're living in the
17 last century. You're acting irresponsibly.

18 I am living in this century and being
19 responsible. In a few weeks I'm installing
20 a 400% efficient heat pump, 1 Btu in, 4
21 Btu's out. My heating bill will drop at
22 least 20% based on today's gas and
23 electricity rates. My electricity is 100%
24 renewable. It's just a clear win for the --

1 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: 30 seconds.

2 MR. FURCHT: If PGW had installed a
3 geothermal loop, my story would be better.
4 My heat pump is limited due to air
5 temperature efficiency dropoff.

6 But a water-sourced heat pump with
7 water provided by PGW would be less
8 expensive, not impacted by cold weather, it
9 would run at 400% efficiency all winter
10 long, providing a bigger win for both me,
11 the climate, and for PGW.

12 PGW has now lost this opportunity
13 to --

14 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Your time is
15 up.

16 MR. FURCHT: In the meantime, if I
17 give you my address, will you turn my gas
18 off in two weeks or should I call back?

19 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Mr. Furcht,
20 gas disconnection is handled via PGW's
21 customer service line. Thank you for your
22 comments.

23 Ms. Young, please introduce yourself
24 and your time begins now.

1 MS. YOUNG: Good morning. My name is
2 Nadine Young. I am a retiree living in
3 Philadelphia on a fixed income so I am
4 worrying about PGW's rate increases.

5 But I'm also kind of baffled because
6 it seems to me that PGW has no plan to
7 generally explore alternative technologies
8 that would make energy more affordable and
9 reduce carbon emissions. We know there are
10 non-pipeline alternatives that point to a
11 future where PGW becomes a smart utility.

12 Despite being an old lady, I pay
13 attention to the just and clean energy
14 future that's coming. But it looks to me
15 like PGW's plan is for business as usual
16 forever, spending millions or billions on
17 more gas infrastructure long into the
18 future. PGW's plan seems to be to ignore
19 the new technology future.

20 I can't help but think that this will
21 soon drive PGW's commercial customers and
22 residents who can afford it to make the
23 switch that Mr. Furcht has referred to, the
24 switch to heat pumps and induction stoves

1 and clean energy sources, leaving PGW with
2 no customers --

3 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: 30 seconds.

4 MS. YOUNG: -- and no plan for
5 survival. That's a bit baffling.

6 So I urge the Commissioners to direct
7 PGW to stop trying to block its customers,
8 its owners, from fully participating and to
9 direct PGW to engage with its community to
10 explore in good faith all the options that
11 will give us affordability and a clean
12 future in which PGW is still relevant.

13 Thanks.

14 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Your two
15 minutes is up. Thank you.

16 Dr. Tsou, introduce yourself. Your
17 time begins now.

18 DR. TSOU: My name is Dr. Walter
19 Tsou. I'm on the board of Physicians for
20 Social Responsibility in Pennsylvania and I
21 live in Philadelphia and I'm a PGW gas user.

22 As a public health physician and
23 former Health Commissioner of this City, I'm
24 quite concerned about the greatest public

1 health threat to Philadelphia and, for that
2 matter, the planet; namely, climate change
3 and the contribution of natural gas to our
4 ever-warming world.

5 My larger concern is the failure to
6 explain how the repairs that are suggested
7 fit into the larger transition of the
8 Richmond Plant away from natural gas and
9 toward renewable energy sources.

10 The debate about spending
11 \$4.7 million for repairs or \$3.1 million for
12 a new power plant belies the larger question
13 of: Where is the timeline to close the
14 Richmond Plant?

15 How do we ensure that the inevitable
16 need to get off gas will happen to minimize
17 the cost of this future stranded asset?

18 Could these funds be better spent in
19 electrifying neighborhoods and converting
20 their heaters and air conditioners to heat
21 pumps, as was previously suggested by Peter,
22 as we start to reduce the use of gas?

23 Where is the plan to develop
24 geothermal grids and pilot projects so we

1 can slowly reduce the need for the Richmond
2 Plant in general?

3 Inquiring minds want to know.

4 The Gas Commission should do more
5 than rubber-stamp expenditures proposed by
6 PGW.

7 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: 30 seconds.

8 DR. TSOU: There should be an ongoing
9 dialogue and direction to move us toward a
10 different PGW with less gas and more
11 electrification. That should be the
12 direction of your questioning and the
13 inevitable responsibility of your
14 Commission.

15 Thank you.

16 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Thank you,
17 Dr. Tsou.

18 Finally we have Pamela Darville.
19 Please introduce yourself. Your time begins
20 now.

21 MS. DARVILLE: Good morning,
22 Commissioners. My name is Pamela Darville.
23 I'm a PGW customer.

24 I've practiced law for over 40 years.

1 That entailed being in an adversarial
2 position. The goal was to represent my
3 clients to the best of my ability and win.
4 You know, as a lawyer I never believed in
5 collaboration.

6 But just now I thought the goal of
7 this meeting was one of collaboration and
8 that there were no competing interests here
9 and it is my belief that there should be no
10 competing interests in this meeting; that
11 PGW, the Gas Commission, and stakeholders
12 all agree with the same interests, to enjoy
13 and provide affordable clean energy.

14 How do we get to that? You have to
15 allow community groups to meet with PGW, to
16 engage in open dialogue about how do we go
17 about engaging in non-pipeline alternatives,
18 and we know that an expanded investment in
19 these alternatives could make energy more
20 affordable and protect the climate.

21 It's not a burden to allow community
22 groups to meet with PGW --

23 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: 30 seconds.

24 MS. DARVILLE: -- to engage in this

1 type of dialogue, to engage in meeting with
2 their publicly held utility company. That
3 should not be a burden. That's an
4 opportunity. For this Commission to
5 describe it as a burden is mind-boggling, as
6 someone stated.

7 You know, I think that PGW should
8 take this opportunity to be on the right
9 side of this issue.

10 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Ms. Darville,
11 I'm sorry; that's your time.

12 MS. DARVILLE: Thank. You very much.

13 EXEC. DIR. McCLENDON: Thank you.

14 That is all that we have for the
15 comment portion, Chairman Brown.

16 ACTING CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you,
17 Gemela.

18 And thank you, everyone, for your
19 comments and feedback.

20 There being no further business, I
21 direct the Gas Commission Staff and assigned
22 counsel from the Law Department to prepare
23 the necessary orders and resolutions that
24 result from today's meeting.

1 This meeting is adjourned. Thank
2 you, everyone.

3 - - -

4 (Whereupon the meeting adjourned at
5 11:05 a.m.)

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7 Reported By: Susan Marie Migatz, RMR, CRR

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