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PHILADELPHIA GAS COMMISSION
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PGW'S PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2025
OPERATING BUDGET
- - -
August 13, 2024
10:10 a.m.

- - -
Hybrid Meeting held on the
18th Floor - 1515 Arch Street
and Virtually via Teams

- - -
BEFORE: ROYAL E. BROWN, Chairman
MIKE DRISCOLL
EVAN URBANIA
CHRISTY BRADY, City Controller
BILL RUBIN, Alternate
Commissioners

- - -
VERITEXT LEGAL SOLUTIONS
MID-ATLANTIC DIVISION

1 APPEARANCES:

2

JAMES C. KELLETT, ESQ.
Deputy City Solicitor
Counsel to Philadelphia Gas Commission

4

ANDRE C. DASENT, ESQ. (Via Teams)
Counsel to Philadelphia Gas Works
COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

5

6

BY: ROBERT W. BALLENGER, ESQ. (Via Teams)

7

JOLINE PRICE, ESQ.

DANIELA RAKHLINA-POWSNER, ESQ.

8

Counsel to Public Advocate

9

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF PGC:

10

11

HEIDI L. WUSHINSKE, ESQ.
Hearing Examiner

12

ROSLYN BELL, ESQ. (Via Teams)
Hearing Examiner

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ANNA M. CORRADO ROWE
Senior Analyst

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TIMOTHY MURTHA
Financial Analyst/Internal Auditor

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SANDRA FONTANEZ (Via Teams)
Administrative Assistant

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PRESENT ON BEHALF OF PGW:

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WILLIAM J. GALLAGHER
Vice President, Budget and Strategic
Development

21

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JOHN C. ZUK (Via Teams)
Vice President, Gas Management/Processing

23

24

1 PRESENT ON BEHALF OF PGW: (Continued)

2

KELLY A. DeLUSSEY (Via Teams)

3 Director, Resource Management

4 DAVID FORDE (Via Teams)

Director, Government and Community Affairs

5

ERIK WICKLEY-OLSEN (Via Teams)

6 Principal Engineer, Engineering and Project
Management

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STEPHEN SCHUMMER (Via Teams)

8 Manager, Budget Reporting

9 CARITA COUNCIL (Via Teams)

Senior Budget Analyst, Finance

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BHAVIN PATEL (Via Teams)

11 Budget Analyst, Finance

12 DOUG BALMER (Via Teams)

Budget Analyst, Finance

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MARY LYNN O'BOYLE (Via Teams)

14 Administrative Assistant

15

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE:

16

17 LAFAYETTE MORGAN (Via Teams)

18

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF GAS WORKS EMPLOYEES' UNION:

19

20 MIKE McDONOUGH (Via Teams)

21

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE CITY CONTROLLER:

22

23 FRANK IANNUZZI

24

1 PRESENT ON BEHALF OF CITY COUNCIL:

2

NICOLAS V. O'ROURKE

3 Councilmember-At-Large/Minority Whip

4 THOMAS P. FORKIN

6th District Chief of Staff

5

MAURA McDONALD

6 Legislative Director to Councilmember/

Commissioner Mike Driscoll

7

8 PRESENT ON BEHALF OF POWER INTERFAITH:

9

DEVIN McDUGALL, ESQ.

10 EarthJustice

11

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC:

12

13 ALLEN DREW (Via Teams)

14 CAROLYN KLEPSE (Via Teams)

15 CELINE BUSNELLI (Via Teams)

16 CHARLES LANIER (Via Teams)

17 ELAINE FULTZ (Via Teams)

18 ELISA McCOOL (Via Teams)

19 ELLA ISRAELI (Via Teams)

20 ELOWYN CORBY (Via Teams)

21 EMILY ABENDROTH

22 EMILY DAVIS

23 EMMA BOORBOOR (Via Teams)

24 HADDONFIELD (Via Teams)

1 PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC: (Continued)

2 HILARY NAIBERK (Via Teams)

3 IMAN HILL (Via Teams)

4 JAMIR L. HUBBARD (Via Teams)

5 J. MARGERUM (Via Teams)

6 JAYSON MASSEY (Via Teams)

7 JORDAN LEVY (Via Teams)

8 JORDAN TEICHER (Via Teams)

9 JULIAN (Via Teams)

10 JULIE GREENBERG (Via Teams)

11 KAREN HARVEY (Via Teams)

12 KAREN MELTON (Via Teams)

13 KENNETH S. ANDERSON (Via Teams)

14 LINNEA BOND (Via Teams)

15 MITCH CHANIN

16 NADINE YOUNG (Via Teams)

17 PAMELA DARVILLE (Via Teams)

18 PETER FURCHT

19 PETER WINSLOW (Via Teams)

20 ROBERT ELLIS (Via Teams)

21 SHERRI MICHALOVIC (Via Teams)

22 SHERRIE COHEN

23 STEVE GREENSPAN (Via Teams)

24

1 PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC: (Continued)

2

SUSAN PHILLIPS (Via Teams)

3

TOM MacDONALD, WHY? (Via Teams)

4

WENDY GREENSPAN (Via Teams)

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1 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Okay. Good morning,
2 everyone. We would like to begin our
3 meeting.

4 This meeting is being held in a
5 hybrid format to enhance public
6 participation. Instructions for virtual
7 participation are included in the public
8 meeting notices and can be found on the
9 Commission's website.

10 I would like to acknowledge the
11 presence of a quorum in the participation of
12 Councilman Driscoll, City Controller Brady,
13 and Commissioner Urbania.

14 I would like to have the agenda read,
15 marked, and entered into the record as Gas
16 Commission Exhibit #1.

17 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: "The
18 Philadelphia Gas Commission will hold a
19 regular meeting on Tuesday, August 13th, at
20 10:00 a.m. in the Commission's hearing room
21 on the 18th Floor at 1515 Arch Street,
22 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with a virtual
23 option for those who cannot attend in person
24 for the purpose of considering:

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"1. The Philadelphia Gas Works'
Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget;

"2. Proposed Regulations on Policies
for Proceedings before the Philadelphia Gas
Commission; and

"3. Such other business as may
properly be brought before this Commission.

"A link to the virtual meeting room
will be posted on the Commission's website
so as to allow virtual attendees to
participate."

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you.

- - -

(Whereupon PGC Exhibit #1 was marked
for identification.)

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CHAIRMAN BROWN: The first item on
the agenda is PGW's Proposed Fiscal Year
2025 Operating Budget and Related Matters.

Section 4.2.a of the Management
Agreement/Ordinance provides that PGW's
proposed Operating Budget and forecast must
be approved by the Gas Commission. Section
4.2.c. states that PGW's expenditures and

1 commitments to spend must be pursuant to
2 approved operating budgets and are subject
3 to any Commission rules and regulations.
4 Section 6.9 gives this Commission
5 responsibility for overseeing the operation
6 of PGW by PFMC, and further provides that
7 all power not specifically granted to PFMC
8 resides in the Commission.

9 The procedural history of the Fiscal
10 Year 2025 Operating Budget review is
11 detailed in the Recommended Decision.

12 On July 9th PGW and the Advocate each
13 submitted Briefs, which will be marked
14 respectively as Gas Works Exhibit #1 and
15 Public Advocate Exhibit #1.

16 - - -

17 (Whereupon PGW Exhibit #1 and PA
18 Exhibit #1 were marked for identification.)

19 - - -

20 CHAIRMAN BROWN: On July 23rd
21 Executive Director Gemela McClendon and
22 Commission Staff issued a Recommended
23 Decision, which will be marked as Gas
24 Commission Exhibit #2.

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(Whereupon PGC Exhibit #2 was marked for identification.)

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CHAIRMAN BROWN: On July 26th PGW filed one Exception to the Recommended Decision, which will be marked as Gas Works Exhibit #2.

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(Whereupon PGW Exhibit #2 was marked for identification.)

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CHAIRMAN BROWN: The Public Advocate filed a Reply Exception on July 30th, which will be marked as Public Advocate Exhibit #2.

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(Whereupon PA Exhibit #2 was marked for identification.)

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CHAIRMAN BROWN: To facilitate our preparation for today's meeting, Commission Staff developed a Briefing Guide. This document outlines the Hearing Examiners'

1 recommended Budget adjustments and other
2 recommendations.

3 A partial draft of this document was
4 shared with the participants on July 31st,
5 2024. The participants suggested minor
6 edits to the Briefing Guide, which were
7 incorporated into the final version.

8 The finalized version of the Briefing
9 Guide, which was shared with the
10 participants on August 13th, will be marked
11 as Gas Commission Exhibit #3.

12 - - -

13 (Whereupon PGC Exhibit #3 was marked
14 for identification.)

15 - - -

16 CHAIRMAN BROWN: We would like to
17 provide the participants in this proceeding
18 with the opportunity to make a brief
19 presentation before we call the question to
20 vote.

21 First, we will hear from PGW and
22 Mr. Dasent.

23 MR. DASENT: Good morning, Chairman
24 Brown. Thank you for having this meeting.

1 I'm sorry I can't be there with you in the
2 room.

3 With me today virtually is John Zuk,
4 our Senior Vice President for Gas
5 Management, and William Gallagher, our Vice
6 President for Budget and Strategic
7 Development.

8 As you know, PGW took exception to
9 the decision of the Hearing Examiners to
10 deny funding for advanced engineering
11 studies.

12 We believe we need studies of this
13 kind for any large project. Actually, any
14 capital project requires planning. This is
15 the largest capital project we've undertaken
16 and it requires that extra measure of
17 planning. It's going to be implemented or
18 it's anticipated to be implemented in fiscal
19 2027 and we need to start planning now.

20 We think part and parcel of that
21 planning is an engineering analysis to
22 support what we're doing, to perfect or get
23 an exact idea of the design, the scope, and
24 the nature of the project, so that we can

1 then measure the economic benefits and any
2 other economic impact.

3 You have to know the animal you're
4 constructing, basically, or the construct,
5 before you can determine the economic impact
6 of what we're doing.

7 So we think you need both, and I
8 think we were trying to be more expansive in
9 offering exceptions that basically said we
10 need to look at engineering as well as
11 economic analysis in the decision to go
12 forward to be fully informed about what we
13 are doing.

14 Now, PGW acknowledges that we have
15 had concerns related to economic benefits
16 and economic impact, and we believe that you
17 should integrate into what we're proposing
18 to do the economic analysis as well as the
19 engineering analysis; but you need to know
20 the design and scope of a project to know
21 its economics, the impact of it.

22 Is it 170 million, as we've
23 estimated, or is it another number? All of
24 the appropriate determinations need to be

1 before the Commission in making a final
2 decision, and this is our first step.

3 If the Gas Commission has any
4 hesitation about the proposed and specific
5 advanced engineering study, it should define
6 the scope of such study and include
7 engineering, design, cost, regulatory
8 considerations, together with the evaluation
9 of current operational requirements,
10 including an up-to-date customer demand
11 analysis and reasonable projections of
12 future demands, and the economic impact and
13 economic benefits associated with the
14 project.

15 We came into this discussion
16 recognizing that historically this LNG
17 liquefier, which has been online for almost
18 30 years now and needs to be replaced, has
19 reaped great benefits for customers, to the
20 tune of tens of millions of dollars.

21 On the coldest day of the year we're
22 able to serve our customers without worrying
23 about throughput through the pipeline, which
24 on the coldest day of the year obviously is

1 more expensive, and it's assuming you can
2 get gas supply at all at that particular
3 time. But we have a liquefier so we can
4 serve our customers in that way.

5 We can make a determination as to
6 whether it's needed. We believe it's
7 obvious because of the tens of millions of
8 savings historically. But even if you cut
9 that in half, you would have substantial
10 savings. And we believe that will be
11 demonstrated.

12 But you've got to show me, I get it,
13 we can prove that, and that is part and
14 parcel of what we believe should be done in
15 evaluating whether to proceed in the future.
16 But you have to have that information to
17 make an informed decision.

18 And that's what we're asking to do
19 today, basically give us the funding so that
20 we can do those things that the Public
21 Advocate would like us to do and do all the
22 things that the engineering folks want us to
23 do, so that we can have an informed decision
24 and a full record on which to decide whether

1 or not to proceed with a project in fiscal
2 2027.

3 That's all we have. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you,
5 Mr. Dasent.

6 Are there any statements on behalf of
7 the Advocate?

8 MR. BALLENGER: Good morning,
9 Commissioners. Can you hear me?

10 COMMISSIONER URBANIA: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Yes.

12 MR. BALLENGER: Great. Good morning.
13 This is Robert Ballenger for the Public
14 Advocate. I apologize that I, too, am away
15 so I can't participate in person; and to
16 preserve bandwidth I'm going to keep my
17 video off. I'll be brief since I'm aware
18 that you have my Reply Exception, but I do
19 want to take a couple minutes to respond.

20 As you know, the Hearing Examiners
21 recommended PGW be denied spending authority
22 for a \$2 million consulting expense for a
23 front-end engineering and design study
24 associated with PGW's plan to replace its

1 liquefier at the Richmond Plant. That
2 replacement is estimated to cost
3 approximately \$170 million, but it's not
4 before you today, at least not explicitly.
5 Instead, PGW wants \$2 million to fund its
6 consultants to engage in pre-project
7 planning.

8 And, you know, I listened to
9 Mr. Dasent and I think what he's asking is
10 essentially for you to modify PGW's
11 proposal. So let's be clear about what PGW
12 has actually proposed.

13 It does not want to seriously
14 evaluate whether it makes economic sense to
15 replace the liquefier in the first place.
16 Although PGW's exceptions submit otherwise,
17 PGW's witness was clear, PGW does not intend
18 to evaluate whether replacement of the
19 liquefier makes economic sense. They want
20 to skip that discussion entirely and get
21 right to the planning part, determining the
22 details, like the size of the new equipment.

23 The record demonstrates that
24 replacing the liquefier would be PGW's

1 biggest single capital project in decades.
2 It also demonstrates that PGW faces
3 significantly different demands for gas now
4 and will in the future than it has in the
5 past.

6 In the context of declining load, the
7 prospect of a massive debt-financed
8 investment to replace PGW's liquefier
9 requires more thorough consideration.
10 Approving the proposed \$2 million expense
11 would bypass that important inquiry and, as
12 the Public Advocate's witness has stated, it
13 would create a real risk of a stranded
14 investment: a \$2 million study for a
15 project that may not be necessary to serve
16 PGW's customers.

17 We, the Public Advocate, urge you to
18 rely on PGW's testimony for what it has
19 actually proposed and what it wants to do
20 and not the framing in its Exception. We
21 agree with the Hearing Examiners that you
22 should deny PGW spending authority as per
23 the Recommended Decision that you received.

24 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you,
2 Mr. Ballenger.

3 MR. DASENT: Chairman Brown?

4 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Yes. Go ahead,
5 Mr. Dasent.

6 MR. DASENT: If I might, just very
7 briefly, I think we need to look at the
8 totality of the record in making your
9 decision today.

10 If you look at the totality of the
11 record, you see we have competing
12 considerations that PGW is trying to
13 harmonize. If you look at the engineering
14 analysis, you will see that it's a necessary
15 predicate to what we have to do. If you
16 look at the economic analysis, customers
17 want to know what they're paying for. We
18 need to see both. That's all we're saying.

19 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you,
20 Mr. Dasent.

21 Next we will take brief comments from
22 members of the public. Comments will be
23 limited to three minutes and should be on
24 the topic of PGW's proposed Fiscal Year 2025

1 Operating Budget.

2 Hearing Examiner Wushinske, would you
3 coordinate this process.

4 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Yes.

5 We will first take comments from
6 members of the public who are present in the
7 Commission's hearing room today and who have
8 signed up to testify on PGW's proposed
9 Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget, and we
10 will follow that by members of the public
11 who have joined us virtually who want to
12 offer testimony.

13 We will have time later in this
14 meeting for people who have signed up to
15 testify on the Proposed Regulations. So at
16 this moment it's only people who wish to
17 testify on the FY 2025 Operating Budget.

18 THE COURT REPORTER: People have
19 signed up, but they have not expressed that
20 they want to testify, so you will probably
21 have to poll the room to ask if they would
22 like to testify.

23 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Okay.

24 So is there anybody who would like to

1 testify on the Operating Budget?

2 Okay. I see that is Mr. Chanin;
3 right?

4 MR. CHANIN: Yes.

5 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: So if
6 you want to come to the table so we can pick
7 up your testimony a little bit better.

8 MR. CHANIN: Right here?

9 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Yes,
10 that will be good.

11 Okay. Are you ready, Sue?

12 THE COURT REPORTER: Yes.

13 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Okay.
14 You may begin.

15 MR. CHANIN: Okay. Hi, everyone.
16 Thanks for the opportunity to testify. As I
17 guess you know, my name is Mitch Chanin.
18 I'm a PGW ratepayer and a nearly lifelong
19 Philadelphia resident.

20 I'm not used to testifying in
21 alignment with the Hearing Examiners'
22 decision. I think this is probably the
23 first time I've ever done that.

24 So in this case I really support the

1 Recommended Decision not to allow the
2 \$2 million expenditure for this engineering
3 study for a \$170 million liquefier project.

4 Following up on what Mr. Ballenger
5 stated, you know, not only is gas throughput
6 declining because of increasing
7 temperatures, the moves towards
8 electrification that are already underway,
9 but just as I've said probably a hundred
10 times in these meetings and hearings, the
11 City of Philadelphia has a 2050 carbon
12 neutrality commitment which will require
13 ending or all but ending the use of natural
14 gas within 25 years.

15 So in light of that commitment what
16 kind of LNG investment makes sense? Every
17 decision, in my opinion, about investing in
18 gas infrastructure must be evaluated in the
19 context of the City's decarbonization goal.

20 A \$170 million project, LNG project,
21 at a time when we're supposed to be
22 radically reducing and eliminating the use
23 of gas during the lifetime of the proposed
24 plan may result in a very large burden, cost

1 burden, on low-income customers who are
2 already struggling to afford their bills.

3 So I think before any engineering can
4 be completed, there should be a thorough
5 examination of the need for that type of
6 facility in light of the economic and
7 temperature trends and the City's climate
8 goal and exploration of a full range of
9 alternatives to ensure reliable energy, keep
10 costs low, and meet the City's climate
11 goals.

12 I've lost track of how much time I
13 have, but --

14 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: You have
15 50 seconds.

16 MR. CHANIN: 50 seconds? Okay.

17 In line with the consideration of
18 advanced engineering studies, two years ago
19 the Commission approved spending half a
20 million dollars to plan for a networked
21 geothermal pilot project with strong support
22 from the Chair of the Commission at the
23 time, Councilmember Derek Green.

24 Since then the public has received no

1 substantive update whatsoever about what has
2 been done with that half a million dollars.
3 The deadline for making a decision has been
4 pushed back by more than a year. There has
5 been no meaningful public engagement and no
6 information provided to any of us who
7 advocated for this or to the public.

8 I don't know that it can be addressed
9 in the Operating Budget approval right now,
10 but the Commission at the time said that if
11 information wasn't shared and if stakeholder
12 engagement wasn't provided, that the
13 Commission could then step in and require
14 those things to happen, and I hope that you
15 will do that.

16 I really want this project to succeed
17 and I have no idea what's going on. And I
18 had one more thing, but that's probably my
19 time, so I will leave it there.

20 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: It is.
21 Thank you very much.

22 Okay. I think is that Mr. Furcht?

23 MR. FURCHT: Yes.

24 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Okay.

1 Whenever you're ready.

2 MR. FURCHT: I am ready.

3 My name is Peter Furcht. I am a
4 Philly resident. I am a member of POWER
5 Interfaith. I volunteer. I'm a PGW
6 customer, smaller than I used to be. I've
7 installed a heat pump last fall.

8 I believe the climate is disrupted.
9 I believe individuals, elected officials,
10 and industry should be doing everything in
11 their respective realms of power to work to
12 mitigate the worst effects of future climate
13 disruption without sacrificing jobs, by
14 keeping those most vulnerable to the effects
15 of climate disruption front and center in
16 their plans, and doing all that while
17 keeping the cost of energy affordable.

18 I joined POWER two years ago when I
19 learned that is exactly what POWER advocates
20 for and has been trying to work with PGW to
21 facilitate.

22 Today I am speaking to express my
23 deep disappointment that PGW is doing very
24 little, if nothing, in its power to mitigate

1 their impacts on climate disruption or to
2 plan for a future of less, not more, gas
3 use.

4 As a consequence, they are risking
5 the loss of jobs, they are putting poor and
6 disadvantaged communities at even greater
7 risk, and they are risking their own
8 survival in an upward spiraling cost of gas
9 delivery without future massive subsidies
10 from Philadelphia taxpayers as gas use and
11 therefore their revenue will drop off.

12 How can I say this? PGW has no money
13 in their 2025 Operating Budget to take any
14 next steps following the conclusion of a
15 geothermal feasibility study they undertook
16 two years ago at POWER's insistence.

17 While the decision point on
18 geothermal feasibility has moved out from
19 last month to Q1 2025, surely PGW knows
20 today that whatever the decision is, there
21 are next steps that will require funding.

22 Maybe it's an engineering study for a
23 geothermal pilot plan. Maybe it's a
24 different feasibility study for another

1 technology if geothermal isn't feasible.
2 Whatever the next steps may be, there is no
3 money in the Operating Budget earmarked to
4 fund next steps in 2025. I guess PGW is
5 willing to wait until 2026 or later to take
6 those steps.

7 Where is the urgency to figure out
8 what comes next? There seems to be plenty
9 of urgency to lay new gas pipelines. Take a
10 look at the Capital Budget that earmarks
11 almost \$20 million for new gas pipelines
12 despite a lack of confirmed customers.

13 A City Councilmember recently told me
14 that -- and I'm paraphrasing -- We can't
15 stop installing new gas pipelines. People
16 need heat. That, it seems to me, is exactly
17 what PGW wants. Climate be damned, jobs be
18 damned, costs be damned, vulnerable
19 communities be damned.

20 Thank you.

21 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
22 you.

23 Is there anybody else in the hearing
24 room who would like to testify on the

1 Operating Budget?

2 Okay. Please come forward.

3 And could you state your name for the
4 record please.

5 MS. COHEN: Yes. My name is Sherrie
6 Cohen and I am a PGW ratepayer.

7 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Okay.
8 Whenever you are ready.

9 MS. COHEN: Thank you.

10 Good morning, Commissioners.

11 This year has been the hottest on
12 record to date and recently July 22nd was
13 recorded as the hottest day on earth since
14 the start of the last Ice Age more than
15 100,000 years ago.

16 These record-breaking temperatures
17 are part of a long-term warming trend driven
18 by human activities, primarily the emission
19 of greenhouse gases which are pushing the
20 planet to dangerous new extremes.

21 You can do something about this. You
22 are the Philadelphia Gas Commission and you
23 oversee the budget proceedings of the
24 nation's largest city-owned gas utility.

1 You have the power to protect a livable
2 climate and human health and alleviate
3 Philadelphia's energy poverty.

4 The PGW budget must match our City's
5 goal for phasing out the use of fossil fuels
6 by 2050 at the latest. Your proposed budget
7 allocates \$2 million for a study to plan for
8 a \$170 million replacement of a liquefier
9 facility in Port Richmond.

10 The Hearing Examiners, as has been
11 discussed, have recommended against this.

12 Why do we need a \$170 million
13 liquefier when we need to phase out the use
14 of natural gas over the next 25 years?
15 Already developers are constructing
16 all-electric buildings. Some building
17 owners are replacing gas appliances with
18 electric appliances.

19 As other speakers have said, we would
20 like to see more funds budgeted for the
21 networked geothermal pilot project. Two
22 years ago you all approved half a million
23 dollars for a planning effort and we are
24 waiting for a substantive update and an

1 opportunity for the public to participate in
2 the planning.

3 Another gas utility in Massachusetts
4 has already begun operating its first
5 networked geothermal project. We can do the
6 same.

7 Thank you.

8 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
9 you for your testimony.

10 Is there anybody else in the room
11 today?

12 Okay. Please come forward.

13 And could you state your name for the
14 record, please.

15 MS. ABENDROTH: Emily Abendroth.

16 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Okay.

17 MS. ABENDROTH: Would you like me to
18 spell that?

19 THE COURT REPORTER: Yes, please.

20 MS. ABENDROTH: A-B-E-N-D-R-O-T-H.

21 THE COURT REPORTER: Thank you.

22 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: And
23 which group do you represent or --

24 MS. ABENDROTH: Philly Climate Works,

1 which is a project of the Pennsylvania
2 Sierra Club.

3 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Whenever
4 you're ready, you may begin your testimony.

5 MS. ABENDROTH: Yes. I have pretty
6 short remarks. I just want to echo what all
7 of the previous ones have said.

8 I also was in the space, I guess it's
9 two years ago, when that geothermal
10 feasibility study was approved and we have
11 been waiting for any progress report of any
12 kind saying whether that project had moved
13 forward, if it had happened, and want to
14 just like lift up folks' calls for some
15 transparency, some progress report, anything
16 in relation to that, and just want to also
17 relift back up folks' iterations of that.

18 The City itself has put forward 2050
19 climate goals. It owns PGW as a municipally
20 owned gas works and should therefore hold it
21 in alignment with making some benchmark
22 progress towards those goals and should have
23 some clear spots that would show it was
24 moving towards that.

1 And we're relying on you, the Gas
2 Commission, and other bodies to in some way
3 require that, and I'll leave it there.

4 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Okay.
5 Thank you.

6 MS. ABENDROTH: Thank you.

7 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Is there
8 anybody else in the hearing room for the
9 Operating Budget?

10 - - -

11 (No response.)

12 - - -

13 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Okay.
14 So for those members of the public joining
15 us online, if you could use the hand raise
16 function.

17 Would that work for you, Tim?

18 MR. MURTHA: Yes.

19 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: I see
20 Elaine Fultz, Linnea Bond, Jordan Teicher.

21 Okay. So you will be unmuted for
22 your three minutes and if you could please
23 state your name and who you represent for
24 the record, please, before you begin.

1 MR. MURTHA: Elaine Fultz, you can
2 unmute and go first.

3 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: I think
4 you have to unmute her.

5 MR. MURTHA: It doesn't give me the
6 option.

7 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Elaine
8 Fultz, can you unmute yourself?

9 MR. MURTHA: It's at the top of the
10 screen towards the right near the red
11 "Leave" button. There's a mic. It
12 shouldn't have a line through it.

13 MS. FULTZ: Got it. Thank you.
14 Thank you very much.

15 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
16 you.

17 MS. FULTZ: Good morning. Thank you
18 for the opportunity to testify. I'm Elaine
19 Fultz. I'm a PGW ratepayer. I'm a member
20 of Citizens Climate Lobby, but I'm not
21 representing them today. I'm just
22 representing myself.

23 I live in West Philadelphia and I
24 strongly support the position of Community

1 Legal Services on the fiscal 2025 Operating
2 Budget.

3 In addition, I would like to comment
4 on PGW's inaction on the \$500,000 it has
5 been allocated for a geothermal pilot
6 project.

7 In Philadelphia today we have more
8 than 40 public schools that have no air
9 conditioning. As a former teacher that
10 concerns me greatly.

11 With global warming, temperatures in
12 those schools are soaring and students are
13 sleeping as a coping mechanism or the
14 schools are dismissing early, which
15 contributes to the students' learning
16 deficits and causes a lot of trouble for
17 their parents.

18 Because geothermal provides both
19 heating and air conditioning, PGW could help
20 to address this problem by conducting this
21 demo project in a way that includes one or
22 more of these schools.

23 This would be a win-win situation.
24 PGW needs to reduce its carbon footprint and

1 the demo could point to the way forward, and
2 Philadelphia students very much need PGW to
3 help them make their schools places where
4 they can learn.

5 So I ask you to encourage PGW to move
6 forward with the demo and to consider
7 including one or more of these public
8 schools I mentioned when you do.

9 Thank you.

10 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
11 you for your testimony.

12 Next I see Linnea Bond. Could you
13 unmute yourself, please.

14 Thank you.

15 MS. BOND: Hi. My name is Linnea
16 Bond. I am a Philadelphia resident and PGW
17 ratepayer and I also work for Physicians for
18 Social Responsibility Pennsylvania, which is
19 an organization concerned and fighting the
20 greatest effects on health that cannot be
21 treated, so climate change falls into that
22 category.

23 In the interest of saving time, I
24 would like to echo comments that others have

1 made. So far I don't think anyone has
2 spoken who I disagree with. But I would
3 like to underscore Mitch Chanin's and Emily
4 Abendroth's comments.

5 And I thank you for your time.

6 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
7 you for your testimony.

8 I see Elowyn Corby. Could you unmute
9 yourself, please.

10 MS. CORBY: Hi. Can you hear me?

11 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Yes, we
12 can.

13 MS. CORBY: Okay. Great. Sorry; you
14 can hear my 9-week-old daughter in the
15 background, another Philadelphian.

16 I am a Philadelphia ratepayer based
17 in Point Breeze. I work for both solar and
18 energy equity nonprofits, but I am currently
19 on leave and I am here representing myself
20 and not my employer. I will also keep it
21 brief because I agree with everything that
22 the other public commenters have said so
23 far.

24 I think that this budget does not do

1 enough to reflect the urgency of tackling
2 the climate emergency and upholding
3 Philadelphia's 2050 carbon neutrality goals,
4 and the expenditure on the liquefier
5 facilities is a great example of that.

6 But, yes, we need to have a budget
7 for PGW that reflects the urgency of
8 transitioning away from fossil fuels and
9 tackling the climate emergency.

10 Thanks so much.

11 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
12 you for your testimony.

13 Robert Ellis, could you unmute
14 yourself.

15 MR. ELLIS: Yes. Thank you. I'm a
16 citizen of Philadelphia, a PGW ratepayer,
17 and I'm also a member of the Climate Reality
18 Project.

19 I think, simply stated, PGW's agenda
20 that they are determined to push through is
21 simply not compatible with the zero-carbon
22 footprint for Philadelphia by 2050. Their
23 determination to keep natural gas at the
24 center of the universe for heating and

1 cooling in Philadelphia is simply not
2 realistic.

3 It's a publicly owned company. They
4 are not owned by PFMC, a small group of
5 people that the Mayor has put in place.
6 They're owned by the City, by the citizens,
7 and they need to listen to us.

8 Thanks.

9 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
10 you.

11 Jordan Teicher, could you unmute
12 yourself, and you may begin your testimony
13 when you're ready.

14 MR. TEICHER: Yes. Thank you.

15 My name is Jordan Teicher. I live in
16 West Philly. I'm a PGW ratepayer. I'm here
17 as a member of Philly DSA to support the
18 position put forward by Community Legal
19 Services with regard to the Fiscal Year 2025
20 Operating Budget.

21 I also just want to name what I see
22 going on here, which is a form of climate
23 denial. Every year that PGW puts forward a
24 budget that doesn't acknowledge the reality

1 of the climate crisis, it's denying that
2 crisis, and in 2024 that is simply
3 unacceptable.

4 People are losing their lives, their
5 livelihoods, and our climate crisis is
6 getting worse and I see the City just
7 sitting on its hands doing nothing. They
8 just submit the same thing every year. It's
9 got to change.

10 Thank you.

11 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
12 you for your testimony.

13 Charles Lanier? I'm sorry if I
14 mispronounced that. If you could unmute and
15 begin your testimony when you're ready.

16 MR. LANIER: Good morning, everybody.
17 Thank you for allowing me to testify.

18 My name is Charles Lanier and I am
19 the Director of the Hunting Park
20 Neighborhood Advisory Committee that
21 represents the local grass roots community
22 in Hunting Park where we serve most of our
23 clients who are very low-income residents,
24 who are also payers of gas bills, and they

1 are all energy-burdened in relation to their
2 gas.

3 People are suffering and trying to
4 survive. I echo everything that's been said
5 today. As a member of HERE 4 Climate
6 Justice and the Climate Reality Project, we
7 need to look at how we can make gas relate
8 to everything that was represented here
9 today.

10 I thank you very much for allowing me
11 to make this testimony.

12 HEARING EXAMINER WUSHINSKE: Thank
13 you for your testimony.

14 I don't see anybody else virtually
15 participating who wishes to testify today,
16 so I will turn it back to you, Mr. Chairman.

17 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Okay. Thank you,
18 everyone, for your participation and your
19 comments.

20 Are there any comments or questions
21 from any of the Commissioners at this point?

22 COMMISSIONER URBANIA: I'll just say
23 I think I would like to make a motion to
24 direct Gas Commission Staff to inquire about

1 the geothermal project and to provide
2 information to the Commission to report at
3 such time at a later meeting.

4 COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I second that
5 motion.

6 CHAIRMAN BROWN: The motion has been
7 made and properly seconded.

8 All in favor?

9 Aye.

10 COMMISSIONER URBANIA: Aye.

11 COMMISSIONER BRADY: Aye.

12 COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Aye.

13 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Any opposed?

14 - - -

15 (No response.)

16 - - -

17 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Okay. The motion
18 carries.

19 - - -

20 (Whereupon the motion was unanimously
21 carried.)

22 - - -

23 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you, Evan.

24 Okay. All the identified exhibits

1 will be entered into the record of this
2 meeting. This matter is now before us for
3 action. I call on Commissioner Urbania for
4 a recommendation and motion.

5 COMMISSIONER URBANIA: Thank you,
6 Chairman.

7 My Motion is set out in a written
8 document with one Appendix and I ask that it
9 be marked and entered into the record as Gas
10 Commission Exhibit #4.

11 - - -

12 (Whereupon PGC Exhibit #4 was marked
13 for identification.)

14 - - -

15 COMMISSIONER URBANIA: A draft was
16 circulated to the Commissioners in advance
17 of this meeting. This Motion was
18 distributed to the participants just prior
19 to the start of this meeting. I ask that
20 this written Motion be incorporated into and
21 made a part of the following verbal motion
22 as if set forth at length.

23 I have read the arguments and agree
24 with the Advocate that PGW's Exception is

1 not supported by the testimony of its own
2 witness on this issue, who testified that
3 the FEED study would not include an
4 evaluation of whether to proceed with the
5 project.

6 I share the Advocate's concern that
7 if the spending authority is granted, there
8 will be no study vetting the necessity of
9 the project in the context of declining
10 load, which could result in wasting
11 \$2 million of ratepayer funds.

12 I also agree with the Hearing
13 Examiners' findings, supported by the
14 Advocate's Reply Exception, and am not
15 persuaded by PGW's Exception.

16 I agree with the Hearing Examiners
17 that PGW should conduct a thorough
18 assessment of the need for the LNG liquefier
19 replacement project given the changes in
20 customer usage before spending \$2 million on
21 an advanced engineering study.

22 I therefore find that we should
23 reject PGW's Exception on this issue.

24 Therefore, I move that the Gas

1 Commission adopt the Recommended Decision
2 and take the following actions:

3 1. Reject the Philadelphia Gas
4 Works' Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget
5 proposal as filed on May 14, 2024.

6 2. Approve an FY 2025 Operating
7 Budget for PGW which projects total
8 operating revenues of \$694.633 million,
9 including total gas revenues of
10 \$690.058 million, and which projects natural
11 gas expense of \$183.037 million, as shown in
12 PGW's proposed Budget.

13 3. Approve an FY 2025 Operating
14 Budget for PGW reflecting the following
15 adjustment to the Non-Fuel Operating
16 Expenses in PGW's filed Budget which reduces
17 proposed expenses by \$2 million as shown in
18 the Appendix to this Motion:

19 Remove funding for an advanced
20 engineering study for replacement of the LNG
21 liquefier.

22 4. Direct PGW to file a compliance
23 Operating Budget for FY 2025 consistent with
24 this Motion within ten business days of

1 today's meeting, provided that PGW should be
2 instructed to identify and make any
3 technical corrections to the presentation in
4 the Appendix hereto, ancillary adjustments,
5 or flow-through changes.

6 5. Direct PGW to file, by no later
7 than the 15th day of the succeeding month
8 for each month in FY 2025, monthly financial
9 reports in the same format as used for the
10 FY 2024 reporting.

11 6. Direct PGW to file, by no later
12 than the 15th day of the succeeding month
13 for each month in FY 2025, monthly
14 collections status reports with a scope and
15 in a form similar to the monthly reports
16 filed for FY 2024. These reports will also
17 include copies of any and all deliverables
18 provided by any PGW consultants related to
19 PGW's collections procedures and policies,
20 including CRP program modifications.

21 7. Direct PGW to continue to file
22 its monthly "Detailed Metrics" reports
23 regarding attaining of annual enterprise
24 metrics and quarterly "Operating Statistics"

1 reports with a scope and in the form agreed
2 to with Gas Commission Staff pursuant to the
3 direction provided by Ordering Paragraph 7
4 of the Commission's FY 2015 Operating Budget
5 decision.

6 8. Direct PGW to file its proposed
7 FY 2026 Operating Budget with supporting
8 documentation by no later than May 23rd,
9 2025.

10 9. Direct PGW to file its Operating
11 Budget Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
12 Participation Forecast at the same time as
13 it files its FY 2026 Operating Budget, and
14 with all future Operating Budget filings.

15 This concludes my Motion.

16 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Is there a second to
17 the motion?

18 COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: I would like
19 to second the motion.

20 CHAIRMAN BROWN: It has been moved
21 and properly seconded.

22 Is there any further discussion?

23 - - -

24 (No response.)

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CHAIRMAN BROWN: All in favor of the
motion say aye.

COMMISSIONER URBANIA: Aye.

COMMISSIONER BRADY: Aye.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Aye.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Aye.

Any opposed?

- - -

(No response.)

- - -

CHAIRMAN BROWN: The motion carries.

- - -

(Whereupon the motion was unanimously
carried.)

- - -

Reported By: Susan Marie Migatz, RMR, CRR

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