



Office of the People's Counsel
ADVOCACY | EDUCATION | PROTECTION



February 2023

A Note from Your People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye

Preparing Today for a Better Energy Future

Last month in this space I shared with you some of the activities of the past year that have been at the forefront for OPC.

On March 1, I go before the DC Council Committee on Business and Economic Development for our Fiscal Year 2022 Agency Oversight Hearing to report on our accomplishments, and I thought it would be appropriate to preview my testimony outlining how OPC expects to build on our advocacy on behalf of DC utility consumers throughout the current fiscal year.



The theme present in my comments is that we are *Preparing Today for a Better Energy Future*. By this, I mean that not only is OPC in step with the District of Columbia in its efforts to reach

climate and environmental goals, but we are also preparing the next generation of climate leaders in their own community. Some readers may recall our first citywide climate conversation: “The Price you Pay, Straight talk about Climate Change and Environmental Injustice.” My plan is to build on that success as we host on April 29 our next climate summit focused on teens and young adults who will be working over the next decade and beyond to achieve the climate success we have begun today.

My comments also will focus on equity and fairness in the utility space. As government and regulatory bodies are moving to address climate and environmental justice issues, concerns have arisen that the benefits of proposed technologies may not be shared equitably among the haves and have nots, yet the underserved may be forced to pay a disproportionate share of the costs of new programs. Nonetheless, OPC is working to ensure that the effects of policy changes are fair and balanced. Through it all, OPC will continue to be unwavering in ensuring the delivery of safe and reliable utility services at just and reasonable rates.

I will update the Council on the status of the Washington Gas rate increase case, Pepco’s plan to request a rate increase this spring, OPC's role in addressing increasing DC Water billing complaints, and concerns consumers have raised about Verizon's changes in landline phone services.

Without a doubt, OPC has a very full year ahead, but I assure you we are vigilant and ready for the challenges. I encourage you to watch the live hearing on March 1 at 9:30 am on the Council's [website](#), cable TV [channel](#), or Council Facebook.



Permission Granted! Going Solar in DC

OPC has reached out to the Department of Buildings to bring consumers up-to-date information on the solar

permitting process in the District. The DOB was formerly a part of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). While the structure has changed, the mission to serve is the same.

Over the years, DOB’s solar permitting department has enhanced

its processes to build efficiency for home- and business owners, alike. DOB has developed a robust internal permitting and inspection process through internal collaboration involving plan reviewers and inspectors, as well as working with external solar stakeholders.

Outside of compliance requirements for permitting through DOB, an [interconnection application](#) with Pepco is also needed before a solar system can be powered up.

For residential projects, the DOB [Permit Wizard](#) is used to begin an online permit application. For commercial projects, DOB's [Citizen Access Portal](#) is the first step to installing solar on larger commercial and multifamily buildings such as apartments for community solar projects--enabling renters and those who cannot install directly on their homes to receive the benefits of solar energy.

The solar permitting [process](#) encompasses three primary functions: 1) review of fire operations, 2) review of electrical systems and existing interconnection and safety, and 3) structural review for roof soundness.

Depending on the location and type of solar project, the Historical Preservation Review Board and/or the Zoning Administrator might need to review the plans.

DC residents can take advantage of programs that can make solar an affordable option such as Solar for All, operated by the Department of Energy & Environment. To learn more visit doee.dc.gov/service/solar-initiatives. For permitting questions, visit dob.dc.gov to send a message directly via Contact Us.

Nyekah Washington, a DOB Solar Permit Reviewer, contributed this article. Reach him at nyekah.washington@dc.gov or (202) 450-0676.

The Office of the
People's Counsel
Observes

BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH

OPC salutes these pioneering People's Counsels
for the District of Columbia among State Utility Consumer
Advocates, a field in which African Americans
are underrepresented nationally



Annice M. Wagner
The 1st People's Counsel
1975 - 1977



Frederick D. Dorsey
1984 - 1990



Betty A. Noel
1991 - 2010

Preparing Today for a Better Energy Future

OPC is an independent
agency of the District
government which
advocates for consumers
of electric, water,
natural gas, and local
phone services.



Sandra Mattavous-Frye
2011 - present

OPC is here to help
local phone customers
with questions about
changes Verizon is
making with landline
phone service.



The Water Connection: How America's 1st Black Boating Club Made History on the Water

The DC Seafarer's Yacht Club was built on resistance against racism and a determination to have Black boaters enjoy the water. Decades ago, local yacht clubs were closed to Black people and marina owners refused to sell Black boaters fuel.

When African American boaters were excluded from docking on

the Potomac River, they navigated to find territory where they could enjoy shared waterway activities.

Renowned educator and civil rights icon, Mary McLeod Bethune, teamed up with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in the early 1940s to demand the U.S. Department of Interior lease an edge of marshy land on the Anacostia River to Black boating enthusiasts.

In 1945, Lewis T. Green Sr., a DC Public School teacher, launched the Seafarers and they built docks and a clubhouse originally called Green's Boat Yard. Located on the Anacostia River north of the Sousa Bridge, it is just south of the CSX Railroad bridge in Southeast Washington.

The Club soon developed a commitment to boating safety and community service. The [Seafarers](#) Yacht Club Annual Cleanup kicked off in 1985 and since has been held in conjunction with the Anacostia Watershed Society's Earth Day Cleanup. This year's will be held on [April 22](#).

Modern day boaters are grateful that water pioneers made waves so that Black boaters can enjoy the water today.

Sailing South to Serve



We must share the news that our Chief of Operations Eric Scott is

leaving OPC to travel on the next journey of his career and family life and return to his native Charlotte, North Carolina. Eric began working with OPC in 2014 and during that time, People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye says he has exemplified strong leadership and built solid relationships with not only our staff but also agency vendors and partners. He is pictured above holding his service award with the People's Counsel and the Operations staff.

Eric practiced law for 10 years in North Carolina before heading north. He worked for the DC government for 15 years. Prominent positions included Director of Operations in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, Chief of Staff for the Department of Employment Services, and Chief of Staff for the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative.

In OPC's Operations Division, Eric led projects such as the upgrade and implementation of OPC's e-invoice, e-travel, and consumer data management systems. Perhaps his OPC "swan song" will be leading the recently completed, smooth relocation of OPC's offices.

"Serving at OPC has been a joy. I have had the honor of leading an operations team that has transformed into a division that is the bedrock of the agency. My OPC colleagues are dedicated and passionate about the agency's mission and work diligently to serve the utility consumers of the District of Columbia," Eric tells the OPC Connection.

Eric will be sharing his talents and skills as the Chief of Operations for INLIVIAN, which is Charlotte's Housing Authority. OPC is grateful for his seven years of dedicated service and hard work here. We wish Eric, his wife, and daughter happy trails down south.



OPC Working for You: Working Groups at the PSC



Last month we introduced a new OPC Connection feature: OPC Working Groups at the Public Service Commission and discussed the Gas Procurement Group. This month let's look at the Customer Impact Working Group. This Working Group examines how grid modernization efforts such as deployment of microgrids or solar may impact various customer groups and looks at concerns about equity, inclusion, and consumer protection, among other things. Through this Working Group, OPC is able to provide recommendations to ensure that all customers will benefit from grid modernization policies adopted by the Commission.

OPC Connecting at the PSC



PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

OPC is Advocating for Consumers in the Following Cases:

Formal Case No. 1169: The Application of Washington Gas Light Company for Authority to Increase Existing Rates and Charges for Gas Service

On January 17, OPC filed a Joint Motion to Revise the Procedural Schedule. The Procedural Schedule as it was, did not give OPC and other parties enough time to complete the work necessary to prepare for an evidentiary hearing in this rate increase case.

On February 10, OPC filed a List of Material Issues of Fact. Each party in the case files their list to help the PSC establish a composite list of issues to be decided. Often, the parties share similar issues but at times add differing issues of concern.

Formal Case No. 1174: Washington Gas Light Company's Application for Authority to Issue Debt Securities.

On January 17, OPC filed comments asking the Commission to consolidate this issue with FC1169 or treat this matter as an evidentiary proceeding.

ET2022-05: Pepco's Multi-Dwelling Unit Plug-in-Vehicle Tariff Rate. On February 3, OPC filed comments and made several recommendations to the PSC relating to customer charges, metering, tax credit riders, and rate design, among other variables.

The Consumer Connection

**Capturing Feedback
from the Community**

A comment below was



captured on Twitter.

.@DCOPC Thank YOU #SandraMattavousFrye for your dedication to protect DC's low income seniors from Verizon's 50% rate increase for #DCLifeline recipients?!#ShoutOut to Chawndise Battle who returned our call immediately, noted our complaint and provided next steps!
@MurielBowser

Look Who Celebrated a Birthday this Month at OPC!

Dionne Calhoun ~ February 16



OPC In Your Neighborhood!

OPC looks forward to seeing you in-person. We welcome the opportunity to speak at your Advisory Neighborhood Commission, civic association or community group meeting onsite or virtually. We can give updates on utility issues, trends, and outline how we serve. Call (202) 727-3071 if your group would like our staff to make a presentation onsite or "Zoom in." Contact the organizations directly if you would like links to attend any of the meetings we'll be visiting virtually.

Department of Human Services Table Exhibit
Wednesday, March 1, 2023
9:00 am - 3:30 pm
2100 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue SE
Mini Fair at Highland Residential

Friday, March 11
10:00 am - 2:00 pm
662 Atlantic Street SE

DC Developmental Disabilities Council
Public Meeting/Aviso de Reunion
Thursday, March 16
3:00 pm-5:00 pm
Virtual

ANC 1D Meeting
Tuesday, March 21
Virtual

Photo Gallery



People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye hosts virtual meet and greets with new DC Councilmembers. Above, Zachary Parker of Ward 5, and below, Matt Frumin of Ward 3. OPC staff outlined the key issues affecting utility consumers in Wards 5 and 3 and across the city.



Far right, Assistant People’s Counsel Thaddeus Johnson speaks on a panel covering telecommunications trends at a policy summit hosted by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners here in the District. Other OPC staff attended the meeting where state consumer advocates and regulators from across the country shared best practices.



OPC's Valca Valentine and Jean Gross-Bethel share information about utility assistance programs at the Senior Spa Day hosted by the Department of Aging and Community Living and other agencies at the Kenilworth Recreation Center in Ward 7. In addition to receiving valuable information, seniors enjoyed salon treatments and other amenities to ease their daily lives.



Who “ya gonna call?” Denise Blackson, Cheryl Morse, and Jean Bethel-Gross are among the dedicated OPC Consumer Outreach Specialists who daily assists DC residents who call the office with concerns about their utility bills or services. Here, they attend a networking gathering with the Mayor’s Office of Community Relations and Washington Gas.

Connect With OPC!

Do you have feedback or an idea for an article that could be featured in an upcoming edition of the OPC Connection? We want to hear from you! Just drop our editorial team an email @ info@opc-dc.gov or tweet us [@DCOPC](https://twitter.com/DCOPC).

OPC Connection Editorial Team:

Doxie McCoy, Phillip Harmon, Quaneisha Glover, Chawndise Battle,
Thaddeus Johnson, Valca Valentine

Contributors:

Sandra Mattavous-Frye, Karen Sistrunk, Laurence Daniels,
Stephen Dudek, Linda Jefferson, Denise Blackson,
Dwayne Houston, Yohannes K.G. Mariam, Pamela Nelson

The Office of the People's Counsel, 655 15th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005 | Tel: (202) 727-3071 | Fax: (202) 727-1014 |
TTY-TTD: (202) 727-2876
www.opc-dc.gov | info@opc-dc.gov

STAY CONNECTED



Office of the People's Counsel | 655 15th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005

[Unsubscribe info@opc-dc.gov](mailto:info@opc-dc.gov)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data
Notice](#)

Sent by info@opc-dc.gov powered by



Try email marketing for free today!