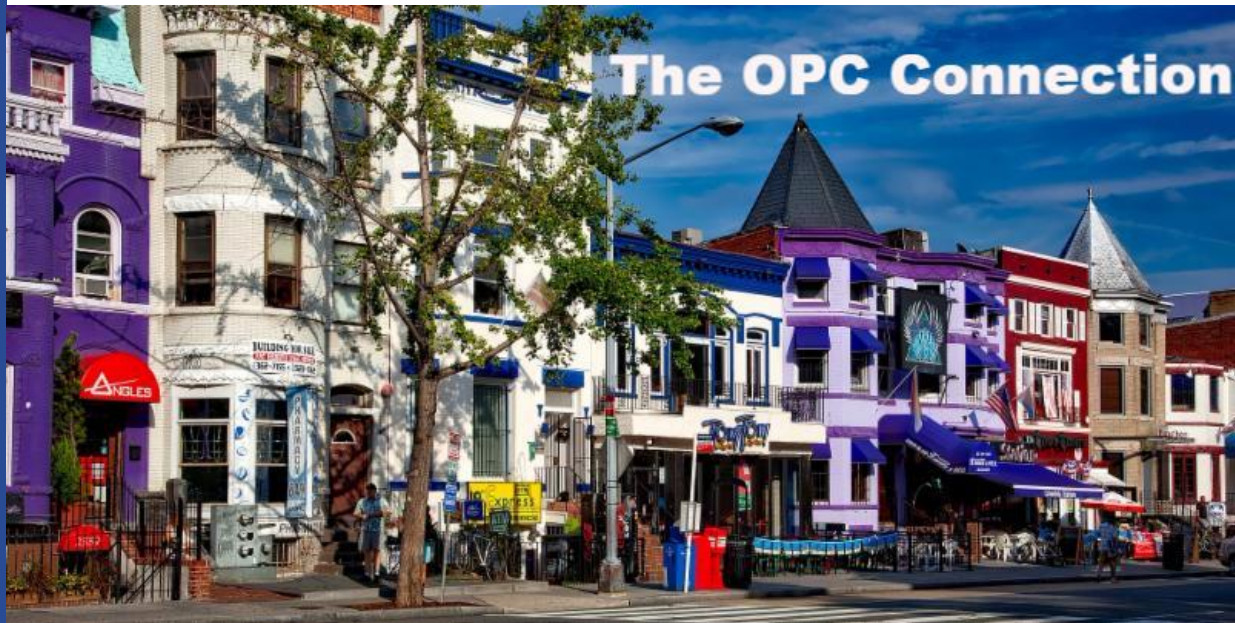




Office of the People's Counsel

ADVOCACY | EDUCATION | PROTECTION



May 2023

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

Let's Keep Talking

A recent study out of Yale University asks the question: “Who is Most Likely to Talk about Climate Change? The [analysis](#) also identifies the types of people most likely to talk with family and friends about global warming. Though not the same thing, climate change and global warming both relate to the heating of the Earth’s surface due to greenhouse gases. Among a couple of a dozen groups, the study says are most interested in talking about climate change issues, Gen Z and millennials (teens to 30s) are in the top five.



That means OPC’s Youth Climate Summit on April 29 targeting those two groups was right on time! By hosting the summit themed: “**Our Planet, Our Future**,” OPC’s goal was to empower

District youth to become advocates for climate solutions. At Catholic University, we brought together hundreds of students, climate activists, global influencers, environmental experts, and green industry employers. Sessions were: “Climate Change 101,” “Are We Ready for a Green Future,” “Be the Go-Go for Change,” and “Show Me the Green: Climate Career and Intern Opportunities.” The breakout discussion on careers was the most popular with a captive diverse audience. It showed that young people of color are interested in playing a role in shaping the energy future. This counters the premise among some that Blacks and other minorities don’t want to be active participants in the climate movement.

We wholeheartedly thank all individuals and groups that helped to make the summit a success. They include Nori Nori of WPGC, who served as MC, and DC agencies who helped bring out the crowds, including the Marion Barry Youth Leadership Institute, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure, DC Council offices, DC Public Library, Public Service Commission, and the DC Sustainable Energy Utility. I thank every single speaker, exhibitor, event planner, and most of all, the youth who showed up.

I challenge you to care about the environment and your community and continue to learn what you can do to fight climate change. Attending **Our Planet, Our Future** was the first step. Watch video highlights by Bryan Rhoades [here](#), and photos by Rob R. Roberts on this [link](#).

Connecting the Dots to Keep Consumers Connected

On April 25, 2023, OPC held its quarterly Social Service Virtual Discussion and Networking Meeting. OPC has been hosting this meeting since 2013 to bring together the utilities, government agencies and nonprofits that are working together to resolve utility consumers' bill payment issues. This session primarily focused on disconnections that have significantly increased since the pandemic-related moratorium on service interruptions expired earlier this year.

Participants (pictured below) included representatives of Pepco, Washington Gas, DC Water, the DC Department of Energy & Environment, and DC Council offices.

Speakers from the utilities and DOEE highlighted information about bill payment assistance on their websites. The nonprofits received tips for helping their clients keep their utilities running. Scroll down for examples.

OPC's next social service networking session will take place on September 21. It will feature a "poverty simulation," that will ask the question: could you survive a month in poverty? The simulation is designed to dramatically demonstrate how much time and energy many families must give just to survive from day to day. The exercise attempts to dispel the premise that "people would do fine if they would just go out and get a job."



Be Aware of Steps You Can Take to Keep the Lights on And the Water Running

If your household is behind on utility bills, please contact OPC today at (202) 727-3071.

OPC's Consumer and Water Services Divisions have received an influx of more than 300 cases over the past month. Nearly all of those cases involve pending or current disconnections, or requests for financial assistance. If you receive a disconnection notice, please do the following:

1. Act now!!! Call your utility company and/or OPC. Do not wait until you are disconnected to contact the utility company.
2. Apply for financial assistance on the [website](#) of the DC Department of Energy & Environment.
3. Try to get on a payment plan with the utility.
4. If disconnected, understand the fees and down payment needed to restore services.
5. Remember, as temperatures rise, utility companies cannot

disconnect consumers if the heat index is over 95 degrees. This weather restriction does not apply to DC Water customers.

Pepco and Washington Gas Compete for Federal Funding for Key Energy Programs



OPC is closely monitoring the monthly reports Washington Gas and Pepco have filed in their pursuit of federal funding for key climate initiatives. On April 6, 2023, Pepco applied for the “Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnership,” program administered by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The program supports the development of comprehensive and regional resilience strategies to address the increasing threats to power system infrastructure, specifically to prevent outages and enhance reliability. With these enhancements in place, consumers should expect fewer power outages during severe weather and faster restoration.

If successful, Pepco’s application would provide funds to replace an aging substation and equipment and prepare surrounding infrastructure, further improving storm resilience and security. DOE funding would cover the costs, not Pepco consumers through rate increases. Pepco anticipates receiving a decision on its application in late September 2023.

Washington Gas participates in the Mid-Atlantic Hydrogen Hub coalition, which consists of community organizations, utilities, energy producers, hydrogen technology providers, national labs, and universities that are working to adopt clean hydrogen energy solutions. On April 6, the coalition applied for a regional clean hydrogen hub grant under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. DOE administers the funding which supports the development of regional clean hydrogen hubs that DOE anticipates will create networks of hydrogen producers, consumers, and local connective infrastructure to accelerate the use of hydrogen as a clean energy fuel that can store and deliver what is considered a more environmentally friendly, low-to-no carbon emission energy source.

The application must (1) indicate the funding will support meeting the clean hydrogen production standard developed under certain

regulations; (2) demonstrate the production, processing, delivery, storage, and end-use of clean hydrogen; and (3) be able to develop into a national network to facilitate a clean hydrogen economy. DOE is expected to notify Washington Gas and its coalition members by Fall 2023 if the application will be accepted for funding.

Start Your "Train Green" Journey with the DCSEU



The District's clean energy goals are some of the most aggressive across the country. A qualified local green workforce is needed to help buildings in DC reduce energy use. The DC Sustainable Energy Utility's (DCSEU) [Train Green](#) Sustainable Energy Infrastructure Capacity Building and Pipeline Program (SEICBP) is designed to assist Certified Business Enterprises and CBE-eligible firms acquire new or enhanced skills and knowledge about energy efficiency and renewable energy design, construction, inspection, and maintenance **at no-cost**.

You can "**Train Green**" this summer by following these quick and easy steps!

- Program Access - Complete the access form at dcseu.com/TrainGreen-register and get your Fiscal Year 2023 Registrant Code.
- Course Selection - Determine your level of experience, pick a Course Pathway and Level, and choose the right course for you.

You can pick from one of the five following pathways:

- Energy Efficiency - Energy auditing, benchmarking, modeling, and optimizing energy use within commercial and residential buildings.
- Sustainability & Health - LEED rating systems and other building standards that focus on how the built environment impacts human health and wellbeing.
- Building Operations - Whole building automatization, maintenance, operations, and green property management.
- Heating, Ventilation, & Air Conditioning - HVAC system

automation, operation, and maintenance.

- Renewables & Solar - Solar safety, installation and maintenance of battery/grid based solar systems.

For course registration - Provide your Registrant Code and email at registration, wait for approval, and take your course.

Find more instructions @ dcseu.com/TrainGreen or call (202) 479-2222. **This article was contributed by DCSEU.*



Employee Spotlight:

Bryan Rhoades Is Behind the Scenes with IT & Creativity

The operations and functionality of OPC's internal systems are extremely important and OPC's Operations Division leads the way in keeping things "fired up and ready to go."

The "Ops" Division recently expanded to meet the needs of our growing agency. Enter Bryan Rhoades. His duties include installing, configuring, troubleshooting, and maintaining office hardware and software. Bryan works to ensure equipment, such as staff laptops, are functioning properly so that we can serve consumers with ease.

Before coming on board in March, the native Washingtonian received several IT certifications from Prince George's County Community College. After obtaining additional certifications, Bryan began his IT career as a lead technician with the Department of Defense. There, he moved up the career ladder into the position of senior technician at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

"When you enjoy what you do and enjoy helping people, it makes you want to learn as much as you can and be the best at what you do," Bryan states. He now has more than 14 years of experience in IT and looks forward to growing even more with OPC.

Outside of OPC, Bryan is raising his daughter and operating two businesses. One of them stocks water in about 200 stores in the DMV. He also owns and operates a recording studio in College Park, MD, where he provides artists with space and equipment.

Bryan says he is always looking for new ways to expand his creativity. He is working on getting the OPC Radio Podcast back

up and running in our new offices. Earlier in this edition, the People's Counsel noted Bryan produced a [video](#) of the OPC Youth Climate Summit.

We look forward to Bryan Rhoades leaving his tech and creative mark on OPC even more than he has already.

OPC Working for You in Working Groups at the PSC



This month we feature the "Standard Offer Services Working Group." The process that gets electricity to DC consumers via Pepco acquiring electricity that is generated outside of the District, and then delivering it to customers, is called standard offer service or "SOS." This working group was part of the Public Service Commission order that was issued in Formal Case No.1017 in 2003, allowing Pepco to be the supplier of electricity to most residential and commercial customers in the District of Columbia. Pepco won the right to supply energy here through a competitive bidding process reviewed by OPC and the Commission.

The working group is tasked with investigating, examining and considering Standard Offer Services in the District or simply put, how well does Pepco, as the primary provider of electricity in DC provide quality electric service to consumers? This helps the PSC monitor the electricity market and the resulting electricity prices.

The SOS Working Group meets at least twice a year to review changes in electricity procurement practices. OPC's participation in Formal Case No.1017 and related matters ensures that the procurement process will result in lower electricity prices for consumers.

OPC Connecting at the PSC



PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

OPC is Advocating for Consumers in the Following Cases:

Formal Case No. 1050: Investigation of the Implementation of Interconnection Standards in the District of Columbia

RM40-2023-01: Title 15 DCMR Chapter 40 – District of Columbia Small Generator Interconnection Rules

ET2023-02: Pepco's Petition to Approve a Tariff Change for 20kW and Below Residential NEM Solar Interconnection

On May 1, OPC filed Comments on Pepco's Rider NEM Proposal and a Petition for a Formal Investigation into Pepco's Compliance with Rules Governing the Interconnection of small energy Generators.

Formal Case No. 1167: Implementation of Electric and Natural Gas Climate Change Proposals

On May 1, OPC filed Comments on DC's Report on Strategic Electrification in Washington, DC. One recommendation OPC put forth is a study of the health risk of indoor air pollution from gas appliances.

On May 8, OPC filed a Joint Request with the DC Government and the Sierra Club for Reconsideration and Clarification of Order No. 21593. The Joint Parties argue the PSC has the statutory authority to order electrification in whole or in part.

Formal Case No. 1130: Investigation into Modernizing the Energy Delivery System for Increased Sustainability

Formal Case. No. 1155: Pepco's Application for Approval of its Transportation Electrification Program

On May 2, OPC presented to the PSC, a Technical Conference Report Regarding Electric Vehicle "Make Ready" Infrastructure.

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

Charges for Gas Service

On May 8, OPC filed a Joint Reply to WGL's Motion to Amend Procedural Schedule with the Apartment and Office Building Association and the Sierra Club, and requested the PSC hold evidentiary hearings and/or alternatively, to permit submission of surrebuttal testimony.

The Consumer Connection

Capturing Feedback from the Community on Twitter



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.

32nd Annual Glover Park Day Outdoor Festival
Saturday, June 3
10:00 am - 5:30 pm
Guy Mason Recreation Center
3600 Calvert Street NW

Understanding Your Utility Bills: Gas, Electric & Water
Wednesday, June 7
11:00 am - 12:30 pm
Virtual and In-Person

Model Cities Senior Wellness Center
1901 Evarts Street NE

Dialogue On Diversity - 2023 Health Care Symposium
Thursday, June 15
10:30 am - 4:00 pm
UnidosUS Raul Yzaguirre Building
1126 16th Street NW



Photo Gallery



Cool swag bags, along with information about OPC's services, are always on the table at community events OPC visits.



OPC's Doxie McCoy with Ralph Cleveland, President/CEO of the American Association of Blacks in Energy, at AABE's 46th National Conference. Sessions covered diversity, equity & inclusion in energy policy, and the impact of the transition to renewable energy on lower-income communities, among other topics.



The smiles of a consumer and OPC's Denise Blackson at a health & wellness pop up at the Link Greenleaf Recreation Center in Southwest.



Observing Older Americans Month, OPC outreach staff talk about benefit programs that help seniors pay utility bills on a Zoom

hosted by Iona Senior Services.

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).

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