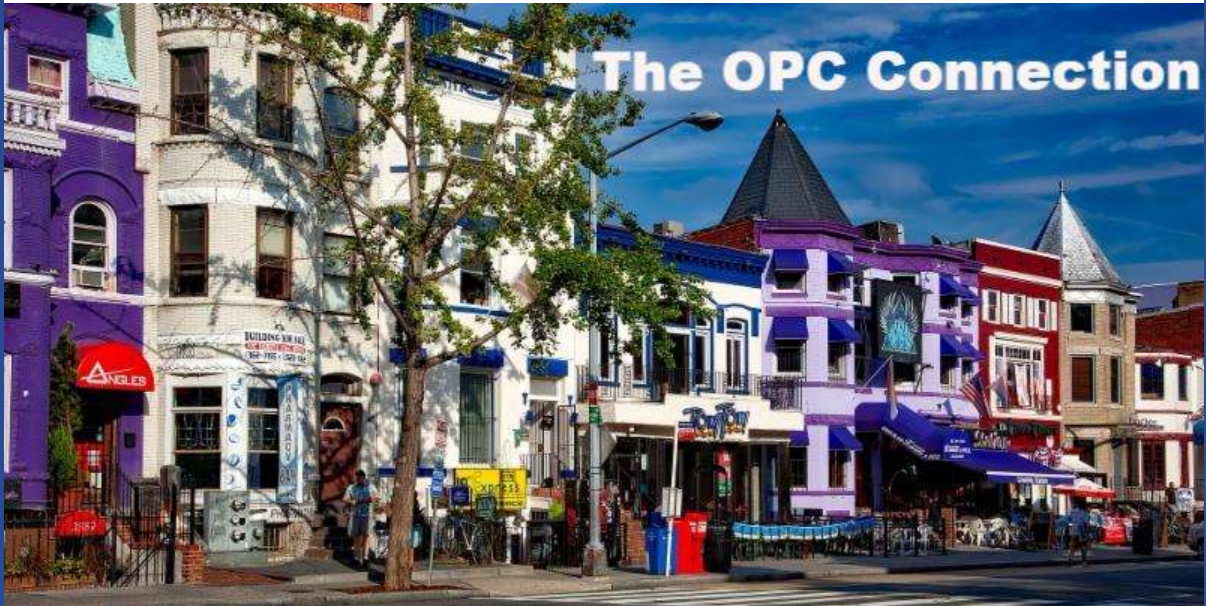




Office of the People's Counsel

ADVOCACY | EDUCATION | PROTECTION



February 2024

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

OPC is Your Utility Lawyer!

If you've seen OPC staff at a community event, you may have picked up a palm card with the tagline: "OPC is Your Utility Lawyer." For OPC, these are not just hollow words. It's a mission my staff carries out daily. Here's an example.



Kathleen Brisbane contacted OPC two years ago seeking help to address gas outages in her Ward 5 home. So, Attorney Ankush Nayar got to work. Recently, she wrote in an email: "I am thankful for Mr. Nayar and Jason Cumberbatch [OPC's engineer] and applaud them for amazing work."

Brisbane notes: "When we first met to discuss the issue and the approach to get WGL to provide continuous gas service to my home, Mr. Nayar allowed me to explain my frustration and desire to pursue the issue not only for my home but for several nearby homes. He listened attentively and then suggested that I allow him to investigate. He provided me with legal representation that would have been difficult to find outside of OPC, even bringing in Mr. Cumberbatch, who had a working history of the technical aspects of gas service.

"Mr. Nayar spent time to ensure that his interactions with WGL were fruitful, and perhaps, at times daunting to the company. He was able to get WGL to provide regular monitoring of the gas line function which helped to ensure prompt attention to each gas outage. He argued for a change in WGL's work schedule when WGL's attorney requested an unreasonable period for my gas line replacement. At each juncture in this battle, Mr. Nayar presented my case rationally and forcefully. He made arguments that resulted in WGL also accelerating the gas line upgrade for nearby houses.

"OPC should be more widely publicized since it is the only free and competent option for DC residents faced with the daunting task of getting a utility company to do what they are paid to do," Ms. Brisbane adds.

If you have reached a roadblock with a utility issue, OPC stands ready to be **Your Utility Lawyer**. Contact OPC at (202) 727-3071 or file a complaint [here](#).

ICYMI: OPC Questions Safety, Cost, and Environmental Impact of WGL's PROJECTpipes

In case you missed it, on February 13, OPC filed a petition with the DC Public Service Commission requesting an investigation into Washington Gas Light's infrastructure through which the utility delivers natural gas to your home or business.

The [petition](#) is a response to concerns about the safety and effectiveness of PROJECTpipes, WGL's multi-year and multi-million-dollar effort to replace portions of its gas delivery system. WGL customers would cover the costs through rates.

OPC believes an [investigation](#) should provide a comprehensive understanding of the problem, encompassing detection methods, repair protocols, geographic distribution, root causes, and environmental impact of natural gas leaks.

Washington Gas has asked the Commission to deny OPC's petition. Learn more about OPC's concerns [here](#) and see this news [article](#).

OPC Launches Utility Notes Video Series

OPC is dedicated to educating the public on what we understand are often very complicated legal, technical, and even scientific matters. To remove some of the mystery about what is going on in the utility industry such as why electrification matters, or how keeping the Anacostia River clean impacts your drinking water, we are using new tools to keep you informed and hopefully encouraged to participate as a lay advocate.



We know that many consumers are unable to witness OPC staff presentations at community meetings around the city. Our solution is to bring the information to you as we introduce a video series called "Utility Notes." We are producing short segments on subjects such as how to read your bill, or how to take advantage of programs such as Solar for All.

We also are creating longer video tutorials featuring OPC staff and others to share in more detail what is at stake in current cases before the Public Service Commission, why OPC is seeking an investigation into the actions of a given utility, or trends in climate and environmental issues that will affect the District.

So, join us on this journey as we use the latest technology to bring you the information you need, directly to your phone or laptop! Check out the links below. If there is an issue that you would like to see explained, just drop us an email at info@opc-dc.gov. We look forward to hearing from you!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HePcCgAIJ-8>

<https://youtu.be/PC7lvY6Q07A>

<https://youtu.be/PrLmy1OpwnE>

Let Your Voice Be Heard at Community Hearings on Pepco's Proposed Rate Hike



The Public Service Commission will host three community hearings to receive public comment on Pepco's rate increase request (FC1176) of \$190.7 million over three years. Each community hearing will begin at 5:30 pm. OPC

encourages consumers to participate as this huge rate increase is under consideration.

If you wish to testify at a community hearing, contact the Commission Secretary by 5:00 pm, three business days before the date of the hearing via email at psc-commissionsecretary@dc.gov or phone (202) 626-5150. The Commission requests that persons needing reasonable accommodations or language interpretation contact the PSC seven days before the date of the hearing. Non-English speakers must contact the Commission Secretary by the close of business, five business days before the hearing. Request special accommodation and interpretation services at (202) 626-5150. See the dates and places below.

Wednesday, March 27
Bellevue/William O. Lockridge Library
115 Atlantic Street SW

Tuesday, April 2
Lamond-Riggs/Lillian J. Huff Library
5401 South Dakota Avenue NE

Wednesday, April 3 *Hybrid in-person or virtual participation
DC Public Service Commission Hearing Room
1325 G Street NW, 8th Floor
Persons unable to attend the hearings may submit written testimony to the Commission no later than April 26, 2024. Submit comments to psc-commissionsecretary@dc.gov, or through the [**DCPSC E-Docket System**](#).

OPC will keep consumers informed throughout these proceedings. We can provide technical assistance on consumer testimony. Reach OPC at (202) 727-3071 or info@opc-dc.gov.



OPC Water Services Team Visits Blue Plains

OPC's Water Services Division

recently visited the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Plant, the largest and most advanced wastewater treatment facility on Earth, located off Interstate 295 in Southwest DC. DC Water provided OPC staff with a comprehensive tour of its operations, showcasing the entire treatment process, from filtering out large non-biodegradable objects and skimming off fats and biosolids, to biologically and chemically treating wastewater to remove harmful substances.

One notable stop was the thickening and dewatering area, where OPC staff observed the transformation of ammonia-rich waste into sterile organic carbon biosolids. These biosolids, going under the [tradename of "Bloom,"](#) are repurposed as agricultural soil additives, adding rich fertilizer back into fields, underscoring the plant's emphasis on sustainability and resource recovery.

Also of interest was Blue Plains' methane capture and reuse, enabling the facility to generate a significant portion of the energy required for operations from the methane gas waste emitted in the treatment process.

Our guide highlighted the critical role of local waterways and their interconnection to the broader ecosystem, including DC Water's

responsibility in preserving the fragile estuarine ecosystem of the Chesapeake Bay.

This visit reinforced the importance of advanced, environmentally friendly water treatment solutions and the potential for such facilities to lead the way in sustainable urban infrastructure development; it also highlighted the costs required to ensure that harmful contaminants don't damage the region's waterbodies.

How is OPC Performing?

On February 28, People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye testified before the DC Council Committee on Business and Economic Development for OPC's Fiscal Year 2023 Performance Oversight Hearing. She discussed the progress OPC has made over the past year in pursuit of our goals to ensure affordable, reliable, safe, climate-sensitive, and environmentally sustainable utility services in the District of Columbia.



The People's Counsel touched on many of the critical decisions that are being made in pending utility rate cases that will affect consumers for years to come. For example, she informed the Council about OPC's proposal in Pepco's current proceedings to establish an "affordability index" that could help regulators understand how to help many more consumers balance their energy burden.

Ms. Mattavous-Frye also commented on planning for the growth of electrification and the transition from fossil fuels in an equitable manner, in light of the city's clean energy and climate goals.

If you missed the hearing, in the coming days it will be available online. Follow OPC and Council social media for links. In the meantime, read the People's Counsel [testimony](#).

The Consumer Connection

Capturing Feedback from the Community



Here's an Email from a Ward 7 Resident:

"A few months ago, the water at my residence had been turned off. [The Office of Councilmember Vincent C. Gray] referred me to the Office of the Peoples Counsel and Mr. Jason Starks reached out to assist me. Mr. Starks answered or returned all of my phone calls and worked tirelessly to assist me in getting my water restored. I am pleased to know that there are still some committed workers going the last mile to assist citizens with these problems. "Mr. Starks was kind, and polite and never complained that I got on his nerves, which I know I did. He did not give up until my water was restored.

"I would also like to commend Valca Valentine of OPC who responded to me when Mr. Starks was not available, Ms. Valentine was very instrumental in making referrals and contacting agencies to assist me with my water problems. She was of great support to me when I called crying to her because I had no water. She was uplifting and encouraging and kept me assured that I would have help to get my water restored because I was so stressed.

"Committed workers such as Mr. Starks and Ms. Valentine make the world a better place to live."

Employee Spotlight: Adam Carlesco is Riding High

Adam Carlesco joined OPC in May 2023 as an Assistant People's Counsel. His core responsibilities include serving as legal counsel for OPC's Water Services Division. Adam is also responsible for tracking and commenting on federal and local legislation and regulations related to utility services and their intersection with environmental and climate change issues.



Adam was born in Syracuse, NY. He later resided in Roanoke and Richmond, VA, and the Philadelphia area before settling down in the DMV in 2012. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia Tech and his Juris Doctorate from George Washington University Law School. Adam has been practicing law for about 10 years, largely as a nonprofit advocacy attorney, working across the spectrum of environmental issues as well as government transparency. A proud moment of his career was working on one of the largest Freedom of Information Act litigation dockets in the nation while representing government scientist whistleblowers.

Fellow OPC employees are amazed at Adam's bike-riding adventures. Just before the bicycle commuter joined OPC, he navigated a 9-day solo ride across the Netherlands. Adam also is a music enthusiast--he can play multiple instruments and has recorded two albums. Adam has a green thumb and says he can identify most plants in the region. He and his wife enjoy pottery making and painting.

Away from the office, public service is Adam's passion. He volunteers as a court-appointed advocate for teens in foster care.



PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

OPC is Advocating for Consumers in the Following Cases:

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

On January 19, OPC filed comments on Pepco's Proposed Vehicle Plug-In Green Rider Tariff and Rate Update.

Formal Case No. 1154: Application of Washington Gas Light Company for Approval of the PROJECTpipes2 Plan

On January 22, OPC filed Comments to WGL's Response to Order No. 21940. OPC maintains that WGL has failed to provide adequate justification for extending PROJECTpipes 2 for the duration of 2024.

On January 22, OPC Filed Comments on Continuum Capital's Audit Report of PROJECTPipes 2. OPC respectfully requests that the Commission not approve the continuation of PROJECTPipes.

Formal Case No. 1017: Development and Designation of Standard Offer Service in the District of Columbia

On January 26, OPC filed Comments on Pepco's Proposed Request for Proposals and Power Purchase Agreement.

OPC In Your Neighborhood!

OPC welcomes opportunities to speak at your Advisory Neighborhood Commission, civic association, community group activity, or meeting, either onsite or virtually. We can give updates on utility issues, and trends, and highlight how we serve DC consumers. Call (202) 727-3071 if your group would like our staff to make an onsite or virtual presentation. Scheduled meetings are below:

ANC 8D Hybrid Meeting
Community of Hope
4 Atlantic Street SW
Thursday, February 29
6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Business Expo 2024 "Moving Business Forward"
Walter E. Washington Convention Center
801 Mount Vernon Place NW
Thursday, March 28
10:00 am- 12:30 pm

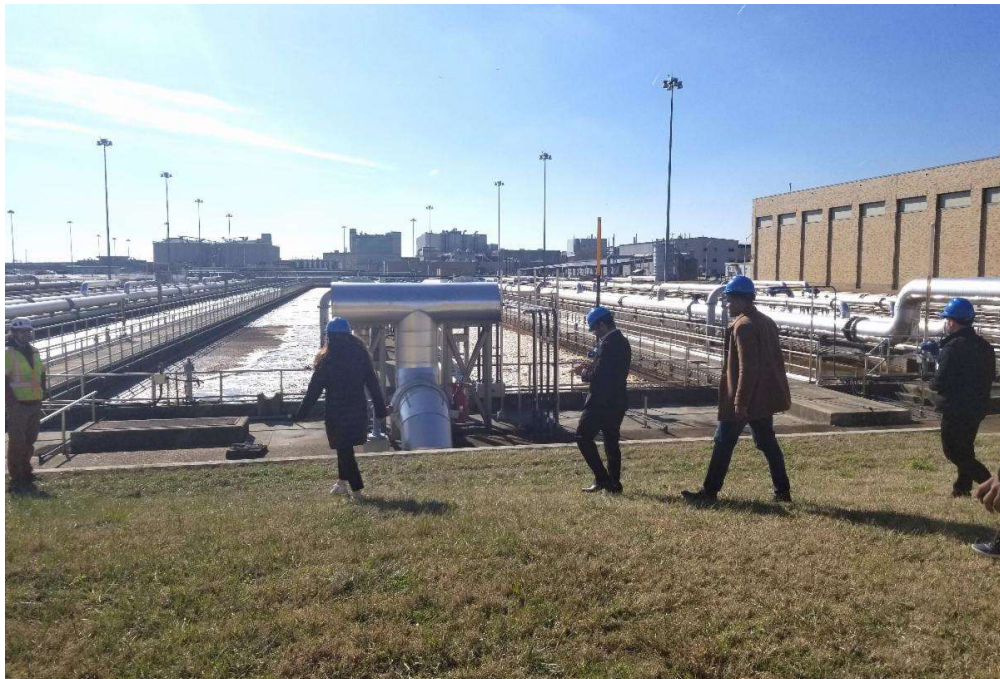
Photo Gallery



OPC's Jean Gross-Bethel (2nd from left) with the Ward 7 Mini Commission on Aging at the Ridge Road Community Center in Southeast, where she provided an update on key utility issues and a tutorial on how to read utility bills.



OPC's Water Services Division tours DC Water's Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant.



Wastewater is collected by the sewer systems in the District, and suburban Maryland and Virginia, and is delivered to Blue Plains.

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 X/tweet us [@DCOPC](https://twitter.com/DCOPC).

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