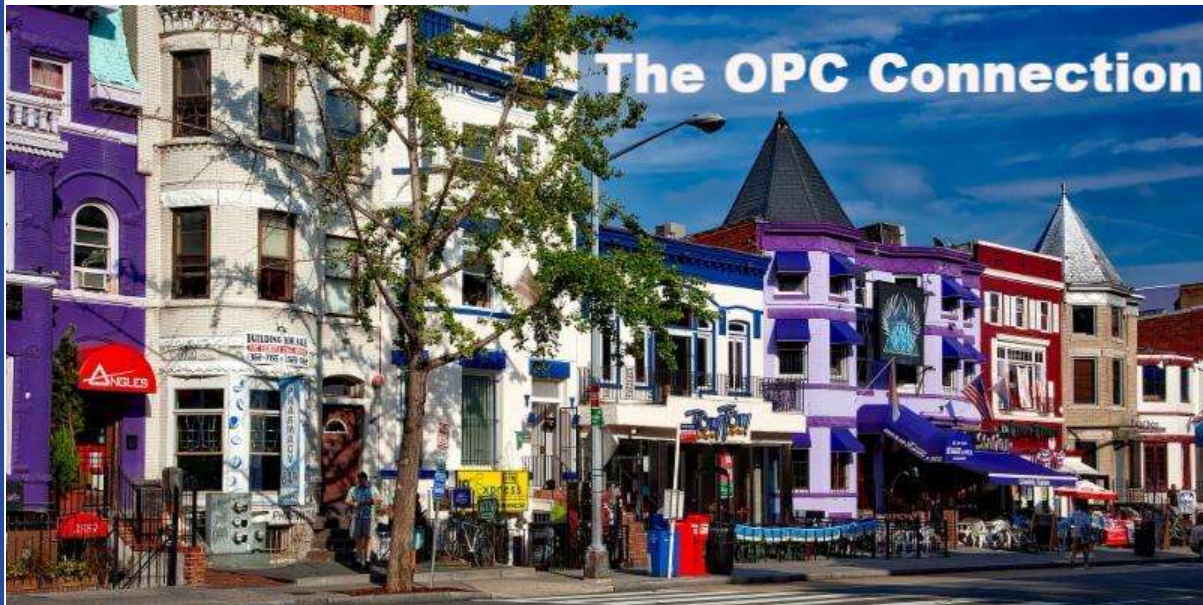




Office of the People's Counsel
ADVOCACY | EDUCATION | PROTECTION



April 2024

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

Planet vs. Plastics

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the Washington Monument, and listening to speakers stress the urgency to save our planet. The observance was the launching pad for a citizen movement that produced new environmental laws and public investments to reduce air pollution, protect nature, and clean our water. For 2024, the theme is “Planet vs. Plastics,” and the focus is on reducing plastic production by 60% by 2040.

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Remember, a little preventive maintenance now can save you from major plumbing headaches later. Let's make this spring a season of fresh starts and leak-free homes!



Connecting with an OPC Partner

Let's Think About Energy Efficiency

Article by Daron F. Coates,
Co-Founder of [ThinkBox](#)

Commercial, nonprofit, and religious building owners in the District are at a historic crossroads with the opportunity to access large amounts of capital, lower operating costs, support their communities, and positively impact the climate. The challenges to realizing these benefits may be complex but are not insurmountable.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy projects are solutions to meeting today's challenges and realizing lasting benefits. These projects can lower energy bills; replace aging equipment; provide

construction capital; meet climate regulations; and create jobs, training, and entrepreneurship opportunities for our communities.

Governments have made over \$50 billion available to execute these projects nationwide, but they require expertise in engineering, financial structuring, operational planning, implementation support, and ongoing measurement and verification. Many DC entities, including [Zion Baptist Church](#) in Northwest, affordable housing developments, charter schools, and others have greatly benefited from the successful execution of these projects - funded with lower operating costs and public incentives - to replace critical infrastructure and equipment and install solar. OPC aggressively educates these entities and works with partners like ThinkBox to facilitate their ability to receive the benefits of available projects.

The key to successfully leaving behind a measurable positive impact on local communities is having expertise on your side of the table to maximize benefits and minimize risk. While funding, contracting, and public incentive options have grown significantly over the past couple of decades, so has the complexity of selecting a winning team. It is important to intentionally partner with a team that specializes in comprehensive project integration and has a proven track record.

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2nd Annual Fashion Show with the Cameo Club
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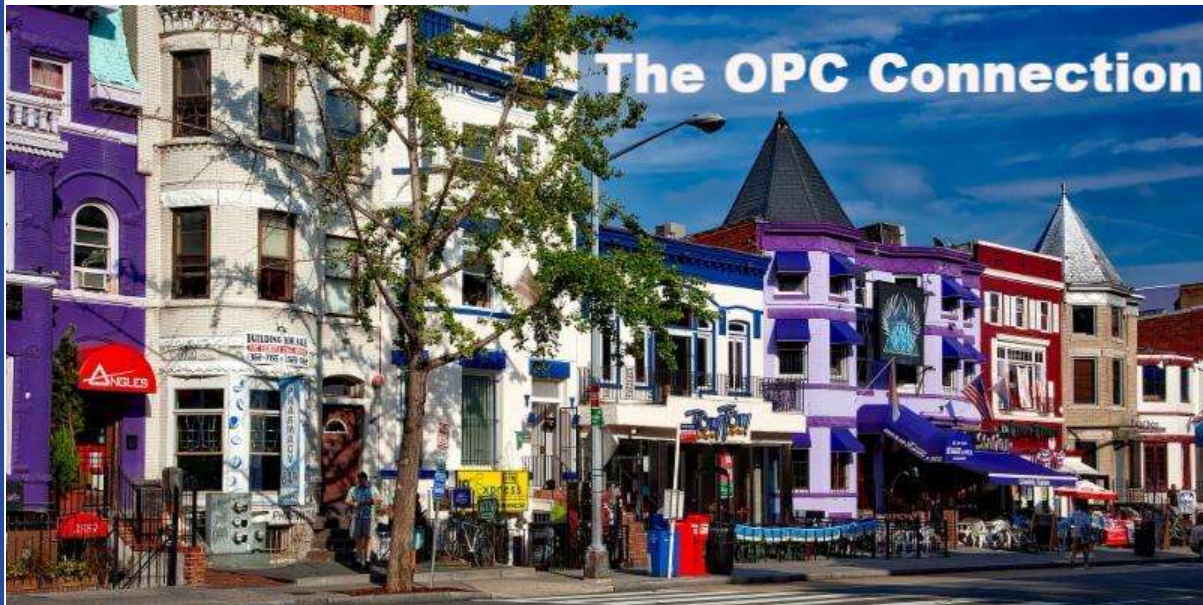
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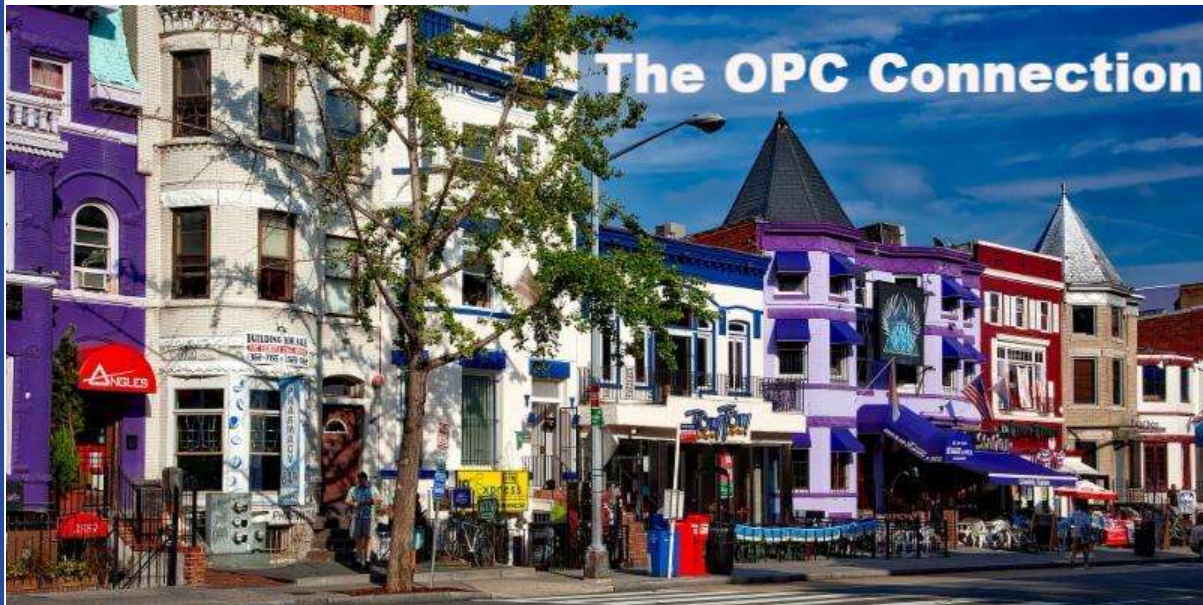
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Article by Daron F. Coates,
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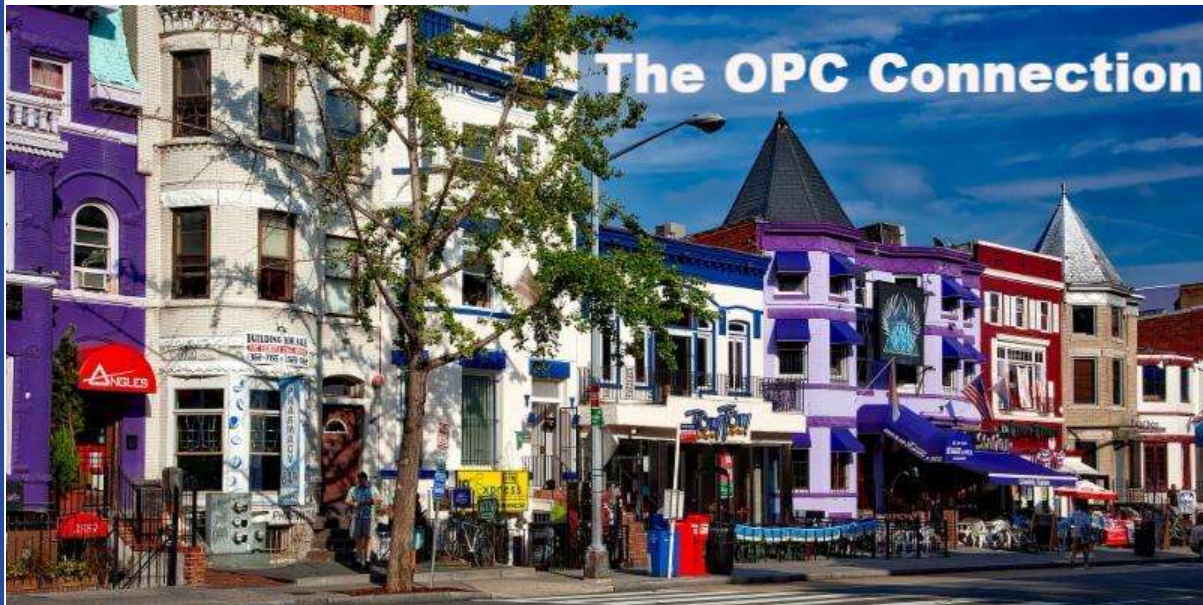
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April 2024

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Sandra Mattavous-Frye**

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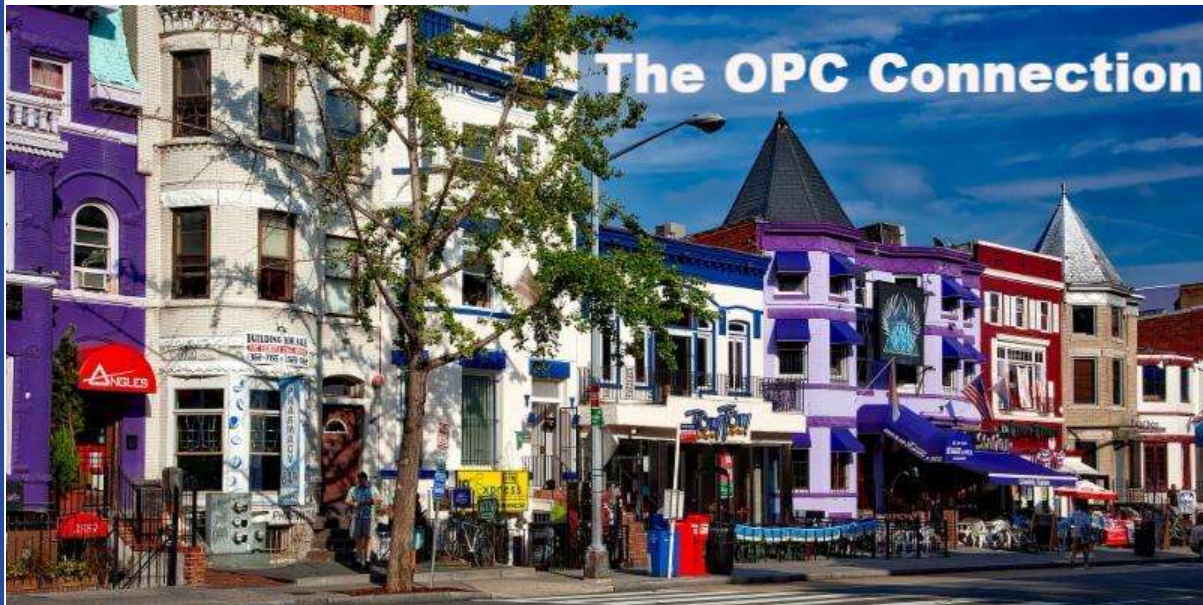
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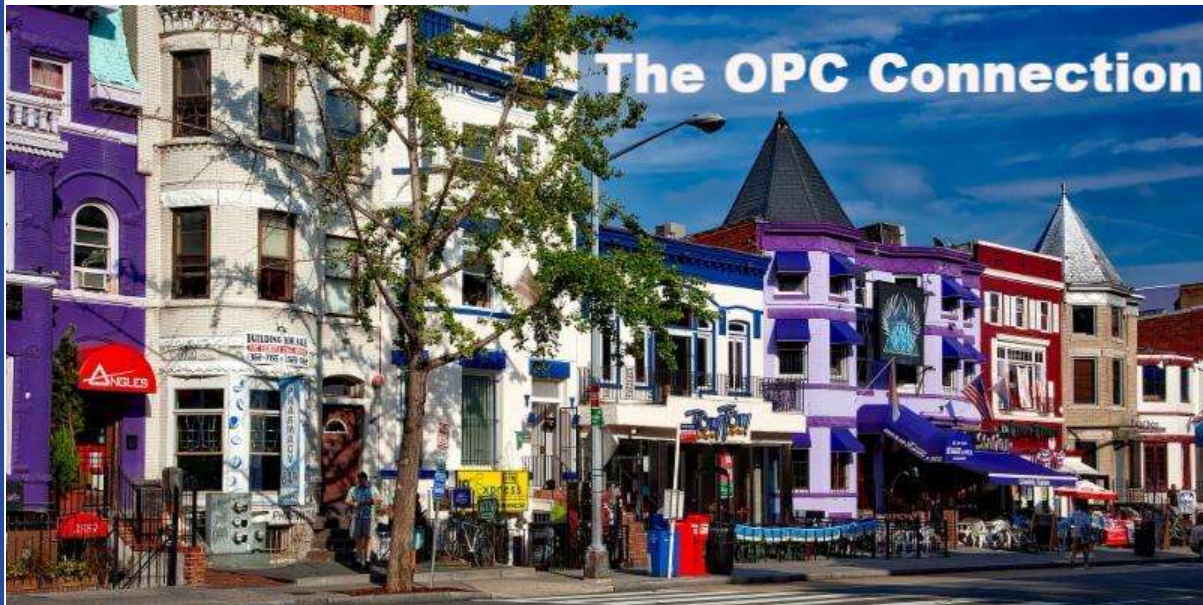
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April 2024

**A Note from Your
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Sandra Mattavous-Frye**

Planet vs. Plastics

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the Washington Monument, and listening to speakers stress the urgency to save our planet. The observance was the launching pad for a citizen movement that produced new environmental laws and public investments to reduce air pollution, protect nature, and clean our water. For 2024, the theme is “Planet vs. Plastics,” and the focus is on reducing plastic production by 60% by 2040.

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Remember, a little preventive maintenance now can save you from major plumbing headaches later. Let's make this spring a season of fresh starts and leak-free homes!



Connecting with an OPC Partner

Let's Think About Energy Efficiency

Article by Daron F. Coates,
Co-Founder of [ThinkBox](#)

Commercial, nonprofit, and religious building owners in the District are at a historic crossroads with the opportunity to access large amounts of capital, lower operating costs, support their communities, and positively impact the climate. The challenges to realizing these benefits may be complex but are not insurmountable.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy projects are solutions to meeting today's challenges and realizing lasting benefits. These projects can lower energy bills; replace aging equipment; provide

construction capital; meet climate regulations; and create jobs, training, and entrepreneurship opportunities for our communities.

Governments have made over \$50 billion available to execute these projects nationwide, but they require expertise in engineering, financial structuring, operational planning, implementation support, and ongoing measurement and verification. Many DC entities, including [Zion Baptist Church](#) in Northwest, affordable housing developments, charter schools, and others have greatly benefited from the successful execution of these projects - funded with lower operating costs and public incentives - to replace critical infrastructure and equipment and install solar. OPC aggressively educates these entities and works with partners like ThinkBox to facilitate their ability to receive the benefits of available projects.

The key to successfully leaving behind a measurable positive impact on local communities is having expertise on your side of the table to maximize benefits and minimize risk. While funding, contracting, and public incentive options have grown significantly over the past couple of decades, so has the complexity of selecting a winning team. It is important to intentionally partner with a team that specializes in comprehensive project integration and has a proven track record.

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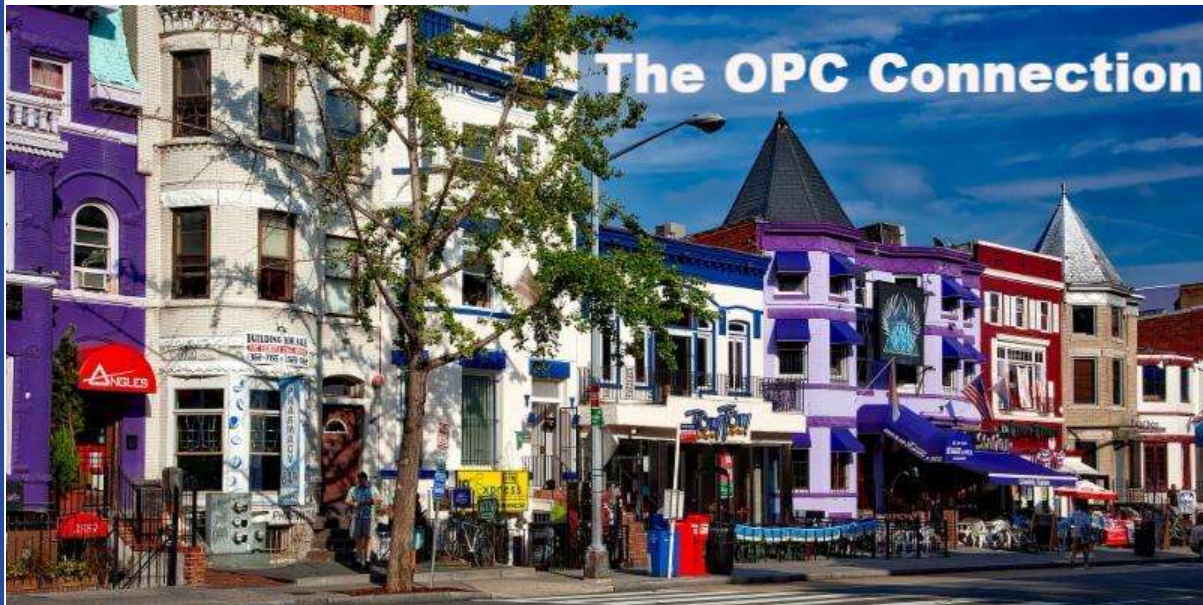
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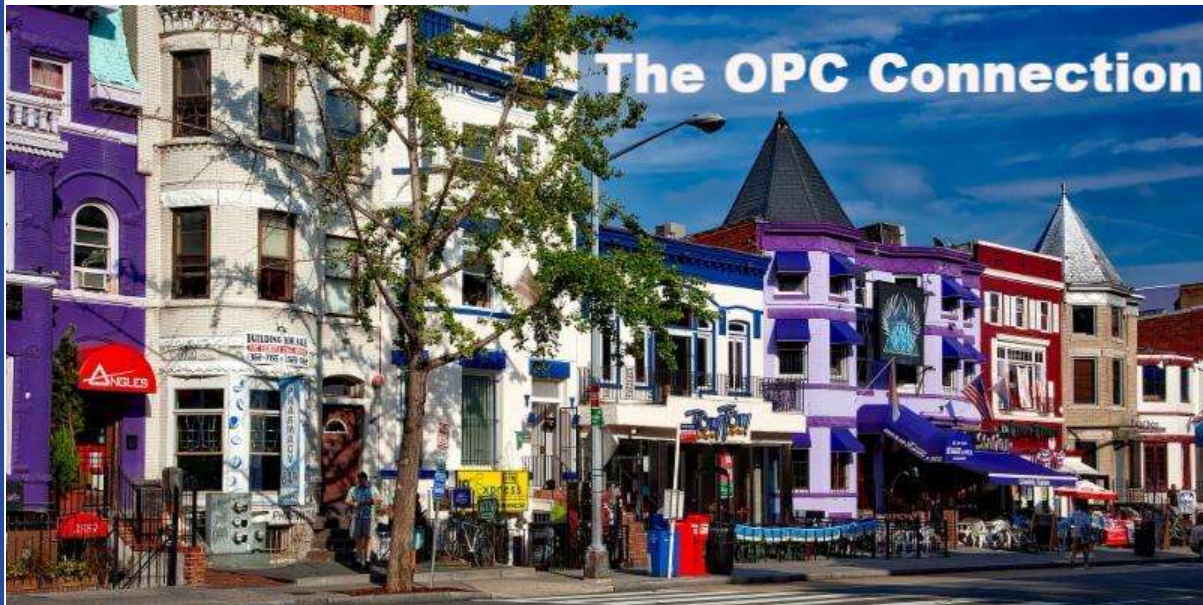
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A Win in OPC’s Corner as the Pepco Rate Case Proceeds



OPC is keeping you up to date on the proceedings related to Pepco’s application to implement a multiyear rate plan which will affect the way your rates are increased.

On April 1, the Public Service Commission issued a decision (order 21976) in favor of an OPC request. OPC sought modifications to the procedural schedule for the PSC’s consideration of Pepco’s application. OPC argued that the schedule should be modified to include a deadline for Pepco to provide responses to OPC’s request for data from Pepco. Furthermore, OPC and other parties to the case asserted that they would need more time to incorporate Pepco’s responses into their subsequent testimony.

Pepco opposed OPC’s motion. However, the Commission disagreed with the utility, stating that OPC presented good reasons why the procedural schedule should be adjusted to establish a deadline for Pepco to provide responses and more time for OPC and other parties to review and respond in future testimony.

In case you missed it, the Commission recently held three public hearings to hear from consumers. People’s Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye stepped up to the podium to speak at the final

one on April 3. Among other points, she called on consumers to educate themselves on the rate increase case, consider all sides, and recognize that Pepco has an obligation to be a good corporate partner with no strings attached. See the entire hearing on this link: [PSC Community Hearing](#), with the People's Counsel's comments at the 1:33:24 mark. Or go directly to her testimony [here](#).

OPC Connects Key Reps to Help Consumers Stay Connected

“Staying Connected” was the theme of OPC’s Social Services Discussion and Networking Meeting on April 9. The virtual webinar brought together key stakeholders to discuss processes and strategies to help consumers avoid utility service disconnections.

More than 80 individuals from across the social service spectrum attended, including representatives from DC Council offices, Pepco, Washington Gas, DC Water, and the Department of Energy & Environment. Speakers shared insightful information and tools consumers can use to keep the lights on and the water running.

Rachelle P. Nigro, Pepco's Senior Community Relations Specialist, stressed the need for consumers to reach out to Pepco's customer service before they are disconnected so that the utility can try to address their needs. For example, if a resident has a medical issue, contact Pepco to have that information placed on file, she said.

DeShandra Jones, Washington Gas Senior Director of Billing, Collections, and Digital Experience, advised consumers to reach out to the company for assistance with payment plans, which can be extended up to 24 months in certain situations.

Meisha Thomas, DC Water Director of Customer Care, discussed the disconnection process, when liens can be placed on a property, and bill payment assistance.

Sharon Y. Cooke, DOEE Energy Assistance Center Supervisor, provided a comprehensive overview of the application process for Low Income Heating Energy Assistance/LIHEAP and the Utility Discount Program. According to Cooke, many residents are eligible for the programs but are not taking advantage of them. Applications can be completed at doee.dc.gov.

In addition, OPC staff led breakout sessions where attendees were able to ask the speakers questions to get more information. Participants, some pictured below, indicated that the discussions were helpful. OPC values partnerships as we all work together to ensure consumers' utility needs are met.





The Water Connection

Spring Cleaning: Plumbing Hacks to Keep Your Home Flowing Smoothly!

As the days grow longer and flowers bloom, it's time to give your plumbing system some much-needed attention. Spring cleaning isn't just about decluttering and dusting; it's also an opportunity to ensure your pipes, faucets, and drains are in tip-top shape. Let's dive into practical tips that will keep your home leak-free and your water flowing seamlessly:

Inspect Faucets and Fixtures: Check for any leaks or drips in your faucets. A small leak can waste gallons of water over time. Tighten loose handles and replace worn-out washers to prevent leaks.

Clear Those Drains: Spring is the perfect time to clear out debris from your drains. Remove hair, soap scum, and other gunk that might be clogging them. Consider using a natural drain cleaner by pouring a mixture of baking soda and vinegar down the drain, followed by hot water.

Check Your Water Heater: Flush your water heater to remove sediment buildup. This improves efficiency and prolongs its lifespan. Inspect the pressure relief valve for any signs of leakage.

Inspect Outdoor Plumbing: Examine outdoor hose bibs and sprinkler systems. Make sure they're not damaged or leaking. If you turn off outdoor faucets during winter, turn them back on and check for leaks.

Test Your Sump Pump: Spring showers can lead to basement flooding. Test your sump pump by pouring water into the pit. Make sure it activates and pumps water away from your home.

Look for Hidden Leaks: Inspect under sinks, around toilets, and behind appliances for any signs of water damage or leaks. Address leaks promptly to prevent mold growth and structural issues.

Remember, a little preventive maintenance now can save you from major plumbing headaches later. Let's make this spring a season of fresh starts and leak-free homes!



Connecting with an OPC Partner

Let's Think About Energy Efficiency

Article by Daron F. Coates,
Co-Founder of [ThinkBox](#)

Commercial, nonprofit, and religious building owners in the District are at a historic crossroads with the opportunity to access large amounts of capital, lower operating costs, support their communities, and positively impact the climate. The challenges to realizing these benefits may be complex but are not insurmountable.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy projects are solutions to meeting today's challenges and realizing lasting benefits. These projects can lower energy bills; replace aging equipment; provide

construction capital; meet climate regulations; and create jobs, training, and entrepreneurship opportunities for our communities.

Governments have made over \$50 billion available to execute these projects nationwide, but they require expertise in engineering, financial structuring, operational planning, implementation support, and ongoing measurement and verification. Many DC entities, including [Zion Baptist Church](#) in Northwest, affordable housing developments, charter schools, and others have greatly benefited from the successful execution of these projects - funded with lower operating costs and public incentives - to replace critical infrastructure and equipment and install solar. OPC aggressively educates these entities and works with partners like ThinkBox to facilitate their ability to receive the benefits of available projects.

The key to successfully leaving behind a measurable positive impact on local communities is having expertise on your side of the table to maximize benefits and minimize risk. While funding, contracting, and public incentive options have grown significantly over the past couple of decades, so has the complexity of selecting a winning team. It is important to intentionally partner with a team that specializes in comprehensive project integration and has a proven track record.

The window of opportunity is open. Look into it now.



**PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMISSION**

OPC is Advocating for Consumers in the Following Cases:

Formal Case No. 1176: Pepco's Application to Implement a Multiyear Rate Plan

On April 1, OPC filed a Reply to Pepco's Response in Opposition to the Motion to Dismiss or, in the Alternative, Motion for Summary Disposition. This motion asks the PSC to dismiss this case and if not dismiss the case, order a judgment for OPC.

Formal Case No. 1142: The Merger of AltaGas, Ltd. and Washington Gas Holdings, Inc.

On April 11, OPC filed a letter of support for the DC Government's comments to AltaGas's response to the Show Cause Order.

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 appearances are below.

Nineteenth Street Baptist Church
Salute to Older Americans Month
4606 16th Street NW
Wednesday, May 1
10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Department of Aging & Community Living & Partners

Older Americans Resource Fair
2nd Annual Fashion Show with the Cameo Club
Hattie Holmes Senior Wellness Center
324 Kennedy Street NW
Wednesday, May 15
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

DACL & Partners Older Americans Resource Fair
2nd Annual Fashion Show with the Cameo Club
Model Cities Senior Wellness Center
1901 Evarts Street NE
Wednesday, May 22
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Photo Gallery



From left, Cristian Salgado of the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs, OPC's Jean Gross-Bethel and Linda Jefferson, People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye, OPC Language Access Coordinator

Silvia Garrick, Roland Roebuck, Deputy People's Counsel Karen Sistrunk, and Phil Harmon of OPC, at the 20th anniversary celebration of the DC Language Access Act.



OPC staff were out in full force at the Healthy Homes Fair at the DC Armory, giving information about ways to lower utility bills and avert disconnections.



OPC's Claire Shibelski and Jean Gross-Bethel present at the Lamond-Riggs Citizens Association meeting in Northeast.



From left, Dr. Yohannes Mariam of OPC, Janani Shankaran of the DC Department of Energy & Environment, and Doxie McCoy of OPC chat at the Clean Energy States Alliance Summit on the Inflation Reduction Act at Gallaudet University, where information on federal funding to advance clean energy initiatives was shared with state energy office representatives.



From left, Valca Valentine of OPC, women's group leaders Celeste Garcia, Jeannette Mobley, and Hazel Thomas; and Doxie McCoy of OPC attend an Emancipation Day event hosted by the Office of the Secretary.

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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STAY CONNECTED

