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Public Service Commission of the
District of Columbia
Second Community Hearing
Natural Gas Safety

Wednesday, May 15, 2019
1325 G Street, N.W., Suite 800
Hearing Room
Washington, D.C. 20005
2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Reported by: Samuel Honig

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A P P E A R A N C E S

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION

Chairman Willie L. Phillips

Commissioner Richard A. Beverly

Commissioner Greeg J. Gillis

ON BEHALF OF WASHINGTON GAS

John O'Brien

Apera Nwora

Stephen Price

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. PRICE: All right. We are now going to
3 call to order the Public Services Commission's
4 Community Hearing on Natural Gas Pipeline Safety in
5 the District.

6 I'm still Willie Phillips, and also the same
7 people, and I'm still with the same people: Mr.
8 Richard Beverly, Mr. Gillis -- today is still May
9 15th, and the time is 2:06 p.m. in the Commission's
10 hearing room.

11 We are gathered to hear the community's
12 concerns related to natural gas safety in the District
13 of Columbia, and to receive an update from the natural
14 gas utility on the dissemination of information on gas
15 leaks and public safety measures to the community.

16 On behalf of the Commission, I want to thank
17 all community members, public witnesses, the Office of
18 the People's Counsel, and Washington Gas for
19 participating.

20 I would like to emphasize that natural gas
21 pipeline safety is a top priority for the Commission
22 and an important objective in carrying out our mission

1 to ensure safe and reliable service to all District
2 residents.

3 Through our public notice we have informed
4 Washington Gas that we would like to hear from them on
5 the following pipeline safety issues: What
6 communication channels has the company established to
7 delivery safety information to the public and to
8 receive feedback? What is the company's plan for
9 addressing community concerns related to prompt safety
10 communication with the public? What actions should
11 the public take, or to avoid, in the event of a gas
12 order, or when the company is addressing a gas leak?

13 Public witnesses representing organizations
14 will be given five minutes for oral presentations, and
15 individuals will be given three minutes to articulate
16 their concerns.

17 Please note that this hearing is being
18 recorded and streaming live, so we ask that you turn
19 off all cell phones, or anything that transmits an
20 electric signal. I guess that includes the Chairman
21 as well.

22 Electronic devices can interfere with our

1 electronic systems, as well as just being distracting.

2 Next, I would like to invite Washington Gas
3 to address the topics included in the public notice
4 for the hearing. Washington Gas...

5 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chairman Phillips.
6 Commissioners Beverly and Gillis, thank you very much
7 for this hearing.

8 We appreciate the time, and certainly we
9 welcome this hearing to explain to you where we are on
10 some of the issues that were raised in the February
11 6th hearing, as well as our subsequent work in those.

12 Much of this I'm going to yield the floor to
13 my colleague, Apera Nwora, who will talk a lot about
14 the community pilot program, and some of our other
15 communications channels. And then we are present here
16 to talk about any other questions that came up.

17 So, I would like to just raise a couple of
18 things; that also we are available for questions, but
19 on a couple of the -- so first, Apera will talk really
20 about what you laid out, and then we'll be available
21 for questions, which is the channels of communication,
22 you know, continued building of a communications plan,

1 as well as actions we hope the public remembers, and
2 the actions they should take, in terms of the smell of
3 gas, and so forth. So, I think you'll really see that
4 in her presentation.

5 In addition, there were certainly some
6 individual complaints, or questions, that came up in
7 the last hearing. One of them, as an example, is
8 McGill Terrace (ph) and the work we had to do at
9 McGill Terrace, and I think we're about complete with
10 that work this week.

11 So, and then there are other general
12 criticisms, or things for us to think about in the
13 future, which are in buckets, which -- primarily
14 around lack of communication regarding leak work,
15 which again, goes to Apera's presentation.

16 Some of our restoration efforts, which I
17 think -- you know, I think we are making some good
18 efforts at. I think McGill Terrace is an example of
19 that, in terms of both the work and the restoration.
20 Certainly, some days we're hampered by weather, but
21 certainly -- and if citizens here have restoration
22 concerns, or questions, we hope we hear those today

1 and we can take action on those.

2 The one thing we were asked to look, again,
3 and we do on a regular basis, in terms of methane leak
4 detection and air quality issues, and again, I do --
5 we certainly do have some of our technical experts
6 here, but we do, again, want to stress that the
7 technology that we use, in terms of prioritizing leaks
8 for replacement, and pipe replacement, you know, we do
9 use the state of the art technology, in terms of
10 technology for emissions and measuring emissions.

11 We certainly would continue to work with the
12 staff, at your permission, to talk about the expense
13 of those technologies, and types of technology, in
14 terms of technology readiness that are out there.

15 I would also note that we, under the merger
16 commitments, as you're aware, we are to get to you by
17 the end of this year, a business plan that talks about
18 our role in the Mayor's work to get to carbon
19 neutrality by 2050, and then there's also subsequence
20 [sic] council legislation on that, which has an
21 earlier date for electricity.

22 But I think that you will see in that

1 business plan -- we'll talk about some of these issues
2 as well, so I would want to note that on those other
3 technologies that are out there.

4 And then, also, you asked us also about an
5 interactive map, and we have worked with,
6 particularly, Con Edison, but we are talking with
7 other companies that have done that. We, actually,
8 have more of a detailed meeting between the IT groups
9 in Con Ed and ourselves, that we are setting up, to go
10 through how they designed that.

11 As we have learned, that is not something
12 they bought off the shelf; they actually designed that
13 and put it in themselves, so we would have to work
14 with them.

15 But again, at your -- with your permission,
16 we would like to continue that work with the staff,
17 both as to design, what Con Ed's experience is with
18 that technology, or that map, and how it works. So,
19 that was also raised at the February 6th hearing.

20 So, those are two items that we believe we
21 should be working further on, as you direct us to, but
22 certainly, we would like to work with your staff on

1 that. On those two issues.

2 So, I think with that we have people here who
3 can answer questions, but I think as to the pilot
4 program that we have established in 2-E and Ward 5, as
5 well as some of the questions that were highlighted in
6 the meeting notice, with your permission I would yield
7 to my colleague to start. Thank you.

8 MS. NWORA: Good afternoon, Chairman
9 Phillips, Commissioner Beverly, and Commissioner
10 Gillis. It's a pleasure to be before you all again
11 this afternoon.

12 So, in addressing the things that were kind
13 of outlined in the agenda, as well as things that Mr.
14 O'Brien mentioned, I would like to start where we've
15 been since February 6th, the initial February 6th
16 hearing, and kind of give a high-level overview of
17 some of our outreach and engagement opportunities to
18 have tried to take part in to get us to this point
19 here, and then, again, answer any questions that may
20 come up from the information that we share.

21 So, on April 1st we launched what we call
22 Washington Gas Engagement Model Initiative,

1 particularly for Wards 2-E and Ward 5. That is
2 supposed to a look ahead and look behind of gas work
3 that will happen in those perspective areas. It's a
4 Share Point site.

5 So, in working with our IT team, as well as
6 our public affairs team, our operations and our
7 constructions team, it was a very manual process of,
8 kind of, outlining the information that actually you
9 all receive on a daily -- given the schedule for
10 Washington Gas and where the trucks will be, as well
11 as if there were any emergency works that were
12 actually acted upon.

13 So, not every call is being broadcast on the
14 Share Point site, but what I shared on the Share Point
15 site is if we respond and actually work to something.
16 So, that's the look behind, and the look ahead is
17 planned work.

18 So, we sent that to every council member of
19 those prospective wards, their staff, OPC, PSC staff
20 receive that information, and the ANC's of those
21 locations receive that information, as well, to gain
22 access to the Share Point to date. And, like I said,

1 we launched April 1st; to date, we've had 11 unique
2 users.

3 So, I would say that it may not be a fair
4 enough time to, kind of, quantify engagement, but
5 we've had 11 unique users, so basically access the
6 site, and their accessing it -- we've had about 84 to
7 100 unique hits, which means their either looking at
8 the look ahead information, or the look behind.

9 We've had some critique. We did receive,
10 actually, some great critique from an ANC in Wards 2-
11 E, and how we can enhance the information that's
12 portrayed on that website. So, we are working to make
13 those enhancements to that particular Share Point
14 side.

15 But also, not only in the Share Point site,
16 we have been actively engaged in community walks. So,
17 wherever there is a planned project work, we have done
18 community walks in Georgetown area, and actually, we
19 just completed one in Ward 6 yesterday, and also in
20 Ward 8.

21 And during all those community walks, we kind
22 of talk about where we are on the street, why we're

1 doing what we're doing what we're doing, and of
2 course, it was made known that we had, not only this
3 hearing today, but we are doing things to address our
4 proactive approach and reaching out to customers on a
5 more frequent basis, so they understand what we're
6 doing and why we're doing it. Not only in our work
7 related to what's planned, or our accelerated pipe
8 program, but in the event that there was an emergency
9 situation and we had to respond to leaks.

10 So, we are enhancing our door hangers, and
11 the communication that we are leaving there. We are
12 getting our contractors onboard with making sure that
13 they're leaving that accurate information, as well as
14 their contact information, so residents know who to
15 call.

16 When it comes to what can residents do to
17 prevent a gas leak, I don't necessarily think there's
18 anything that they can do to prevent a gas leak, but
19 as you all know, that there's campaigns, such as
20 excavation and before you dig where to call, and all
21 of that work is still going on.

22 But one thing that we cannot communicate, and

1 over-communicate, is any time that customers smell a
2 gas odor, they should call 911, and they should also
3 call 844-WashGas.

4 So, we're being more proactive in that
5 messaging. In fact, we've just done some publications
6 in El Tempo (ph), The Informer, and the Georgetownner,
7 just specifically related to gas safety, what to do
8 when you see our trucks, what does that mean, what the
9 lines in your street may mean. Because just because
10 you see a yellow line, does not necessarily mean that
11 there's an issue, or something to be alarmed; that's
12 just a marking.

13 So, doing those type of proactive
14 communications, we have increased that and are
15 steadily increasing that, as to how we can broaden our
16 outreach and allow the community to understand, not
17 only our business, but the work that we do.

18 John mentioned that we are looking into the
19 interactive map. We were hoping that the Share Point
20 site could lend, as to how active customers would be,
21 when it comes to web technology. So far it has not
22 proven, again, that it's going to get that much use,

1 but it may not have just been enough time, since this
2 just launched on April 1st.

3 But one thing that I am very excited about,
4 is we have been working with the D.C. Alerts, to sort
5 of get some -- a mobile communication, and how we
6 define that communication, or alerting customers, when
7 there is, what we would call a disruption, in an area
8 and making that something that is readily available to
9 our customers, should they sign up for that service.

10 So, those are just some things, and hopefully
11 that will -- we will solidify that partnership and
12 that relationship by the fall.

13 So, those are just some high-level key
14 highlights on things that we've been doing, and like I
15 said, we are welcome to questions and engagement. I'm
16 always open. I am now a vestibule -- people have my
17 contact information to get in contact with me, so we
18 are just working to progress, and whatever comes out
19 of this, and going forward, we are open to working in
20 coordination with everyone, all of you here.

21 So, with that, I yield.

22 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Thank you. Commissioner

1 Beverly, Commissioner Gillis, do you have any comments
2 or questions?

3 COMMISSIONER BEVERLY: I do have a question,
4 or at least an observation.

5 When you mentioned ANC area 2-E and Ward 5 to
6 be the target for the pilot that you're running; can
7 you explain why it's limited to that, for people that
8 wouldn't know that are listening to this?

9 MS. NWORA: Absolutely. So, the hope is to
10 -- the hope and goal, and the unicorn vision, is
11 actually to have it open to the entire District. What
12 we are discovering is that, as I stated, it is a very
13 manual process. And the onset, even if we go back to
14 February 6th, has been what we would call an influx of
15 concern coming out of those two areas.

16 So, it would just -- it made sense to not --
17 to concentrate it to those areas where that influx was
18 happening at that time, which could possibly account
19 for why there's only been 11 people using it thus far,
20 but the actual goal is to open up that type of
21 program, or something else, to the District at large
22 because it is such a manual process. Like, it's

1 literally people going in, extracting information, and
2 it's time consuming.

3 We're still in internal conversation, how
4 that will work. It will probably take a more enhanced
5 IT system to, kind of, coordinate all of those
6 efforts, but right now we've limited it to the place
7 where we were receiving a high concern and in influx
8 of issues.

9 COMMISSIONER BEVERLY: Do you have an
10 estimate timeline for when this might expand?

11 MR. O'BRIEN: Two things; one is we do, in
12 talking with staff here, is we got ready -- we would
13 like to come back at the end of the summer and see
14 where we are on the program, and where we are on how
15 to deal with it, in terms of the manual piece.

16 I want to say that -- the one thing I will
17 say, and there are some in the audience who do call
18 and ask us about leaks, or activity in their
19 neighborhood, and we do try to get back to them. That
20 is not a pilot program, so when people do call us we
21 want to make sure, and I want to reiterate that, this
22 was -- this certainly arose out of two key areas where

1 we had received a lot of concentrated calls, so we
2 thought that these were good areas to do a pilot on.

3 The challenge is, not so much the planned
4 work, which you all see on a daily basis, it is also
5 the -- some of the emergent work that we want to get
6 to people, and that becomes one of the big challenges,
7 in terms of the manual what happened, what's the
8 resolution, making sure we can pull the report
9 together.

10 So, I think, Mr. Beverly, we certainly will
11 be back before you. I think through the summer we'll
12 see how we do with this, and where we can expand it
13 to, but I do want to reiterate, A, what Apera said is,
14 please call us if you smell gas, number one. But,
15 number two, if people do call with concerns about
16 trucks in their neighborhood, that is not -- we don't
17 say there's a pilot and you're in Ward 4, or Ward 8,
18 we do get back to them and answer their concern.

19 It is how we can do this in a planned way, so
20 that ANC members might have it on a LISTSERV, or
21 otherwise, and how we can get to the full city.

22 COMMISSIONER BEVERLY: Okay.

1 MR. PRICE: Commissioner Gillis?

2 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: Thank you, Chairman.

3 And thank you, Washington Gas. I think this is a --
4 you were able to address some of the concerns that
5 were presented in February 6.

6 Questions about the portal and the access.
7 You mentioned that you're -- yes, you are allowing a
8 week ahead, if you look and what's planned, and then
9 the week behind, when it actually has happened. Have
10 you given thought to having more than just a week
11 ahead? Maybe looking at a two week ahead schedule.
12 And if not, could you explain why a week ahead is
13 approximate?

14 MS. NWORA: It's interesting that you ask
15 that, because that was a part of the feedback that was
16 given by Commissioner Lohse in Ward 2-E.

17 One, it has to do with the actual scheduling.
18 So -- and this is leading to things that O'Brien just
19 stated --

20 MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. O'Brien.

21 MS. NWORA: Mr. O'Brien stated -- our
22 scheduled -- our planned work, it shifts, and this is

1 something even I am learning, a lot, just based upon
2 priority and what was needed to be handled immediately
3 that day.

4 And so, I -- I -- we are vacillating with are
5 we giving too much information, or just enough, with
6 just that week, in that week. And if that's useful
7 information in that week, because the hope is, what's
8 happening in that week will also -- you shouldn't see
9 that on your next following week.

10 And so, we have to track how that -- and if
11 you are seeing the same planned work on the planned
12 week ahead, then we probably need to -- maybe it needs
13 to be even condensed a little bit more.

14 So, by the summer we hope to work out those
15 types of timely kinks.

16 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: Great. Great. Thank
17 you. And also, leads to a second question, based off
18 of what you just said, I'm sure there are situations
19 that come up, as you go through the week, that things
20 fluctuate.

21 MS. NWORA: Right.

22 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: And things change, and

1 then you find that you may need to validate some of
2 the information that you put out in the week ahead --

3 MS. NWORA: Right.

4 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: -- during that week.
5 That may be a little difference once it becomes the
6 past work.

7 MS. NWORA: Exactly.

8 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: Has the company thought
9 as to how to validate that information on that week
10 ahead, especially if things change, whether it's a
11 location site, or national project type code, or what
12 have you, as you go through the -- as it's shown as
13 the planned work?

14 MS. NWORA: Absolutely. Because right now,
15 there's only two tabs on the site. So, we are
16 considering opening up another tab that talks about --
17 especially in the look behind work -- so, for example,
18 there was a situation on Olive Street this week; that
19 situation was handled, right? It was taken care of,
20 but our crews have to come back.

21 So, technically, that work that happened on
22 Olive, that's still -- that is still an open -- what

1 we would call an open issue. So that should probably
2 shift then to a new tab, so residents, customers,
3 stakeholders, understand that, okay, the issue has
4 been resolved. Like, the construction part of this
5 has been resolved, but there may be some restoration,
6 though. And this is what the restoration tab looks
7 like.

8 And so, actually walking customers through
9 the process of the work, and what that looks like,
10 until it is completely resolved off of that, either
11 look behind, or look ahead, outlook. Yes, we are
12 considering that that will be, and what that will look
13 like.

14 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: Thank you.

15 MR. PRICE: I don't have a question as much
16 as just a comment. I am not necessarily disappointed,
17 but the eleven unique users is surprising, and I just
18 want to offer our staff, Marie Smith (ph), who's here
19 in the audience, and Kelly Digue (ph), who's our
20 communications expert, if we can come up with a plan
21 to make sure that the ANC's, in particular, are doing
22 everything that they can to make this information

1 available to their constituents. I just want to make
2 sure that we're doing everything that we can.

3 MS. NWORA: That would be very, very helpful.
4 I was excited about the eleven, because two weeks ago
5 it was three, and I was a little bit apprehensive,
6 because I understand that this is information that
7 people want, and they deserve, so I just want to make
8 sure that we are giving it accurately, and using all
9 of our stakeholders to kind of communicate that
10 information.

11 Because I don't want the work to go in vain,
12 and I also do not want our stakeholders to feel as if
13 we are not trying, because we are trying every avenue
14 to get you the information that you need, but it is --
15 it will be a collaborative effort on how you all are
16 receiving that information. So, yes.

17 COMMISSIONER BEVERLY: We appreciate your
18 efforts. At this time -- and also, I welcome you to
19 come to the table, if you want. If you don't want to
20 have to keep getting back, the company is welcome to
21 come to the table.

22 I will now call the first pre-registered

1 witnesses to speak. I will ask that you state your
2 name, and whether you're testifying as an individual
3 or representing an organization. Again, organization
4 representatives will have five minutes, and those
5 speaking as an individual will have three minutes.

6 All witnesses should refer to the video
7 monitor, which will display a clock that shows how
8 much time you have available to complete your
9 testimony.

10 And the first name that I have, a familiar
11 name, Mr. Edward Segal. He's representing Georgetown
12 Gas Leaks (ph).

13 MR. SEGAL: Good afternoon. Chairman Beverly
14 -- I'm sorry -- Chairman Phillips. I didn't want to
15 give you a premature promotion. Commissioner Beverly,
16 Commissioner Gillis. My name is Edward Segal, I'm
17 representing myself today, and I wanted to thank you,
18 again, for the opportunity to speak to you, as I did
19 in February.

20 I live in Georgetown and I maintain the
21 GeorgetownGasLeaks.com website, and the DC Gas Leaks
22 log.

1 In February I spoke about the unfortunate
2 failure of Washington Gas to notify the public about
3 the number, nature, danger level, and repair of the
4 thousands of gas leaks that we've had across the city.

5 As far as I and the public are concerned, the
6 only thing that has changed since February is the fact
7 that, at least my community, we've had at least a
8 dozen more gas leaks. The last one is very fresh;
9 yesterday. There was one before that, just a few days
10 prior to that, on Olive Street.

11 So, things haven't changed, in terms of the
12 continuing problem of the gas leaks throughout the
13 city.

14 The most recent gas leak brought the
15 unofficial total in Georgetown, since 2016, to at
16 least 140. This is an unofficial total because we
17 still don't get an account from Washington Gas about
18 the status of gas leaks in the city on a regular daily
19 basis.

20 And across the city, it's even worse; at
21 least 4,000 gas leaks. Most of them have been the
22 most dangerous kind, grade one.

1 Everything else remains the same. Despite
2 the potential danger posed by grade one gas leaks,
3 Washington Gas continues to keep the public in the
4 dark about the obvious potential hazards.

5 The Washington Gas website continues to urge
6 people who smell natural gas to leave the area, move
7 to a safe location, and not use appliance, lights, or
8 motor vehicles.

9 That's great advice, obviously, but what
10 about everyone else who's left behind in the community
11 after these people leave their house because of
12 Washington Gas's advice? Why doesn't Washington Gas,
13 or the DC Government, immediately notify the rest of
14 the community about the danger and how to stay safe?

15 Neither I or anyone else in my community has
16 ever been told to leave the area because of any of the
17 dozens of gas leaks that have been reported and
18 confirmed by Washington Gas. Why is that?

19 Washington Gas should stop keeping us in the
20 dark. They should immediately share with the public
21 the same information about natural gas leaks and
22 repairs that they're required to report under D.C. law

1 to the D.C. Government.

2 That important information should be easily
3 available through an interactive online map, social
4 media, and other communication tools.

5 The good news is that I was very happy to
6 hear that Washington Gas is now working with Con
7 Edison to create and launch an online map. I'm also
8 glad to hear that they're now working Alert D.C. to
9 use that existing technology to get the word out.

10 And, I don't mean to brag, but these were two
11 of the major reforms I was calling for more than two
12 years ago. So, I'm happy to see that these steps, and
13 I hope other steps, will be taken in that direction.

14 There was reference made to the look ahead
15 and look behind reports. That's good, but frankly, I
16 want to look now at how what's happening. The
17 thousands of people in my community, I think, see or
18 hear or smell gas, they see Washington Gas trucks
19 patrolling, they see them doing the work; they want to
20 know now what's happening, not a week from now.

21 The bottom line is this; if Washington Gas
22 won't provide, or can't provide, full daily public

1 disclosure about natural gas leaks and repairs in our
2 neighborhood, then the D.C. Government should.

3 Homeowners should also be told about the age,
4 condition, and safety status of the gas pipelines that
5 are adjacent to their properties.

6 We all deserve to have confidence and peace
7 of mind about the potential dangers to our safety that
8 lie beneath our streets. I'm sorry, but we certainly
9 do not have that confidence now.

10 Thank you very much.

11 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Thank you, Mr. Segal.
12 And thank you for your leadership on this issue. I
13 want to ask my colleagues; do they have any questions
14 or comments while we have you here at the microphone?
15 Thank you. Will you please continue to communicate --

16 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: I have one questions,
17 Chairman, I'm sorry.

18 Mr. Segal, again, yes, thank you for
19 appearing before the Commission.

20 Question, you had engagement with Washington
21 Gas with regards to the interactive portal --

22 MR. SEGAL: No.

1 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: No?

2 MR. SEGAL: No. I just learned about it at
3 the ANC meeting I attend. I did ask whether that -- I
4 could have access to that, and I never heard back.
5 Not from Washington Gas, but from a number of the ANC.
6 And since we're really on the same side of this, I
7 don't see it's a matter of us versus them; I think
8 it's a matter of the entire community acknowledging
9 and working together on this urgent public safety
10 issue.

11 That's why I've made the offer before, and
12 I'll make it again publicly, by background is in
13 public relations and marketing, this has been my
14 career for 30-plus years, and I got involved in this
15 issue with natural gas leaks when I returned from
16 California and moved back to my community. I'm more
17 than willing and glad to work with you and Washington
18 Gas to share my knowledge and expertise and public
19 relations. I think I know, based on my own
20 experience, the public is really hungry for this
21 information.

22 Now I'm scratching my head that their pilot

1 project does not have the visibility and interaction
2 that I think it deserves. So, I'll repeat my offer.
3 I'm willing to work with you, pro bono basis for the
4 good of the community, to use my expertise and skills
5 to help generate publicity and awareness about what
6 Washington Gas has done, is doing, and will be doing
7 in the future. Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: Thank you, Mr. Segal.

9 MR. SEGAL: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Thank you. We'll now
11 call our next witness, Mary Feeherry.

12 MS. FEEHERRY: Good afternoon. Thank you for
13 the opportunity to testify to the Public Service
14 Commission.

15 My name is Mary Feeherry. I'm a long time
16 D.C. resident and member of the Clean Energy
17 Commission of the Sierra Club D.C. Chapter. Sierra
18 Club is the nation's oldest advocate for the
19 environment, and in the District, we have 3,000 dues
20 paying members, all of whom are concerned about this
21 issue.

22 Pursuant to the Clean Energy D.C. Omnibus

1 Amendment Act of 2018, the Public Service Commission
2 is required to "take into consideration the effects on
3 global climate change the District's climate
4 commitments when making its regulatory decisions."

5 In my comments today I will be focusing on
6 the threat caused by the continuing leakage of methane
7 gas in neighborhoods served by Washington Gas. I will
8 then point out that in the long term, D.C. must
9 transition away from using gas all together, and that
10 was must start that transition now.

11 The D.C. Chapter of the Sierra Club is
12 concerned that Washington Gas mains are leaking
13 methane gas. The Club is concerned about these leaks
14 for several reasons.

15 First, because they are a threat to the
16 safety of the residents, and second, because their
17 impacts on the climate change crisis.

18 D.C. has committed to reduce its greenhouse
19 gas emission by 50 percent below its 2000 levels by
20 2032, and to be carbon neutral by 2050. To achieve
21 these goals, D.C. needs to begin now to reduce its
22 dependence on fossil fuels, including methane gas, and

1 to stop burning fossil fuels entirely within a few
2 decades.

3 These are ambitious goals that cannot be met
4 while we are burning and leaking methane, a powerful
5 greenhouse gas, 80 times more potent than CO2, and
6 therefore, much more harmful to the environment.

7 Washington Gas cannot expect to reduce
8 greenhouse gas in our environment when methane leaks
9 are occurring. These leaks are dangerous, and
10 Washington Gas may not be implementing state of the
11 art technology to deal with them.

12 For example, we understand the utility in
13 Pittsburgh is using advanced leak detection methods
14 developed in partnership with the Environmental
15 Defense Fund and Google Earth Outreach to map and
16 measure leaks coming from underground pipes. They are
17 using highly sensitive leak detection sensors, and
18 advanced data analytics. D.C. may benefit from a
19 similar approach.

20 Over the period that Pipes One Program (ph)
21 was in place, the number of leaks identified appears
22 to have continued to rise at an alarming rate

1 according to data provided by the Apartment and Office
2 Buildings Association. It also appears that the money
3 spent in the Pipes One Plan was not necessarily
4 targeted at replacing the most serious leaks.

5 We, therefore, ask that in future money spent
6 on mitigating methane be strongly prioritized to
7 specifically address the most dangerous and most
8 serious leaks first. We also ask that this money be
9 tied to achieving specific and ambitious goals in the
10 reduction of the volume of methane leaked from
11 distribution systems.

12 But even if all leaks were somehow fixed,
13 D.C. simply cannot achieve its climate goal of
14 becoming carbon neutral by 2050 if it continues to
15 rely on gas for heating and cooking.

16 To help avert the gravest consequences of the
17 climate crisis, we must end our dependence on gas
18 altogether. This can be accomplished by transitioning
19 from gas to electricity generated by renewable sources
20 for heating and cooking. We urge the Public Service
21 Commission to take its climate responsibility
22 seriously and begin planning the process of

1 conversation to electricity. It should be done first
2 in all new construction, avoiding the initial cost of
3 gas hook up, then existing buildings should be
4 converted, perhaps by incentivizing the retrofitting
5 of older structures.

6 Converting to electricity will have positive
7 outcomes. A reduction of leaks of environmentally
8 hazardous methane gas, and safety of citizens from the
9 emission of methane gas in buildings, which has
10 resulted in deaths and displacement.

11 Other cities across the U.S. are already
12 beginning the transition. For example, in the City of
13 Berkeley, an ordinance is currently being introduced
14 and would prohibit hooking up new buildings to natural
15 gas, essentially mandating all electric homes. Los
16 Angeles has a similar plan to require all new
17 construction to be zero carbon by 2030.

18 Let's transition to electricity. Once that
19 transition is complete, we will not need to debate how
20 to spend huge sums of money over decades on upgrading
21 an aging and dangerous distribution system for dirty
22 gas.

1 Thank you for the opportunity to testify to
2 you.

3 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Thank you for your
4 testimony. Thank you so much. Please, if you have a
5 copy of your testimony, provide it to the Commission
6 secretary.

7 MS. FEEHERRY: Sure.

8 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: And Mr. Segal, as well,
9 if you have a copy. All witnesses. Thank you.

10 We'll call our next witness, Natalie Karas.

11 MS. KARAS:

12 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Welcome.

13 MS. KARAS: Hi. Good afternoon, Chairman
14 Phillips, Commissioner Beverly, Commissioner Gillis,
15 and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this
16 important issue.

17 I am appearing today on behalf of the
18 Environmental Defense Fund, but also as a D.C. citizen
19 and WGL customer.

20 EDF is an environmental non-profit
21 organization, more than two million members, and a
22 global staff of over 700 economists, scientists,

1 policy experts, and other professionals. Working with
2 industry scientist and academics, EDF finds practical
3 and lasting solutions to the world's most pressing
4 environmental problems.

5 At the first community hearing in February, I
6 testified about EDF's collaborations with several gas
7 utilities across the United States to map and quantify
8 leaks on their distribution systems using advanced
9 leak detection technology and data analytics.

10 A number of utilities have deployed this
11 technology, including Center Point Energy, Pacific Gas
12 and Electric Company, People's Gas of Pittsburgh,
13 National Grid, Consolidated Edison, among others.

14 Compared to the current labor intensive
15 techniques, this technology allows utilities to drive
16 streets up to 40 miles per hour collecting two samples
17 per second and creating millions of data points. It
18 consistently finds three to five times more leaks than
19 traditional methods, due to its greater sensitivity,
20 leading to the triple win of improved safety, repair
21 cost savings, and environmental benefits.

22 In my work across the country, I've observed

1 that we are in the midst of a predictive analytics
2 revolution where utilities have a tremendous
3 opportunity to take advantage of state of the art
4 methods and technology to find many more leaks on
5 their systems and prioritize and repair those leaks in
6 an efficient manner.

7 I have also observed that within the utility
8 industry there are both leaders and laggards. In WGL
9 Project Pipes II (ph) proceeding in formal case 1154,
10 the Office of the People's Counsel submitted the
11 technical affidavit of Virginia Polascos (ph) which
12 was appended to the March 22nd, 2019, comments. That
13 affidavit details how advanced leak detection
14 technology and data analytics can improve safety and
15 lead to cost savings and climate benefits.

16 In its reply comments in that proceeding, WGL
17 states that it supports the continued dialogue on
18 advanced leak detection but believes that this issue
19 should be explored in this proceeding, formal case
20 977. Divorcing the issue of advanced leak detection
21 technology from cost recovery could lead to
22 significant missed opportunities.

1 EDF's work has shown that advanced leak
2 detection technology and data analytics provide a
3 framework that allows utilities to act using leak data
4 to prioritize investments.

5 The estimated cost for WGL's distribution
6 replacement portion of the proposed Pipes II Plan is
7 \$277.1 million. Where, as here, such investments are
8 significant, prioritization using advanced leak
9 detection technology can lead to important
10 efficiencies and notable consumer savings.

11 For example, Public Service Electric and Gas,
12 New Jersey's largest utility, achieved an 83 percent
13 reduction of methane emissions by replacing one-third
14 fewer miles of gas lines, as compared to a business as
15 usual scenario.

16 As this example demonstrates, incorporating
17 advanced leak detection technology would allow the
18 company to operationalize emissions data, providing
19 the means to quantify greenhouse gas emissions
20 reductions, by ensuring that the largest leaks are
21 fixed first. A goal that would allow the District to
22 put real numbers behind its climate action plan.

1 In short, there's a tremendous opportunity
2 for WGL to employ these advanced digital tools within
3 the context of its proposed prioritization program.

4 We look forward to working with WGL, the PSC
5 and stakeholders, to help develop the pathway for
6 implementing best practices in D.C. Thank you for the
7 opportunity.

8 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 We'll call our next witness, Rick Murphy.

11 MS. LOHSE: Rick?

12 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Murphy.

13 MS. LOHSE: He's not here, and I'm after him,
14 I think...

15 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Okay. Sure. Ms.
16 Gwendolyn Lohse.

17 MS. LOHSE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Are you speaking on
19 behalf of Mr. Murphy?

20 MS. LOHSE: I am. I am. Good afternoon,
21 Chairman Phillips, and Commissioner Beverly, and
22 Commissioner Gillis. Thank you for having us testify

1 today.

2 I am representing Advisory Neighborhood ANC
3 Single Member District 2-E-06, which is on the east
4 side of Georgetown. Overall, ANC 2-E represents about
5 12,000 residents, plus the students of Georgetown.

6 Per our testimony in February, my district
7 has been ground zero for the Georgetown gas leaks, and
8 I think Ed spoke to some of the numbers, many of which
9 have been in my specific area.

10 As shared in our initial testimony in
11 February 2019, given the unclear data published on the
12 leaks, plus our community's experience, we identified
13 three main areas of concern. The lack of and quality
14 of communications, safety, and the quality of project
15 management. Therefore, ANC's initial testimony, again
16 in February, we outlined ten recommendations around
17 improving the quality of communications, improving the
18 quality of project management, and involving the
19 oversight of the utility by your Commission.

20 The residents of ANC 2-E greatly appreciate
21 the work that Washington Gas is undertaking for our
22 community, and we have seen some improvements since

1 February. That said, the residents of ANC 2-E still
2 remained concerned and frustrated.

3 Our testimony today will focus on the
4 progress, in respect to our initial recommendations,
5 and the perspective of our community is that
6 additional actions are needed to meet the
7 improvements. Our natural gas utility, Washington
8 Gas, is demonstrating a commitment to make
9 improvements; however, the challenges called for by
10 our recommendations are going to take time.

11 So, ANC 2-E strongly advises the Public
12 Service Commission to continue to expect improvements,
13 to track them, and to publicly report on the status of
14 the improvements. And I'm going to run down the ten
15 recommendations quickly and give you a status update.

16 Our first one, which was -- there's five of
17 them under quality of communications, one through
18 five. The first one is determining how Washington Gas
19 will proactively communicate with residents about
20 unscheduled repair work and consider if Washington Gas
21 could do a pilot. I think we heard a little bit about
22 the pilot just a minute ago. And this would also

1 include, potentially, how they might use social media.

2 So, the status, Washington Gas has launched,
3 since we met in February, a portal. It's piloting an
4 online repair tracking portal with us and Ward 5,
5 among others. We appreciate the effort being made by
6 the portal and we've provided feedback, detailed
7 feedback, on that portal.

8 The portal has tried to include retrospective
9 information on the unscheduled repairs. This
10 information on unscheduled repairs is included in the
11 portal the week after the repairs occur.

12 We advise Washington Gas that the scope and
13 the content of the portal needs to be better defined.
14 What types of repairs of the project are included
15 beyond project pipes? How can repair projects -- how
16 can the user connect to scheduled and unscheduled
17 repair work? Where can the portal include a start and
18 a finish date, or expected finish date, for each of
19 the projects?

20 After refinement, then Washington Gas
21 determine if the portal can serve as an effective tool
22 to provide timely communication to ANC's, or others,

1 regarding these unscheduled repairs.

2 Beyond the portal site, Washington Gas is
3 using D.C. Alert to inform residents of unscheduled
4 repairs, plus their staff are quickly responding to
5 questions on unscheduled repairs, if an ANC
6 commissioner reaches out to them. The question is
7 how, when Washington Gas proactively communicates
8 unscheduled repairs to residents remains to
9 determined, as well as how, and if, Washington Gas
10 would use social media for that purpose.

11 So, that's recommendations one, and I can
12 provide this when we're done.

13 Recommendation two was can Washington Gas
14 partner with ANC 2-E to disseminate resident focused
15 communications, and socialized policies for when such
16 communications are needed?

17 Washington Gas has been included as a speaker
18 in ANC 2-E public agenda, and that is ongoing and
19 should continue. So, we do appreciate that. That's
20 making a difference.

21 Additionally, ANC 2-E is committed to
22 disseminating the information from the Washington Gas

1 online portal, once that content is clear and usable.
2 I would not be comfortable at this point using it -- I
3 think that's why it's called a pilot, right? So, we
4 need a little bit of time to improve that before it
5 goes wider, and you would not want to cause confusion,
6 given the purpose of our goals.

7 ANC 2-E offered to meet with Washington Gas
8 regarding its feedback provided to Washington Gas on
9 the portal, such as adding timing, dates that speak to
10 the expected finish of a project.

11 And I'll just reiterate; we also gave them
12 feedback on data analytics to look a higher level for
13 the earlier testifier. So, it's -- really would be
14 useful to look at it at a summary level, and what type
15 of analytics are usable.

16 So, such as for the last six months, how many
17 projects were open, how many were closed, how many
18 were planned, how many were unplanned, how many
19 repairs have been done -- been finished on the
20 sidewalks, how long did it take, etcetera.

21 The next recommendations, three, interactive
22 maps; I'm not going to go over that in any level of

1 detail. We still very much support the interactive
2 maps, and we hope that will happen, and it sounds like
3 there's work being done on that. And we could -- we
4 would absolutely welcome the ability to look at the
5 interactive map.

6 I think the one with Project Pipes is useful,
7 but again, it doesn't include all the types of
8 repairs. So, without all the types, it could get
9 confusing if you bring it online.

10 The fourth recommendation was educating the
11 repair crews, or to appoint a single repair crew
12 member when they're working on a leak, so they can
13 answer questions. We're not sure about the status of
14 that. I know Washington Gas was going to work on
15 that.

16 The fifth was using basic things like door
17 knockers when needed. There has been some
18 improvement. We have heard from residents there's
19 been some improvement, but we still need more
20 consistency. Consistency is essential when there's
21 concern and frustration in the neighborhood and the
22 community.

1 The second category of recommendation is
2 around project management. So, the sixth
3 recommendation was to publish a consolidated long term
4 plan for all types of planned gas leaks, including the
5 timing. So, going -- like a Project Pipes project
6 plan, but for all the gas leaks, and that status is
7 unknown.

8 Our seventh recommendation was identifying a
9 reasonable timeframe for Washington Gas to have its
10 project sites restored to the condition that existed
11 before the crew arrived to repair the gas leak, such
12 as fixing the sidewalk. If the site cannot be
13 repaired for more planned work, Washington Gas should
14 proactively inform residents.

15 The status is, after many months, Washington
16 Gas has restored several sidewalks to their previous
17 condition, and we -- this is much appreciated. At
18 least one location that has gas repairs a few weeks
19 ago still needs to be put back in place. And overall,
20 a formal timeline for the required street/sidewalk
21 restoration by Washington Gas has not been
22 communicated to us.

1 So, getting a timeframe will allow us to
2 track -- there's the expected timeframe, did we meet
3 it, and then we can publish getting that to the data
4 analytics, so we all have a baseline.

5 The last set of recommendations, the last
6 three, were involving oversight by the Public Service
7 Commission. The first one was that PSC should publish
8 a set of recommendations concerning how to improve
9 dissemination of gas leak information. So, we'll look
10 to you all for that.

11 The next one was scheduling a follow up
12 hearing at the end of 2019, and I'm going to talk
13 about that in a minute. We still think there is a
14 need for an additional hearing.

15 And then the last one; if there's useful
16 benchmarks that Washington Gas could publish to have
17 the Public Service Commission work with Washington Gas
18 on that, and we still believe that would be a very
19 good recommendation.

20 So, next steps. We continue to welcome the
21 opportunity to partner with Washington Gas and the
22 Public Service Commission. I'm going fast, but

1 they'll give us more time if there's questions. Given
2 the status to date, we believe an ongoing partnership
3 is essential to reach these shared goals, and we
4 recommend a third hearing at the end of 2019 to
5 provide all the parties involved -- to make additional
6 progress -- there is more progress that is needed, and
7 then to report out that progress.

8 So, thank you very much. We appreciate you
9 holding this follow up hearing, and we do hope that
10 you will hold that other one. I'll take any questions
11 you may have.

12 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: I just want to thank you
13 for letting us know that there's been some program,
14 and we recognize that this hearing, when it was
15 scheduled, was perhaps a little premature because
16 there's still pilot programs going on; however, we
17 thought that it was important that we do do something
18 at this stage.

19 The Commission will take your recommendation
20 and look at what is the best next step for us to make
21 sure that we capture all the progress, and we get that
22 information to everybody. I'm going to turn my mic

1 off.

2 MS. LOHSE: And we are -- just as follow up
3 -- I'm happy to share the recommendations we made with
4 Washington Gas on the website and send it to you or
5 your staff members.

6 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Welcome. Absolutely
7 welcome.

8 That is the -- you were the final
9 preregistered witness. Do we have any -- you were
10 very comprehensive, so you answered all of my
11 questions.

12 MS. LOHSE: Okay. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: All right. So, before we
14 move on, I want to give the company an opportunity to
15 provide any response. I want to make sure that
16 everyone here, who's a public witness, has had an
17 opportunity to testify. Who wants to testify?

18 If you do not want to come to the microphone,
19 please note you can also submit your comments in
20 writing, or you can even come up to me and tell me
21 orally and I'll write it down for you. We just want
22 to make sure everybody has an opportunity to be heard.

1 Okay. I also want to just recognize, again,
2 the Office of People's Council. We -- you're not on
3 the list, but I see, Mr. Daniels, thank you for being
4 here, and your team for being here. You're always
5 welcome to make comments in any proceeding that we
6 have. You know that. Okay.

7 So, at this time I want to allow the company
8 an opportunity to respond to any of the public
9 witnesses that came before us today. You can have all
10 the time that you need.

11 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I
12 will yield to Steve Price a bit. First of all, we
13 appreciate all the testimony today. We do -- it's
14 very constructive, the testimony that was given to us
15 today, and we certainly would appreciate and welcome a
16 third hearing, as we continue to deal with some of
17 these issues and try to make sure we're communicating
18 as best as possible.

19 So, however you deem, we will be here, and
20 you know, that's the case. But we do welcome it, as
21 well.

22 So, a couple of things, just in terms of

1 numbers of leaks, and so forth. I think that's why
2 another -- another hearing is important, because we
3 really should level set on the numbers that we should
4 all be looking at, and how we talk about this.

5 We do, obviously, have a Project Pipes case
6 before you, so I'm not going to do things I shouldn't,
7 in terms of speaking, but we do have a system of --
8 that does need pipe replacement, and does need that
9 work, and in that way we're not unlike other utilities
10 of similar vintage.

11 So, there is a lot of work to be done, and we
12 do realize that that requires us to communicate, and
13 over communicate, what we're doing.

14 So, in terms of numbers, and so forth, we --
15 I think that is something that we should all work on,
16 and the -- lay out some definitions about how we're
17 going to talk about that.

18 We certainly appreciate the testimony, both
19 from the Sierra Club and from EDF, and we -- you know,
20 as I stated briefly, we do want to continue to -- and
21 particularly with EDF and the discussion around other
22 utilities, and what they do in terms of the types of

1 leak detection and detection technology, we certainly
2 do want to spend some time with those people, and we
3 will -- folks, and we will do that.

4 In fact, I think we're trying to work on a
5 meeting with some of the folks from EDF, as we speak,
6 in terms of sitting down with us.

7 So, we do want to spend some more time on
8 that, and certainly, the testimony from Ms. Lohse, as
9 her February testimony, it gives us a very good
10 roadmap, in terms of the way she lays it out. So that
11 is much appreciated.

12 So, there is work to be done. We know we
13 deal in a system with natural gas, and the safety of
14 delivering that natural gas, and I do just want to
15 speak on behalf of the people who do that every day in
16 the field, and we do have a staff, that 24 hours a
17 day, is committed to the safe delivery of natural gas,
18 and I do want to make sure there are those of us who
19 are here, and before you, and are paid to be here
20 before you, but the real people who do this, I'm very
21 proud to be associated with the team we have in the
22 field doing this work. So, I do want everyone to know

1 that, in terms of the dedication of our people.

2 So, with that, I think Steve had a few couple
3 of safety comments, and then we yield.

4 MR. PRICE: Just a couple of comments. Good
5 afternoon, Chairman Phillips and Commissioner Beverly
6 and Commission Gillis.

7 And in response to a couple of the public
8 testimony today, which as John said very aptly, we
9 really appreciate it. We take our customer's concerns
10 seriously, and we take safety seriously.

11 I wanted to just comment to Mr. Segal's
12 questions, I think rhetorical, as to why customers are
13 not evacuated at every leak site, and the answer to
14 that, and I know Mr. Segal may not have intended it
15 quite that way, but the answer is to that is safety
16 doesn't require an evacuation in the repair of the
17 vast majority of leaks; however, when it is required,
18 it is done, and it's done in conjunction often with
19 District of Columbia Fire Department.

20 And there was, actually, an incident in
21 downtown not too long ago, where a building was
22 evacuated when a third-party cut a gas line inside the

1 building, and every occupant of that office building
2 was evacuated. So, if evacuation is required, it will
3 be done.

4 I also want to thank Ms. Lohse for observing,
5 at least some of the improvements, and particularly on
6 the field side, which is the group that we are focused
7 on. John and Apera's team have really worked hard on
8 the communication side at a higher level, at a higher
9 scale, but we have not abandoned the responsibility to
10 have our personnel also be sensitive, and aware, and
11 knowledgeable, and be able to, within the context of
12 their safety obligations, communicate to customers.

13 Something that was not raised last time, is
14 that we do conduct customer satisfaction surveys, and
15 our field personnel, for years -- for years have
16 achieved very high levels of satisfaction from
17 customers, and that includes not only the underground
18 leaks, which have been a main focus of this hearing,
19 but of course, all the above ground odor calls, many
20 of which are not necessarily gas leaks, but result in
21 an interaction between one of our field personnel and
22 one of our customers.

1 And we typically score, over years, in the
2 high 80s, low 90s, satisfaction rating from surveys
3 that we take. We spend time in training, we emphasize
4 the importance, we understand that customers can be
5 concerned, and they benefit from knowledgeable
6 communication from our personnel, and we try to
7 deliver that.

8 Thank you. That's all I had.

9 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: (Cross talk).

10 MR. O'BRIEN: Steve just reminded me of a
11 point that was in Ms. Lohse's testimony. We do do the
12 training with our contractors, as well, so we do have
13 work done, obviously, through our contractors,
14 particularly around Project Pipes. But at a
15 subsequent hearing we can also follow up on what that
16 training looks like.

17 I believe we provided some of that to staff
18 when the questions were asked by staff, but we can
19 certainly make sure we follow up, so you know we're
20 doing that with contractors, as well. Steve just
21 reminded me of that point.

22 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: Questions, comments?

1 COMMISSIONER BEVERLY: I certainly support a
2 follow up hearing in this, and I thank the gas company
3 for being responsive, quickly responsive, actually, to
4 the concerns of the community, and encourage you to
5 keep doing that (inaudible).

6 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: And thank you for the
7 follow up, especially in response to the comments that
8 came today.

9 Just a little bit more on your contractor
10 outreach, and the training that you had. I know
11 you're going to go into detail at our next hearing,
12 but Ms. Lohse actually brought up a good point,
13 especially when your contractors -- your staff,
14 they're out, they're dealing with gas leaks, what have
15 you, and the residents actually come up to them with
16 questions, or whatever have you.

17 Can you talk a little bit about what you
18 train those contractors to be able to say? And even
19 if they're not prepared to say anything, what
20 mechanism can residents actually -- what mechanism can
21 residents use to be able to get their questions
22 answered when they see a contractor, or a staff

1 member, doing a repair right in front of their home?

2 MR. PRICE: Right. So, the two components,
3 actually, have a slightly different response. The
4 contractor workforce is largely doing planned work,
5 and that work, typically, has been communicated, there
6 has been some letters, some level of communication, if
7 not personal communication. There should be a --
8 responsive to any concerns, even if there had already
9 been that level of communication. At a minimum, some
10 ability to acknowledge any question, even if they're
11 not able to answer it.

12 And for instance, it would not be unusual
13 that they would not necessarily be able to answer a
14 comprehensive scheduling question; when is this going
15 to be done? You know, how long will it take,
16 precisely? That's going to be kicked up, probably, to
17 a supervisory level, and they should be able to take
18 that information if they are actually able to stop
19 their work and engage.

20 And on that piece, that's a common piece with
21 our field force. They are out there, most
22 particularly our underground field force, is actively

1 working a leak, and that will be their priority.

2 Again, we certainly would appreciate the
3 understanding of the public that that is their first
4 priority.

5 But there, also, are opportunities even
6 within that where a crew leader might be in a position
7 to engage a customer. If they don't, I hope it is not
8 out of, you know, any kind of rudeness, or lack of
9 desire. I hope it is simply because there's a lot on
10 their minds when they're out there working, and that's
11 what I would expect it to be.

12 If they do contact somebody, they typically,
13 can tell you what they're doing; they're repairing a
14 gas leak. They're not going to likely get into the
15 details of the mechanism of what they're going to do.
16 They should absolutely tell our customers the one
17 thing that is 100 percent true in every case, that
18 they will not leave that site until that condition is
19 made safe.

20 And the other thing that I think that they
21 can now be able to say is that our communications with
22 the communities in the District of Columbia are

1 getting better, and we are looking for ways to provide
2 them more information on the unplanned work. Apera
3 went into that in great detail.

4 I expect we will continue to improve there,
5 and the more we do, I think our field force will
6 become more and more knowledgeable that there's
7 actually probably a more effective level of
8 communication that would satisfy the customer, make
9 sure they're -- they understand safety is the
10 priority, and communication will be forthcoming, or is
11 forthcoming, through their ANC.

12 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: Very good. Thank you
13 very much.

14 And then my second question; I am happy to
15 hear that you're willing to work with the
16 Environmental Defense Fund and the Sierra Club on
17 advanced leak detection best practices. This is the
18 second time we've heard this in this hearing, so it's
19 evident our stakeholders are interested in this, so
20 I'm glad you're willing to have that outreach with
21 them.

22 Anything else brought up from our previous

1 hearing? Any other best practices that you can share
2 with us, that you'll be looking into, between now and
3 the next time we come together?

4 MR. O'BRIEN: I think the one thing -- and
5 this gets into the time, and how we do this, is what
6 we started this hearing with, which is how do we make
7 some of these things less manual, so that it's
8 quicker?

9 I mean, some of the things through the
10 testimony are -- and Steve highlighted -- we don't
11 want to -- we want crews to be trained to deal with
12 the community, but we certainly will continue to look
13 for ways from an IT standpoint, that if we can do some
14 things -- not just the interactive map, but if we can
15 do some things from an IT standpoint, we can be
16 quicker in our response to the community, in terms of
17 things.

18 So, that is sort of a long term how do you
19 get to best practices, in light of where you are with
20 other investments you have to make in the system?
21 I'll leave it at that, but that certainly would be
22 something I think that internally will be something

1 that's a continuous improvement for us, is to how to
2 make some of this less manual, and that will be sort
3 of a -- that's really -- a lot of this is, in terms of
4 how do we -- if we can become less manual with some of
5 this information, we can be quicker in disseminating
6 it. But that is also, not to say we're not out in the
7 field doing it, it's how do we -- how would that aid
8 our communication, and the speed of our communication?
9 Did that make sense?

10 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: It does. Thank you
11 very much. Thank you, Chairman.

12 MR. PRICE: If I could just add one more
13 thing on that last question, Commissioner Gillis?

14 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: Yes.

15 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: There are serious issues,
16 and I don't want to sort of just gloss over them, with
17 respect to the efficiencies created by new
18 technologies, or not. There are serious questions as
19 to, you know, what level of sensitivity adds to
20 safety, versus doesn't. And we're going to continue
21 to be open to those technologies.

22 We have met with new technologies, we've met

1 face to face with them, we are as interested as
2 anybody, certainly from a safety standpoint, if there
3 is a better way to do things. We're engaged in the
4 industry on those best practices.

5 So, we'll continue to speak frankly, and I
6 just -- I didn't want the implication to be that we
7 necessarily agree that there are efficiencies, or that
8 safety's improved, and we'll speak very openly and
9 honestly about our views of that as we consider those
10 issues.

11 And then one last thing, John mentioned early
12 on the plan that we will be filing in 2020, but you
13 know, right now there's Projects Pipes II, which is
14 pending before the Commission, and within that filing
15 there's some significant information on the
16 anticipated greenhouse gas reductions that can be
17 achieved, and are expected to be achieved, through
18 Project Pipes II.

19 Secondly, we are under a current commitment,
20 a resulting from our merger, which has us reducing the
21 grade two backlogs in the District of Columbia.
22 That's significant on this greenhouse gas issue,

1 because when you talk about grade one's, those leaks
2 are repaired immediately.

3 So, yeah, whatever has caused that, has
4 caused it, but they are repaired immediately. Grade
5 two's can be managed. Our grade two's are already
6 managed quite efficiently, relative to the
7 requirements. We have up to a year to monitor, and 15
8 months, within industry standard. But our grade two
9 repairs are typically completely within 90 days. So,
10 we are already trying to push that down.

11 And as you can imagine, as the grade two
12 backlog reduces, in accordance with the commitments
13 that we've made, that should also improve.

14 COMMISSIONER GILLIS: Very good. Thank you.
15 Thank you, Chairman.

16 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: I will let that be the
17 final word. I support my colleagues' comments. I'll
18 just make a couple notations before we leave. I want
19 to thank everybody for participating. I think today
20 has been a productive hearing.

21 That will not be the final word; someone
22 would like to say something.

1 MS. LOHSE: Gwendolyn Lohse, ANC 2-E. Just
2 as a note, and I've already spoke with Washington Gas
3 -- Gwendolyn Lohse, ANC 2-E. I already spoke with
4 Washington Gas about this, but one of the things, as
5 we think about data analytics, that I think we want
6 the work that they do to be the most useful to
7 everyone, and also they're putting resources into it,
8 so we want to make good use of our resources, that can
9 be effective.

10 As you think about -- there's a Project
11 Pipes, and what we understand is that there's a 40
12 year plan, there's a four or five year plan, and then
13 there's the commitments they have that have financial
14 penalties should these gas leaks that you just spoke
15 to occur.

16 As you think about whether it's interactive
17 maps, or it's data analytics that provide a view on
18 reported, unreported, complete, uncompleted gas leaks,
19 if we can look at that in a more holistic manner, it
20 would very much help our communications.

21 Because what happens is if we don't look at
22 it holistically, people don't think that we're

1 communicating accurately. So, it would help us to
2 help you, and look at -- let's try and look it within
3 a holistic manner. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS: I think that's very
5 helpful. Thank you so much.

6 So, I don't want to foreclose anybody else.
7 Going once, going twice. All right. So, I want
8 everyone to know that the record will remain open
9 until May 24th. You have until then to file any
10 written comments, if you want to, and that's not just
11 for the people here in the room, that's for all the
12 thousands watching at home and online.

13 We also have a commitment from, I think, all
14 the participants in the company, to do a third hearing
15 sometime in the end of the year; the Commission is
16 committed to doing that.

17 With that, nothing further before the
18 Commission, the time is 3:14, and this hearing is
19 adjourned.

20

21

22

1 CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

2 I, Samuel Honig, the officer before whom the
3 foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify
4 that any witness(es) in the foregoing proceedings,
5 prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that the
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12 action in which this was taken; and, further, that I
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Corinne Yanosy

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