

## **Opening Remarks for Community Hearings Regarding Pepco/DDOT's Joint Triennial Application**

Good morning Chairman Kane and Commissioner Fort, Community witnesses and other stakeholders. For the record, I am Sandra Mattavous-Frye, People's Counsel for the District of Columbia. I am pleased to have played an active role in what is a landmark achievement for the District of Columbia. I am confident a properly designed and implemented Undergrounding Plan will result in measurable gains in outage reductions and an overall increase in system reliability in the District of Columbia.

Today, I would like to take the opportunity to discuss briefly the role my Office played in helping us to reach this destination and the role OPC will continue to play as we move forward.

The proceeding currently before the Commission begins our review of the "game changer," called for by Mayor Gray that will finally allow District electricity consumers to come out of the dark and get the reliable service they deserve at an affordable rate. It marks the culmination of a nearly two-year effort by the District government, the DC Public Service Commission ("Commission" or "PSC"), the Office of the People's Counsel ("OPC" or "Office"), the City Council, and other critical stakeholders to effect an unprecedented, historic public-private partnership between the District and Pepco to improve the reliability of the

District's electric-distribution system, which has been plagued with repeated power outages for decades.

OPC has long championed the rights of consumers to reliable and affordable electric service. My Office first raised this issue to the PSC following the 1995 Ice Storm and repeatedly throughout the ensuing years. As reliability continued to deteriorate, OPC filed countless petitions asking for Commission action. We advocated for the PSC to commission studies to examine the feasibility of undergrounding and testified before the Council on several occasions. Our efforts reflected the growing concern expressed by our constituents.

The series of severe-weather events in 2012 causing widespread and sustained power outages across the region was the turning point; it led to the formation of The Mayor's Power Line Undergrounding Task Force ("Task Force").

As People's Counsel, and a member of the Task Force, I was committed to finding a solution to the seemingly insoluble problem of power outages that has plagued our city for over a decade. The Task Force plan, which provided the impetus for the enabling legislation, was responsive to our residents' calls for action and was designed to achieve our reliability goals.

Currently, my Office is reviewing Pepco/DDOT's joint Triennial Application for legal sufficiency. At this juncture, we have not reached final conclusions; however, I want to assure DC residents that I am focused on their concerns regarding the implementation of the plan; that we stay true to the goal, and that adequate protections are in place to ensure that the \$875 million authorized under the undergrounding law is monitored as part of a transparent and open process.

The objective will be to ensure that the Plan as filed is consistent with the intent of the enabling legislation in all respects: is fair and equitable: targets the worst performing feeders across the city, shields seniors and many low income residents from any increase, and spreads the costs so the remaining consumers will see very modest increases in their bills. The end result must guarantee that DC consumers see a major increase in the quality of their electric service that will lift the District's electric system reliability and outage frequency performance into the upper tier of utilities nationally where it belongs.

In closing, the value of every dollar spent must deliver a corresponding benefit to District consumers who ultimately pay for this investment.

To achieve this, my Office will work hard to ensure that every requirement prescribed by the undergrounding law and the Task Force Report are met.

Again, I thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing the comments from the community, regarding the Task Force Plan. I will be listening closely and carefully.