

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Transportation and Public Utilities to conduct joint hearings regarding the sustainability and diversification of the Philadelphia Gas Works.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Gas Works (“PGW”) is the largest municipally-owned gas utility in the country with a distribution system of approximately 6,000 miles of gas mains and provides services centered on provision of natural gas to approximately 500,000 customers; and

WHEREAS, Utilities are highly regulated businesses, permitted to have monopoly control of providing usually high-capital cost goods and services with consistent profits in exchange for reinvestment in the capital stock and not using revenue in unrelated ventures; and

WHEREAS, For 180 years, PGW and its employees have provided essential utility service to the residents and businesses of Philadelphia with a commitment to safety, service, and innovation; and

WHEREAS, Forces outside the control of either PGW or the City of Philadelphia will call upon that history of innovation: the increasing destruction caused by global warming and the twin financial threats of more efficient energy usage and competitive price of renewable energy sources; and

WHEREAS, Climate change is not just a future threat to be avoided, but - with the planet having already experienced one degree Celsius warming due to human activity, which has caused the rising sea levels, severe storms, and other extreme weather events we see right now - a present danger requiring significant human adjustments to avoid far worse damage; and

WHEREAS, In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a body consisting of hundreds of climate researchers convened by the United Nations, issued a report that outlined a truly ambitious timeline for shifting systems from heating, to cooking, to transportation, to industry away from fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia joined hundreds of other American municipalities and states in committing itself to the Paris Climate Accord goal of limiting warming from climate change to below two degrees Celsius; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia was selected as one of the 25 winners of the Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge, leading the City and PGW to embark on a business diversification study to analyze the various options for PGW to go beyond their current use of natural gas and investigate opportunities in other energy sources and services; and

WHEREAS, As the City prepares for the release of the initial study over the summer, we must be prepared for the next steps in this process, such as a possible labor study, creation of an emissions reduction goal and a business plan to achieve that goal created with strong public input, and implementation of one or more pilot projects to diversify sustainably; NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Philadelphia does hereby authorize the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Transportation and Public Utilities to conduct joint hearings regarding the sustainability and diversification of the Philadelphia Gas Works.