

**MINUTES OF
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
April 14, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER:

Robert Barkanic called the meeting to order at 12:33 PM.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL (CAC) MEMBERS' PRESENT:

Robert Barkanic, Chairperson	Duane Mowery
Trisha Salvia, Vice Chairperson	John St Clair
George Ambrose	Jerome Shabazz
Jacquelyn Bonomo	Thaddeus Stevens
Carol Collier	John Walliser
William Fink	James Welty
Jason Foster	Timothy Weston
Katherine Heatherington Cunfer	

DEP STAFF PRESENT:

Ian Irvin, Executive Director
Casey Damicantonio, Policy Office
Seth Pelepko, P.G., Deputy Secretary, Oil and Gas

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Chair Barkanic solicited additions or corrections to March 2026 Minutes.

Jerome Shabazz moved to approve the Minutes of March 2026, meeting with no correction, George Ambrose seconded. Adopted unanimously

DEP UPDATE:

Seth Pelepko, P.G. - Deputy Secretary, Office of Oil and Gas Management, Department of Environmental Protection

Deputy Secretary Pelepko discussed geothermal development in Pennsylvania, including the results of studies, the possibility that Pennsylvania could be a geothermal leader especially in the northeastern United States, and the possibility of grant opportunities and viability. One of these grant opportunities is to capitalize on the oil and gas industry knowledge, where environmental goods and services can rely on shale wells that are depleted or have reached their end of commercial life and be transitioned toward renewable energy sources.

During a House Energy Committee meeting on March 24, 2026, the Department provided testimony on House Bill 2076, which passed the Committee by a vote 15 to 11 on April 13, 2026, and will advance to the next stage. New development would be targeting 5,000 feet or greater,

which could repurpose older oil and gas assets and possibly transition them to develop geothermal energy. There is also a chance to carve out shallow systems because it is important that current operations continue unimpeded by new legislation

Questions:

- A Council member voiced concern that DEP, as the arbiter of whether deep formation has been exhausted from oil and gas, would resolve conflict between the two uses of harvesting oil and gas and production of heat. The bill leaves it up to DEP entirely and ought to be an appeal process beyond bureaucratic resolution.

DEP has a key role in coordinating energy resources. But the latest version of legislation allows for an appeal process. DEP has a framework to hear the voices of all stakeholders.

- A Council member wanted to make a clarification in the DEP Report: The Sewage Advisory committee voted to move a rulemaking package forward. However, that Committee voted did not vote to support the current proposed language draft for Chapters 71, 72, and 73.

- Another Council member asked about the potential environmental hazards of geothermal and how they will be addressed.

With geothermal being 5,000 feet or deeper from drilling, the Department looks at some of the historic oil and gas processes to protect the water resources, shallow groundwater resources and deeper fluids. It is important for the Department to consider surface disturbance, erosion and sediment controls, and waste management as DEP continues to develop and do exploratory work.

PRESENTATIONS:

**Rian Skov - Lead Regulatory Geologist, Deputy Oil and Gas Supervisor, Washinton
Department of Natural Resources
Washington's Geothermal Regulatory Structure**

Mr. Rian Skove discussed the regulatory structure in Washinton, how a company would need to navigate that structure to go from exploration to production and those difficulties, and how Washington is addressing them to create a more streamlined permitting process.

Washington has a multi-agency framework: State Environmental Policy Act, Air, Land use and Zoning, permits, worker safety, notice of intent, federal permits. This framework requires several permits and agencies for a geothermal project to go from exploration (permit) through the DNR through me as I am the sole regulator of the geothermal programs in Washington.

When a company would come in and develop geothermal in Washington, that company is presented with 87 different permit requirements depending on facility location. Therefore, to address these complexities and the spiderweb network the Washington legislature passed a bill on geothermal's regulatory structure.

Senate Bill 6309 was passed in 2024 to come up with a multi-agency collaborative process. Washington looked and compared other regulations nationwide to ensure consistency and to streamline a process with a clear permitting path. In this way, companies have a better timeline and know the types of costs and risks involved. Washington is also doing a Geological Survey with a contractor who is conducting a study on three high potential areas in the state. Washington does not have hydraulic fracturing because there is no oil and gas production; therefore, Washington's law prohibits hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas; however, it does not say anything for Geothermal. This is a collaborative process so we can have an idea and some potential mitigation strategies to limit any impacts found.

The Revised Code of Washinton provides guidance for the two types of geothermal permits, one for production and one for exploration. Permits just cover drilling, re-drilling, deepening, and reclamation but do not cover construction of the power plant, water withdrawals or injections, noise, and grading. With different agencies, staffing levels and review capabilities would add considerable amount of time and cost for the companies who would have to evaluate these issues. Multiple local jurisdictions will have to hire a third-party consultant to perform the review because those jurisdictions may not have in-house subject matter expertise. A draft report will be completed and submitted to Washington Legislature on June 30th, and the final report will be completed June 30, 2027. The Washington Legislature will help identify issues, bottlenecks, or holdups and help create a pathway with law changes, revisions and possibly new laws.

Questions:

- A Council member voiced his interest in the steps Washington has taken despite no industry in the state that needs these guidelines. The Council member also sked about volcanic activity that occasionally occurs. Does Washington have provisions about getting too close to volcanic sites?

Geothermal experience shows some challenges in areas where no power plants could be built, such as Mount Saint Helens, which is covered under a National Monument, as well as Mount Baker. So, the available areas for geothermal are smaller, but Washington's focus would be on conventional geothermal.

- Another Council member discussed how, in southwestern Pennsylvania, there are a lot of shallow systems. As the Commonwealth continues its discussions about geothermal, only 800 feet below the surface are abandoned coal mines that are under pressure that have water. A thought is to have a similar map developed by DEP.

- Another Council member asked whether Washington modeled the geothermal experience after any other states?

As far as the current program is concerned, no. This is where the collaborative process looks now at now how our current system would operate vs what others do and how to improve.

Eddie Guerra - Senior Vice President Civil Infrastructure Development, Rizzo International
Repurposing Abandoned Oil and Gas Wells as Geothermal

Rizzo International was founded in Pittsburgh in 1985, family owned and has about 100 civil engineers and earth scientists focused on Geophysical investigations and energy. Rizzo is here to introduce a concept focused on repurposing abandoned gas wells for geothermal production and to seek partnerships. Families are impacted by several things, including the rise in energy costs, data centers, electrifications, industrial growth driving, grid capacity constraints, aging energy infrastructure, more frequent outages, and costly system upgrades.

Currently, Pennsylvania has more than 17,000 abandoned wells in PA. Rizzo's concept would use existing wells for geothermal heating, which also reduces groundwater and methane risks, upgrades integrity, and seals pathways of existing wells, providing lower energy costs. Main risk is the viability of the site and not technology. Rizzo's work, so far, has been to explore the geothermal gradient of western PA, and how does this overlay with location of existing wells and communities who could benefit.

Questions:

- How do you incorporate issues with the well, like corrosion, into your economic model?

That is not something in the current model as the current model only contemplates casing of the geothermal tube. The model does not include environmental considerations like leaking. Nevertheless, things like that need to be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

- Is the company currently involved in well plugging activities or engaged in collaborative relationships with those companies?

Rizzo and well plugging with significant plugging from federal, would there be a way to collaborate with current projects to get more information.

Marc Cammarata, P.E. - Deputy Commission, Planning and Environmental Services
Division, Philadelphia Water Department
Combined Sewer Overflow

Mr. Cammarata discussed the Philadelphia Water Department's programs and history, impacts of combined sewage, the Green City Clean Waters program, and PWD's strategies to mitigate the effects of combined sewer overflows. PWD oversees 10,000 square miles of watershed and serves 1.7 million customers with three treatment plants. PWD's goal is to protect the water, environment, aquatic habitat, and the people that PWD serves by making sure PWD properly manages waste and stormwater.

PWD is funded by its customers – it is not funded by the general fund or through tax revenue – PWD is a fee for service organization. The City of Philadelphia is about 140 square miles of land area - 60 percent are served by combined sewers and 40 percent are served by municipal separate storm sewers where there is no commingling of sanitary flow. Creeks are not often impacted by water quality as sanitary flow sewage from homes goes to treatment plants for full treatment. Only during wet weather events does PWD exceed some of its sewer capacities, specifically in the combined sewer because every drop of water in a weather event that goes into a separate sewer eventually goes into a creek. However, what comes out of a combined sewer outfall is diluted sanitary sewage; whereas what comes out of separate sewer has everything from urban stormwater runoff, including fertilizers, oils, dog waste, etc.

Under the federal Clean Water Act, PWD thinks about stormwater management from point sources. However, because of the focus of today's conversation, a policy was enacted in 1994 to address combined sewer overflow. This means that PWD has not really been addressing the issue for a long time vis-à-vis since the founding of the City of Philadelphia and subsequently changes through the centuries. Early on, PWD put a long-term control plan that helped develop a strategy plan in 1997. That 1997 strategy plan included 20 capital projects abating the effects of combined sewer overflow to the tune of about ½ a billion of gallons. But the 1997 strategy plan also included novel approaches that thought of the long, long-term approaches and tools to address all PWD's compliance obligations. This long-term planning was more than just combined sewer overflow, it thought about storm sewers, source water protection, flood mitigation, aging infrastructure, and the dense urban environment. This also involved integrated watershed-based planning based on data collection and evaluation and a planning process that transcends just one regulation, allowing PWD to understand what ails the water bodies so that PWD can move forward. While PWD finds multiple opportunities that blend objectives, it also thinks about assets that serve more than one purpose, giving PWD an opportunity to start to collect chemical, physical, biological, meteorological, climatological data to understand assessment approaches moving forward and scalability. Learning that the impacts of the end of pipe with poor water quality, erosive forces and habitat impacts with wetland degradation dumping and trash. In the past, PWD was disconnected but is now factoring in water near neighborhoods and awareness with the public.

In 2009, PWD submitted an updated, long-term control plan through negotiations and modifications with state agencies, federal agencies, and environmental groups formalizing the next 25-year strategy. This strategy continues to mitigate and abate the effects of combined sewage. This control plan is about delivering nature-based infrastructure, source control infrastructure, development of sustainable ways to control stormwater runoff, and encourage different types of land in the city. PWD successfully met its 10-year targets and is planning on exceeding its 15-year targets.

With almost 20 percent of the population below the poverty line, PWD has several different assistance programs to help citizens pay their bills and utilize tier assistance programs or

income-based billing. These programs help recoup some of the costs of maintenance and improvements, but it also forces PWD to redistribute to remaining ratepayers while balancing the public's desire in not seeing cost increases.

Questions:

- What are some priorities that PWD takes into consideration?

People usually do not know the value of the resources or services that a PWD provides. PWD need to do this better – showing the value of the provided resources and services so that citizens can appropriately appreciate and criticize. PWD has focused on talking to people who are affected by this issue, relating to someone, and explain things, which brings trust, respect, and value of the things that PWD provides.

Public Comments

No Public Comments at this Meeting.

If any other members of the public are interested in giving comments at future meetings, please reach out to Executive Director Irvin and we will gladly place you on the agenda.

CAC Committee Reports-

Legislative Committee - Updates on a few bills with special focus on radon testing in schools and standards for private water well construction.

Strategic Issues - Monthly scheduled meetings, keeping up to date on presentations, discussing Data Centers, and enhancing public participation further. A brief conversation related to ability of the Council to weigh in and be timely with talking to DEP, and the General Assembly.

Radiation Protection - Met on April 1st and discussed program updates, Code PA was shown, as well as revenue package discussion, going over Medical Reportable Events and Nuclear Material Events Database. Separately, Executive Director Irvin participated in U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Public Meetings about the Regulatory Framework for Fusion, which will eventually be regulated by the Department.

Solid Waste Advisory Committee - Final Environmental Justice policy, which the Council reviewed last month; draft technical guidance documents on land clearing, grubbing and excavation, the use of concrete and other clean fill materials containing protruding rebar or other mental as clean fill; updates to coproduct regulations.

New Business/Open Discussion:

Appointment of the Nominations Committee - Bill Fink, Jerome Shabazz and John Walliser.

Council's Response to Department's Act 54 Report - Council would still like to hear from stakeholders about thoughts and perspective on the 6th, and the report.

2025 Annual Report - Comments and edits are due by Friday, April 17th.

A Council member would like to emphasize that DEP is a cooperative partner and not an enforcement focus. The Council member would like to the agency to work with stakeholders despite the admirable goals. He specifically mentioned a solution to housing based on regulatory hurdles that add uncertainty and costs to developers. He would also like to see a culture change in DEP, referencing Senator Yaw's bill about amending DEP's name to the Department of Environmental Services. He feels that there should be an incentive to work hand-in-hand and not as an enforcer.

Another Council member echoed the earlier comment, specifically pointing out the rulemaking on Chapters 71, 72, and 73, the Sewage Advisory Committee's work, and almost two dozen meetings. The Sewage Advisory Committee made comments to the Department on its rulemaking on Chapters 71, 72, 73, but the Council member is not expecting to significant changes based on SAC's comments. He believes that this would be an example of the Department not listening to stakeholders, bringing into question the use of volunteer time, sometimes hundreds of hours, if that time is for naught. The Council member would like to report back to the full Council updates on Chapters 71, 72, and 73 rulemaking to see if the Department is truly listening to all stakeholders.

ADJOURNMENT:

Next meeting will be May 12th, at 12:30 in Room 105 at RCSOB or online.

Jacqueline Bonomo moved to adjourn the meeting. Tim Weston second the motion, which was unanimously approved.

The April 2026 meeting of the CAC adjourned at 3:28pm.