



Odette Ramos

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Testimony

21-0076R Investigative Hearing – Baltimore Gas & Electric Decision Making

February 1, 2022

Chair Middleton and the Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present 21-0076R Investigative Hearing – Baltimore Gas & Electric Decision Making.

This resolution comes before you out of extreme frustration with recent interactions with BGE related to their planned work for gas line and pole installation. While I have been very grateful to BGE for their emergency response to situations such as transformer replacements, gas smells, and the like, we have grown weary of the planned work that has been done in the neighborhood without notice, without proper planning, and without community input.

BGE is not the only entity that we need to scrutinize. The Department of Transportation issues the permits and inspects the work. The resolution calling for this hearing is very specific about the information we want to receive from BGE and DOT to begin to understand what is happening and how we can work together toward mutual solutions so that the important services are provided with minimal inconvenience for residents.

I can cite several examples of these issues:

Greenmount Ave and 32nd Street: Greenmount Avenue is undergoing significant construction for water main replacement, conduit upgrade and then federally funded street scaping. We were unaware that BGE would have to enter the area until one of our business owners noticed a BGE truck in the area and asked what they were doing. It was then revealed that BGE would be in the area replacing gas lines. DOT did not know about this, nor did my office. If we did not know, then the street scaping would have gone in and then would have been destroyed by BGE.

32nd Street and Brentwood Ave: When BGE let us know they would be in the area, we did not know they would be extending their work further into the neighborhood. The community painted a street mural on Brentwood as part of a new Design for Distance strategy for the lot and the Waverly Market. Three weeks later, BGE was in the area and the mural is destroyed. Knowing their location for their digging ahead of time would have avoided this waste of money and time.

Greenway and 34th Street: A new pole with several transformers was placed on the sidewalk outside of 3405 Greenway with no notice. BGE placed a pole with multiple transformers in the garden of the Geneva Condominiums building. While there is increased electricity needs at JHU and Union Baptist Church nearby, residents were not given any notice or warning, and are worried about the transformers so close to their buildings. Also, the pole at 3405 Greenway is right in the middle of the sidewalk, a clear ADA violation.

29th Street and Huntingdon Avenue: There was no notice of work for this project. There was night work along with day work, and residents reported that the Contractors set up without allowing pedestrian access to the sidewalks, signage, or any other alternate routes for pedestrians. Poles were also installed, but first were placed in the public right of way with no regard for the impact on residents. The ADA violations were never addressed by DOT despite the promises to do so.

Keswick and 40th Street: While I did receive notice of this project, we were uninformed that this would be night work. As residents complained loudly, we switched this project to day work and shut down the intersection. DOT and my office worked on a traffic re-routing plan that was very complex and complicated. It was shared with me that DOT had issued a permit for emergency work to BGE during the pandemic so they could move quicker and not have to provide notice or communications or traffic plan to the community. BGE used that permit in this case, rather than going through the normal channels of sharing the work with the community, addressing the problems with the traffic, etc.

This hearing is designed to begin a conversation to improve these relationships and the process for notifications for planned work. We are engaging in this conversation at a public hearing to hold all parties accountable for their promises and action plans.

As a reminder, we asked for very specific information for this hearing in our resolution. We are looking to get that information at this hearing, and continuing the conversation.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Odette Ramos', is positioned above the typed name.

Odette Ramos
Baltimore City Councilwoman, District 14