

**Fourth Quarterly Report of the Independent Consumer Advocate (ICA)
For the Metropolitan District of Hartford County (MDC)
October 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025**

I. Introduction

This is the fourth report I am submitting as the ICA intended to summarize my activities in the fourth quarter of 2025. This quarter I continued to attend meetings of the Commission and various committees of the MDC. In particular this quarter I attended numerous meetings focused on the 2026 budget.

II. Budget

This quarter I attended numerous budget meetings and heard discussion concerning a wide variety of issues. One issue that I focused on was the funding for Generation Power CT, formerly known as Operation Fuel, which funds are used to provide grants to vulnerable customers facing hardship in paying their water bill.

I spoke at both the Public Budget meeting on November 12th and again at the Board of Finance Meeting on November 17th with regards to the disparity in the high dollar amount that is currently being dedicated to Riverfront Recapture as opposed to the much more modest amount that is being dedicated to Generation Power CT. I proposed that, in contrast to providing assistance for a regional park, a more appropriate use of some of these funds would be to increase the support for Generation Power CT. I met with the staff at Generation Power CT multiple times over the course of the year. They presented compelling information that despite a recent increase, their funding is still insufficient to meet the ongoing needs of customers. Based on the information I was presented by Generation Power CT in the first half of this year they received approximately 629 applications and were able to fund only 283 applicants. After these funds run out there are very few resources available for individuals who find themselves unable to pay their water bill. Were MDC to dedicate additional funds to Generation Power CT, this money would go directly towards paying customer water bills less only a very small percentage to cover the administrative expenses of Generation Power CT. Therefore, unlike funds expended on Riverfront Recapture, funds dedicated to Generation Power CT are largely returned to MDC and go directly towards the purpose of providing water to customers. I find the discrepancy in funding, with 1.2 million budgeted for Riverfront Recapture and only 100K budgeted for Generation Power CT, to be disproportionate and not in the best interests of customers.

I have asked for a meeting with MDC staff and the Generation Power CT leadership in early 2026 in the hope of starting the discussion regarding their budgetary needs well in advance of next year's budget season.

III. Policies

I remain committed to the goal of reducing MDC practice to written policy wherever possible.

a. Private Property Damage Policy

This year I was able to work with MDC staff to revise the Private Property Damage Policy to be applicable to businesses as well as residential properties. This new revised policy is now in effect.

b. Authorization to Perform Work on Private Property Release of Claims

This year MDC incorporated many of my suggested revisions in the Authorization to Perform Work on Private Property Release of Claims, Form 37-R. The focus of these revisions was to reduce homeowner liability. This new revised form is now in effect.

c. Leak Adjustment Policy

I submitted a draft leak adjustment policy to MDC for their consideration and review last quarter. I have followed up with MDC for feedback and await their response. I hope to finalize this in 2026.

d. Shutoffs

I received numerous communications from customers over the year expressing concern regarding MDC's policies for shutoffs and reinstatement of water service. This quarter I submitted a draft shutoff policy to the MDC for their consideration and review. I hope to work with MDC staff in 2026 to finalize this policy.

IV. Community Partnership Opportunities

I am continuing to work building relationships with community partners where such relationships may be beneficial for MDC customers.

a. Rebuilding Together Hartford

Last quarter I reported I met together with Rebuilding Together Hartford (RTH) and MDC to discuss a possible collaboration where RTH may be able to provide assistance to certain Hartford customers to bring those homes within the qualifications for the Sewer Backup Prevention program and to assist properties with issues outside the scope of MDC work. This quarter I have worked together with RTH assisting in identifying appropriate projects to work on and assisting individuals in the application process. RTH has also introduced me to additional community nonprofits who may be interested in

partnering with MDC on properties in Hartford. I intend to continue my efforts to build relationships with area nonprofits in 2026.

b. Building for Health

Last quarter I reported participating in meetings for the Building for Health Partnership referral network organized by Connecticut Children's and grant funded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Building for Health is an initiative that connects programs to keep Greater Hartford residents housed in safe, healthy, stable and high-quality homes while enhancing their overall well-being. This quarter I was able to complete the application process in an individual capacity in my role as the ICA. At this point I am waiting for further information regarding my participation as a referring partner in the program. As I stated previously this would allow me to easily refer out vulnerable customers for additional services as needed and hopefully to help bridge the gap in funding in certain circumstances where homes need additional work, outside of the scope of MDC services, in order for a homeowner to take full advantage of the services MDC does provide.

IV. Individual Consumer Complaints

I continue to interact with customers regularly and this quarter saw numerous complaints regarding leak adjustments and bill concerns. Additionally, this quarter the ICA was made aware of numerous customer complaints with regards to the installation of water meter pits as well as the use of high pressure and steam to clean the sewer lines. There are a variety of concerns that have been raised with regards to these issues including costs, customer inconvenience and in some cases property damage. As a result the ICA intends to continue to work together with customers, commissioners and the various related MDC committees to focus on these customer concerns in the first quarter of 2026.

V. Conclusion

I have greatly enjoyed my first year in the role of Independent Consumer Advocate. In particular I have enjoyed meeting with and hearing from MDC customers, commissioners, staff and leadership and through these interactions learning how MDC operates, its many ongoing projects and initiatives, and the concerns and issues that must be addressed to meet the needs of its many customers. I look forward to continuing to focus on these issues in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Tavelli". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "T".

Elizabeth Tavelli

Independent Consumer Advocate

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