BEFORE THE 1 FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION 2 DOCKET NO. 060256-SU 3 In the Matter of: 4 APPLICATION FOR INCREASE IN WASTEWATER RATES IN SEMINOLE COUNTY BY ALAFAYA 5 UTILITIES, INC. 6 7 8 9 10 11 ELECTRONIC VERSIONS OF THIS TRANSCRIPT ARE 12 A CONVENIENCE COPY ONLY AND ARE NOT THE OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF THE HEARING, 13 THE .PDF VERSION INCLUDES PREFILED TESTIMONY. 14 15 16 AGENDA CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS: 17 ITEM NO. 8 18 CHAIRMAN LISA POLAK EDGAR BEFORE: COMMISSIONER MATTHEW M. CARTER, II 19 COMMISSIONER KATRINA J. TEW 20 DATE: Tuesday, January 23, 2007 21 Betty Easley Conference Center PLACE: Room 148 22 4075 Esplanade Way Tallahassee, Florida 23 24 JANE FAUROT, RPR REPORTED BY: 25 Official Commission Reporter (850)413-6732

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## PARTICIPATING:

MARTIN FRIEDMAN, ESQUIRE, FRANK SEIDMAN, and JOHN WILLIAMS, representing Alafaya Utilities, Inc.

STEPHEN C. REILLY, ESQUIRE, and TRICIA MERCHANT, representing the Citizens of the State of Florida.

RALPH JAEGER, ESQUIRE, BART FLETCHER and RICHARD REDEMANN, representing the Florida Public Service Commission Staff.

## PROCEEDINGS

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: We will be on Item 8.

MR. FLETCHER: Commissioners, Item 8 is staff's recommendation on a final rate request from Alafaya Utilities, Inc. Alafaya is a Class A wastewater-only utility in Seminole County. Again, representatives for OPC and the utility are here to address the Commission, and staff is available to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you. And I would like to proceed in a similar manner on this item. And so, Mr. Friedman, we will start with you. I'll ask you to help us point out by number the specific issues that you would like to address. Mr. Reilly and Ms. Merchant, then to you with the same request, and then we will look to staff for comments, and then we will have discussion.

With the addition of, Mr. Friedman, if you want to respond to a comment made by Mr. Reilly, I will allow that, as well. And so, Mr. Friedman, we are ready when you are ready.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Commissioners.

My name is Martin Friedman with the law firm of Rose, Sundstrom, and Bentley. We represent Alafaya Utilities. With me, also, is Mr. Frank Seidman and Mr. John Williams representing the Utility.

The first issue that I want to address, again, Issue
14, is the salaries issue, and I won't belabor that with any

additional argument, but would kind of reiterate what argument I made with regard to the prior staff recommendation.

Another comment that I have is on Issue 28, which is the show cause for allegedly not booking the adjustments from the last rate case. Here's what happened. And they did drop the ball, I mean, there is no doubt about it. The ball was dropped, but it wasn't completely dropped. It was a fumble, but they really didn't lose the fumble. And here's what happens. Certain of the staff people, the regulatory accounting staff people make adjustments as required by the PSC order, and then that information goes to other staff people who actually input that into the particular books of that company.

In this case, we verified with the staff that prepared the adjustments that the adjustments had been made, and we confirmed back to the Commission in the appropriate time after the last rate case that that had been done. The problem was -- and this occurred on a couple of these rates cases, not all of them. Some of them the adjustments got made completely, and on some of them, for some reason, the ball got dropped. This was one that the ball got dropped on and adjustments did not get made.

The company has taken appropriate action to make sure that doesn't happen again. The employee who was in charge of that is no longer working with the company, and the company has been assured that the new person whose responsibility it will

be to make sure that that occurs understands the importance of making sure that that information that they get from the regulatory staff ends up in the books and records of the company. And so I would suggest to you that the company has made the appropriate response to the mistake, acted upon it expeditiously, and would just suggest that no further action is necessary for them to get the point.

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The last issue I want to just mention, and I understand from talking with Mr. Fletcher of the staff that maybe the company had not gotten a lot -- had not gotten to them the information that we have now regarding the pro forma adjustments. One of them was the digester, and that is Issue 4. There were a number of pro forma additions. The digester was one, and the staff included some amount for that, but the amount they included was substantially less, maybe about half of what the actual project cost is.

And at this point it seemed, when talking to Mr. Fletcher, that maybe there was some miscommunication between the company and him that we might not have gotten him what information that he needed. That notwithstanding, we believe that the appropriate amount should be the amount that's included in these contracts that we have that I can provide to the staff which shows what those actual expenses of that digester is going to be. And that is substantial. I mean these digesters are very expensive. Luckily in this case, by

making this digester repair it makes a substantial decrease in certain operating expenses. So it is a capital improvement that has substantial benefit in reducing operating expenses, too. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you.

Mr. Reilly.

MR. REILLY: Basically, we would support, you know, the staff's adjustment again, you know, in Issue 14 concerning the salaries and the staff's recommendation on Issue 28 show cause. We otherwise support pretty much the staff's recommendations on the adjustments they have made to pro forma plant additions. We do have, however, one exception we would make on Issue 4. I'm going to address that issue with the Commission as well as Issue 5, which is what is the appropriate used and useful percentage for the wastewater treatment plant.

As to Issue 6, I will yield, once again, to Tricia Merchant just to make a few follow-up comments on the working capital issue.

Concerning Issue 4, the one that we do take exception to, it relates to the pro forma plant addition, the \$180,000 for the meter replacement to the approximately 1200 existing reuse customers. We don't take exception to the recommendation that this be done, it's just that the recommendation provides that this process of replacing the meters will occur all during the year 2007 to be completed by the end of 2007. And we

believe that because the metering project is phased in during the entire year, it would be more appropriate to include a 13-month average of the \$180,000 investment in reuse meters to be added to rate base instead of the full 2007 end of the year investment.

It's important to note that this is a capital investment that is being made and finished a full two years outside the test year, and we think that using that 13-month average would be a little more fair to the customers.

On the larger issue, Issue 5, the used and useful percentage of the wastewater plant, I would address the Commissioners' attention to the recommendation on Page 67.

It's Attachment A, and that's a real easy to follow graphic of the whole issue of wastewater treatment and it really highlights what the differences are.

Essentially, there is no real difference of opinion between the utility, staff, or OPC as it relates to the demand-side of the equation. The average annual daily flow of 1,216,000 together with the growth factor produces the numerator of the equation. The whole question relates to the permitted capacity, what should be considered the capacity in the used and useful equation. Even though the wastewater plant capacity is stated as 1.535, the reason why it is is that, in fact, there are two 1.2 million-gallon trains of wastewater treatment capacity. So actually the true capacity of the

wastewater plant is 2.4 million gallons.

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The reason why staff and the utility used the 1.5 million gallons is that there is a limiting factor. The disposal, the effluent disposal is limited, the capacity of that is limited to 1.535. And so, what has happened, of course, the Commission and its staff has used the rule that says compare the permitted capacity of the plant to the -- stated on the same basis as the permitted capacity is on the annual average daily flow to produce the percentage.

However, what we would point out to the Commission is the rule also provides for two exceptions, and we would ask you to consider those exceptions. That when determining the amount of used and useful amount the Commission should consider whether the permitted capacity differs from the designed capacity, and that's in the rule. And, number two, whether there are differences between the actual capacities of the individual components of the wastewater treatment plant and the permitted capacity of the plant.

We believe Alafaya presents a clear example of both of the factors that should be considered when determining the used and useful of this plant. Clearly, Alafaya's actual capacity of 2.4 million gallons is considerably greater than the effluent disposal limitation, and clearly there is a mismatch or difference between the actual capacities of the individual components of the wastewater treatment plant and the

permitted capacity of the plant.

The customers have made an investment in this unused 865,000 gallons of capacity, and we believe it should be considered in the used and useful percentage. We believe this investment should be removed, and this plant should be removed from the used and useful -- with the used and useful adjustment.

We understand -- also there were some other reasons why staff has recommended that you can look at only this limited disposal capacity in the permitted. They say that DEP's redundancy requirements pursuant to DEP Rule 62-610 and the Environmental Protection Agency's reliability Class 1 (phonetic) requirements for a utility that disposes of effluent through public access irrigation also requires that you rate it at the lower capacity.

In response to this statement we did a little research yesterday. We spoke to Doctor David York, who is the state water resource coordinator for DEP, and he shared with me and made mention of the specific rules that his division addresses this question. It is 62-610.4621, Florida

Administrative Code, which references another rule,
62-610.300(1)(c), which further represents another manual. And I have them all here, and they are way beyond the scope of this process, but suffice it to say when I described the situation he basically represented to me that certainly that to meet

Class 1 reliability and redundancy requirements does not require you to use this higher capacity. The statement by the utility that all of the 2.4 million gallons of capacity is needed to fulfill DEP's redundancy requirements and Class 1 reliability requirements is not true.

We also, I had our consultant talk to Tricia Williams (phonetic), of DEP's Central District Office in Orlando. She confirmed that the second 1.2 million-gallon per day treatment facility does not provide redundancy or Class 1 reliability for the first 1.2 million-gallon train. It's our understanding, essentially, that these two trains have within them and their associated appurtenances sufficient redundancy and reliability built in to meet the DEP standards.

We believe that there are no redundancy or reliability Class 1 obstacles for Alafaya to increase the permitted capacity of their wastewater treatment plant as it increases disposal capacity. So, as time progresses, and capacity disposal capacity is increased, in fact, the permitted capacity according to DEP will be increased correspondingly. And, in fact, that's essentially where we are. There is a pro forma adjustment right now that the customers are paying for to have a 20-inch reuse main added to add capacity.

Also, will soon be constructed an additional

1.5 million gallon reuse ground storage facility. So the

utility is well on the way to greatly increasing its wastewater

disposal capabilities. As those capabilities are expanded the permitted capacity will increase.

So we argue that it is not a legitimate basis to say you must consider all of this -- that you cannot consider this additional capacity in the used and useful calculation. We believe that the rule should be applied using those two exceptions to give credence to the fact that this excess capacity is still there that the customers have paid for, and we need to get some recognition in the used and useful percentage.

I would yield to Ms. Merchant, unless you have a question.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: No. Thank you.

Ms. Merchant.

MS. MERCHANT: Good morning, again. I'm going to talk about Issue 6, which is the working capital calculation. I'm just going to add a few more comments from what I had before. I wanted to respond to one of staff's arguments that we were requesting the Commission waive a rule. That's not what we are requesting at all. I recognize that there is a rule, and certainly I agree with the balance sheet approach. The problem in all of these cases that are Class A utilities using the balance sheet approach for Utilities, Inc. is that the balance sheet is not representative. That's what I'm saying. I'm saying default to the formula approach.

And if you look at the specifics for Alafaya, they have about \$2.8 million in revenues, test year revenues. They have \$2 million in O&M expenses. They only have \$8,000 on a 13-month average basis of accounts payable. That is a very small amount for a company that has on an annual basis \$2 million in O&M expenses. And if you add in the taxes and other income then it is even higher.

So the numbers just don't match. And what I'm saying is that the numbers -- I'm not saying there is any inappropriate accounting, I'm just saying that for a regulatory basis, not all the numbers are flowing through. You know that rate case expense is paid for by Water Service Corporation.

None of the accounts payable associated with rate case expense is not being flowed down through the accounts payable. I don't believe that at all.

Secondly, if you look at the balance sheet approach for the company compared to the formula approach, the test year numbers, there is about \$100,000 difference before you even get into staff's adjustment. If you add in staff's adjustment, that raises the difference to \$300,000 between staff's recommended balance sheet approach and the formula approach. Those just happen to be the magnitude of the numbers.

If you don't agree with that philosophy, I have another philosophy I want to add in, and it has to do with staff's adjustment for deferred rate case expense. In the

past, the Commission has added in rate case expense as a pro forma adjustment and that is standard practice. The two cases that staff quotes in its recommendation for regulatory practice on adding in rate case expense happen to be projected test years. This company does not have a projected test year.

And what we have done in other cases in the past when there hasn't been a projected test year, and I don't know that it was precisely defined as projected versus historical, but the Commission has instead of allowing the remaining unamortized balance at year one to be added to working capital, they have taken the average unamortized balance of rate case expense over the four-year period. So, essentially, they have added into rate base 50 percent of the rate case expense, the unamortized rate case expense.

three-quarters, in year two they have half, in year three they have one quarter, and in year four they have zero left to be unamortized. So that's how the theory that the Commission has used in the past in small water and wastewater companies has been used to put in the average unamortized balance of working capital into the balance sheet approach. So that methodology has also been employed.

My primary recommendation is to go back to the formula method because it hasn't been -- because I don't believe the numbers are reliable and haven't been flowed down.

But a secondary recommendation would be that instead of adding in the full amount of unamortized rate case expense, and also the other miscellaneous deferred debits, is that you take the average unamortized balance over the life of the rate case expense. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you, Ms. Merchant.

Mr. Friedman, do you have any additional comment on any of the points raised by OPC?

Do you want to hear from staff first?

MR. FRIEDMAN: Yes, please.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Mr. Fletcher.

MR. FLETCHER: Yes, Commissioners. To address the utility's points on Issue 4 regarding the digester contract, we did see the contract this morning and it is signed. It was signed in '06, and the amount of it was \$1,495,612. Since there is a signed contract, given that support documentation, we will agree to that amount based on that documentation.

Let's see. The salary issue. Again, based on the support documentation that was provided for the salaries, we still stand by the historical recommendation for a 4.51 percent increase over the historical salaries. With regard to Issue 28, I will defer to Ralph Jaeger regarding our comment.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. And before you do, I'm sorry, Mr. Fletcher, I was still thinking through Item 4. So I apologize. Could you repeat your comment or recommendation

regarding the salaries issues on Issue 14.

MR. FLETCHER: It would be to recommend that for the digester it would be \$1,495,612 for plant. And, again, we would have to use the retirement factor, using the Handy-Whitman that's in the recommendation in order to calculate the fallout for the retirement, and then also the corresponding accumulated appreciation expenses would change.

MR. JAEGER: Chairman, before we move forward, there was some question about an expense of \$300,000. Was this the digester? Is there going to be an expense for --

MR. FLETCHER: Right. But that will not change, that O&M expense. There isn't a corresponding adjustment for O&M expenses because of the sludge concentrations is going to be a higher concentration. It's going to reduce the volume in the sludge hauling, but that will not change. It's still 300,000.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay.

MR. JAEGER: Do you want me to address the show cause issue?

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Yes, please.

MR. JAEGER: Yes. There are two show cause issues.

I think Mr. Friedman just addressed the one dealing with the books and records. And this utility opened a docket, or we in 2004 because of the problems with Utilities, Inc. making adjustments from orders in accordance with the NARUC Uniform System of Accounts. And we entered into a settlement agreement

whereby they agreed what they would do, and they would make these adjustments, and they would go back and review all orders in 2003 and 2004 and make the necessary adjustments.

We now have ten Utilities, Inc. dockets, rate case dockets open, and in seven they seem to be okay. But in three, as Mr. Friedman said, they did drop the ball. In Wedgefield and Cypress Lakes we were recommending prior that there be a \$3,000 fine for this failure to adjust their books, and we think that fine is appropriate here in Alafaya, and that it is consistent with what we have done in the past. And recognizing that we have had this problem before and it was addressed and they did drop the ball again, we stand by the \$3,000.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Mr. Fletcher.

MR. FLETCHER: Yes, Commissioners. To address OPC's concern on Issue 4 regarding the reuse meters, Staff has indicated in the recommendation, we cite Section 367.0817(3), which states that all prudent costs of a reuse project shall be recovered in rates. Now, the Commission -- as a result of that statute, we found that 100 percent of the reuse facilities are 100 percent, reuse facilities should be considered 100 percent. And, in that light, we think that the full cost of these meters should be reflected in the rates.

And another point to that is we are recommending, and if the Commission approves we are ordering the utility to do this. That is another supported basis that we think the full

cost should be allowed. And this is also consist with some prior cases where utilities have had a meter replacement program that was not completed yet, and those costs were also added at the full cost.

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That case was actually Placid Lakes Utility. They had initially filed a 2000 rate case, and after that rate case they didn't have all the support for their meter replacement, and they came back in for a limited proceeding. And in that limited proceeding the full cost was recognized. And we think it is consistent with that case and also consistent with the reuse statute that all the costs should be fully recovered through rates.

And with regard to Issue 6, the working capital, again, as Mr. Revell stated in Mid-County, our auditors were sent out. We audited the working capital, the accounts that make up the working capital allowance under the balance sheet approach. And staff believes that it is still representative and it is consistent with Commission practice and the rule. And then, I guess, Issue 5 I will refer to Mr. Revell.

Forgive me. The rate case amortization. I'm sorry Ms. Merchant had also mentioned that regarding the 13-month average. I will say that that is consistent, the unamortized balance that we reflected in Issue 6 for working capital is consistent with the 13-month average balance that the Commission used for prior cases for Class A. One was the

Public Utility of Florida case where we used the 13-month average unamortized balance, and also for the Aloha 1999 wastewater rate case. We used the rule that you have to use the 13-month average balance, and it's consistent with those cases, as well.

MR. REDEMANN: Issue 5, used and useful. Let me explain a little bit. Yes, the utility has two twin 1.2 million gallon per day plants. The site for that is very limited. The utility could have built smaller plants, but probably in this rate case then we would be looking at having them build more plants because they would have to replace the smaller plants. So it was a good idea that they built the two larger plants because the site is very limited.

For Class 1 reliability you need to have duplicative facilities, so they would need two identical plants. With respect to the capacity of the system, just recently on September 19th, 2005, they rerated the system capacity at 1.535 million gallons per day. It's the same capacity that we used in the prior rate case, in Docket 020408. The capacity actually had gone down slightly, but they put it back at the same capacity.

I spent a considerable amount of time talking to Tricia Williams' supervisor, Denise Judy, and asked her why they didn't increase the capacity because the disposal seemed to have increased slightly. And, basically, over the past 10

to 20 years the utility has had problems getting rid of their effluent, so until they can show consistent usage with the reuse system they were not going to change the capacity of the system.

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The only way to dispose of the effluent right now is the one million gallon per day ponds and through the reuse system. Currently they can filter a million gallons per day, but depending on the flow they may not actually even get a million gallons per day of disposal through the reuse system. It just depends on the flow.

The DEP could increase the capacity, and we don't have a problem if they do increase the capacity, but basically right now the 1.535 million gallons per day is what the capacity of the system is. In order to dispose of more effluent they could build, or send the effluent to another pond, but that cost is not reflected in these rates. Or they could -- probably another pond would be the only way that we would agree to increase the capacity of the system, because there is simply no other way to dispose of the effluent.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you.

Any further comments from staff at this time? No. Mr. Friedman.

MR. FRIEDMAN: I'm going to ask Mr. Seidman to address the used and useful issue, and that is the only issue we will address.

1 CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay.

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MR. SEIDMAN: I don't have much to offer on this. I agree with what Mr. Redemann said in their conclusions. I would like to -- I understand the research that Mr. Reilly did, and I don't know the premise which he proposed to Doctor York, but the component backup requirements of the EPA rule specifically says that the treatment system shall be designed such with the largest flow unit out of service the hydraulic capacity with the remaining units shall be sufficient to handle the peak wastewater flows.

These two units that make up the 2.4 million-gallon plant are 1.2 million gallons each. The peak flows every month of the test year exceeded that amount. I think the plant is close to adequate, not quite, but I think that has to be taken into consideration.

When we are doing used and useful, we are required to base it on the permitted capacity. But, in addition, in this case, as we pointed out, the plant had to be built not just to meet the average annual daily flows, but to meet the Class 1 reliability.

And just one comment on this. I think Mr. Reilly mentioned that we are building a 1.5 million gallon reuse tank. That will have no impact on meeting this Class 1 reliability. That tank holds reuse quality water. And what we are looking for in the plant is to maintain reuse quality water, to produce

reuse quality water. If the plant is down, it does not produce reuse quality water or cannot go in that tank.

I would just like to mention one other thing, if I could, with regard to the working capital issue, and that is just a historical perspective. Utilities, Inc. has been providing service through its utilities in Florida for several decades. They have been submitting rate cases over that several decades, and they have followed the rules with regard to working capital in all of those cases. To suddenly now discover that there is some alleged anomaly in the balance sheets that makes the working capital approach invalid, I think is too little too late, and we ought to stick with the rules. And if the rules are going to change, we ought to know about them beforehand, not after the case is filed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioners, questions?

Commissioner Tew.

COMMISSIONER TEW: I have one for Mr. Fletcher. On Issue 4, about the digester contract that you were talking about, and you gave us the new figure. How does that change what we have before us on Issue 4? I just want to make sure I'm clear. I understand that you just received the contract today, right?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes. He provided the signed contract. We have that, and that would change the amount of plant. If you look on Page 19, it would change the \$466,525 amount. We

will replace that with using the contract amount of 1,495,612. 1 And, again, we have to apply a retirement adjustment using the 2 Handy-Whitman Index on that amount. And so it's basically 3 going to change that figure. It will increase the plant, and 4 then, of course, the corresponding accumulated depreciation 5 will have to be calculated and then the depreciation expense, 6 7 and it will all flow through the revenue requirement calculation. 8 COMMISSIONER TEW: So if we approve your 9 recommendation, as modified here, there will be fallout 10 adjustments similar to what we did earlier? 11 MR. FLETCHER: Yes, Commissioner. 12 COMMISSIONER TEW: Okay. 13 COMMISSIONER CARTER: Madam Chairman. 14

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Carter.

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COMMISSIONER CARTER: After listening to staff and the parties and having reviewed the record, if I'm in order I would move staff recommendation on Issue 8 in toto.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Including the adjustment to Issue 4 as just recommended by our staff?

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Yes, ma'am.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. Commissioner Carter, you are in order.

Commissioner Tew, any further questions or discussion?

COMMISSIONER TEW: I can second. CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. Then all in favor of the motion say aye. (Unanimous affirmative vote.) CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Opposed? Show it adopted. And we will be on -you. MR. JAEGER: Chairman, I'm sorry, I didn't hear what I wanted to make sure, we are adding the digester and then the fallout adjustments, is that --CHAIRMAN EDGAR: The fallout adjustments, yes, sir. MR. JAEGER: Thank you. 

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STATE OF FLORIDA CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER COUNTY OF LEON I, JANE FAUROT, RPR, Chief, Hearing Reporter Services Section, FPSC Division of Commission Clerk and Administrative Services, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the time and place herein stated. IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I stenographically reported the said proceedings; that the same has been transcribed under my direct supervision; and that this transcript constitutes a true transcription of my notes of said proceedings. I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action. DATED THIS 30th day of January, 2007. JANE FAUROT, RPR Official FPSC Hearings Reporter FPSC Division of Commission Clerk and Administrative Services (850) 413-6732 23 24