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1	BEFORE THE				
2	FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION				
3	In the Matter	of:			
4			DOCKET NC	. UNDOCKETED	
5	INITIATION OF RULEMAKING TO AMEND RULE 25-30.0371, FLORIDA				
6	ADMINISTRATION ADJUSTMENTS.	CODE, ACQUISITION			
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13	PROCEEDINGS:	STAFF RULEMAKING	WORKSHOP		
14					
15	DATE:	Thursday, May 20,	2010		
16	TIME:	Commenced at 9:30 Concluded at 9:59			
17					
18	PLACE:	Betty Easley Confe Hearing Room 148	erence Center	ter	
19		4075 Esplanade Wa Tallahassee, Flor			
20					
21	REPORTED BY:	JANE FAUROT, RPR Official FPSC Repo	orter		ू ट (a)
22		(850) 413-6732			(NJ
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1	PROCEEDINGS			
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3	MS. MILLER: Well, it looks like it's			
4	9:30, so I guess we'll get started.			
5	Pursuant to notice issued, this time,			
6	date, and place were set for a staff rule			
7	development workshop on the Acquisition Adjustment			
8	Rule, Rule 25-30.0371. I'm Cindy Miller with the			
9	Office of General Counsel, and with me we have			
10	Jessica Miller with the Division of Regulatory			
11	Analysis, and JoAnn Chase with the Division of			
12	Economic Regulation, and Eric Sayler with the Office			
13	of General Counsel.			
14	We have set out some materials for you			
15	over here, and also a sign-in sheet. If you could			
16	do that for us that would be helpful. We have a			
17	court reporter, Jane Faurot, so please, when you			
18	speak, state your name and who you represent. We			
19	are going to start with a walk-through of the rules			
20	by JoAnn Chase.			
21	MS. CHASE: Good morning. We are going to			
22	go through the specifics of the rule			
23	section-by-section, but before we do that, I just			
24	want to make a few comments, which is, I think, most			
25	people here realize that the purpose of the			

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

acquisition adjustment rule itself is to encourage consolidation and acquisitions of small systems by well-run utilities in order to take advantage of economies of scale, better ability to attract capital, more professional management, and a better quality of service in the long-run while at the same time mitigating rate impacts to customers.

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I think all parties agreed at the January 8 Commission workshop that we held on this topic that 9 the current acquisition adjustment rule was a 10 product of thoughtful and careful negotiations of 11 the parties involved, and it does serve to balance 12 the needs for incentives with the sensitivity to 13 rate impacts. Since its adoption in 2002, it has 14 reduced controversies over the acquisition 15 adjustment in transfer proceedings which, of course, 16 serves to reduce administrative and legal costs for 17 the parties and the Commission, and it has afforded 18 the industry the certainty needed in the area of 19 acquisitions. This has been demonstrated by the 20 results that were also discussed at the January 21 22 workshop.

23 Since the rule was adopted, there have 24 been no positive acquisition adjustments approved by 25 the Commission, and there have been six negative

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

acquisition adjustments, although two were not 1 recognized because the purchased price was within 2 80 percent of net book value. However, at the 3 January workshop several concerns with the rule were 4 discussed with regard to negative acquisition 5 adjustment. There was expressed a concern that the 6 existing rule could afford a windfall to an 7 acquiring utility to the detriment of the customers. 8 This concern is most prevalent, most noted when 9 there is a large difference between the purchase 10 price and the net book value. Some solutions were 11 discussed at the workshop and in the comments filed, 12 13 which include extending the amortization period for the negative acquisition adjustment, it's currently 14five years, and also some sharing mechanism was also 15 16 discussed. So the customers in that regard could reap more of a tangible benefit for the negative 17 acquisition adjustment. 18

19 Staff's proposed changes focus on 20 addressing concerns with a negative acquisition 21 adjustment, but we have also offered wording and 22 organizational changes within the rule that we hope 23 help clarify and simplify some of the language in 24 the rule. But I do want to stress that it is 25 staff's intention to leave the fundamental purpose

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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of the rule intact.

2 Since most of the concerns were with the 3 treatment of negative acquisition adjustment, and 4 they occur when the utility is paying significantly less than net book value, in the draft rule we have 5 6 separated the treatment of negative acquisition 7 adjustment into two groups, which is when the difference between purchase price and net book value 8 9 is greater than 50 percent and when this difference 10 is 50 percent or less. This is very similar to the 11 approach used by Aqua filed in their comments after 12 the January workshop.

Under the draft rule, if the difference between the purchase price and the net book value is 50 percent or less, the only material change we have made is to increase the amortization period from five years to seven years. This serves to deter the acquiring utility from filing for a rate case for a longer period of time.

If the difference is greater than 50 percent, then under the staff draft rule half of the negative acquisition adjustment will be amortized over the seven years, and half will be amortized over the remaining life of the assets. In this way the customers get an added benefit by

keeping rate base lower than it would be under the current rule, so that in future rate -- this is reflected in future rate cases.

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Before I get into the specific changes of the rule, I do want to point out, again, as Cindy 5 did, that the handouts that we have on the website, we also have copies over there on the table. And we are going to be going -- using the one that's called Comparison of Existing and Staff Draft Rule Provisions to go over the specific changes that we have made to the rule.

12 I'm going to be going section-by-section, 13 but at any point if you have questions along the 14 way, just please indicate that. Stop and we will 15 discuss rather than --- you do not have to wait until 16 the end of the presentation.

17 MR. KELLY: Do you prefer that? Do you 18 want to go all the way through, or do you want 19 to ask them as we went along? It doesn't matter to 20 us.

21 I think it would probably be MS. CHASE: 22 easier if we just asked as we went along rather than 23 having to hold questions. But I do want to ask, for 24 the purposes the court reporter, that when you do 25 make comments or have questions, if you would please

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

introduce yourself for the record, and also state who you are here representing.

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All right. If we look at that document, Section I of the rule just provides definitions. We are not proposing any change to this section. Now, I will say, I noticed this morning I left off a sentence, the last sentence of that section which defines negative acquisition adjustment. And obviously we did not mean to do that. So that will be put in. As it is in the current rule it will be in our staff draft rule, as well.

Section II of the rule addresses positive 12 13 acquisition adjustments. We are not intending to 14 make any material change to the treatment of 15 positive acquisition adjustments. What we've done 16 here is try to simplify/clarify some of the language. We have changed the term extraordinary 17 18 circumstances, which is sometimes problematic in a 19 rule because it isn't defined anywhere and it's 20 very, very difficult to define, so we have just 21 eliminated that particular term and we have changed 22 it to evidence supporting. But the language that 23 gives the examples of the type of evidence that would support a positive acquisition adjustments 24 remains the same. 25

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

1 So our intention is to leave the bar as high as it is was before for positive acquisition 2 adjustments. The specific changes we have made, 3 again, that one, to change the term extraordinary 4 circumstances. The other change we have made is we 5 have moved up language from current Section IV 6 7 regarding the determination of the amortization period, and we have put it in this so that it is 8 9 clear how a positive acquisition adjustment would be There is no material change to that 10 amortized. language, it's simply moved up into that section. 11 Does anybody have any questions or 12 comments about that? 13 MR. KELLY: Yes, ma'am. J. R. Kelly with 14 Office of Public Counsel. 15 I just want to make clear what you just 16 said. It's not staff's intent to make it easier for 17 a party to come in and obtain a positive acquisition 18 adjustment? 19 That's correct. MS. CHASE: 20 Okay. We have a few concerns MR. KELLY: 21 that taking out the language about -- that you have 22 the burden to prove the existence of extraordinary 23 circumstances. I do understand your comments about 24 it not being defined, but we do feel that by taking 25

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

that out it seems to us you could certainly make an 1 argument that it is lessening the burden --2 Uh-huh. 3 MS. CHASE: 4 MR. KELLY: -- of a party that wants to come in and ask for that. And the other thing I 5 would state is that in the current language where it 6 7 says -- in the last sentence where it says in determining whether extraordinary circumstances have 8 9 been demonstrated, your current rule does give a --10 maybe not an all-inclusive, but an indication of 11 things that you can look at with respect to the 12 party that has the burden of the extraordinary --13 proving extraordinary circumstances. 14 I don't have any proposed language today, 15 and we can -- we're going to put our heads together. 16 Charlie Beck, who has been working on this mostly is 17 out of the office and won't be back until Monday, 18 but I just want to let you all know that we do have a little bit of a concern that an argument can be 19 made by taking that language out you've reduced the 20 21 burden on the persons asking for this.

And the last comment I would make is that whether you stay with -- whether you stay with the current rule or whether you amend it, we think that either in the last sentence of the current language,

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or in your sentence that says evidence supporting 1 2 the adjustment, that there are a couple of factors 3 that we would ask to be included. And, again, I Δ don't have those in writing today, but I'll tell you 5 what they are, and we'll get those to you in 6 writing. Two things that we would want the Commission to look at: The elements of the 7 transaction, and by elements, that could be a myriad 8 9 of whatever circumstances are surrounding the 10 purchase; for example, is it a purchase of just a 11 water and wastewater utility? Is it water and 12 wastewater and something else, a golf course or 13 whatever? We think that the totality of the 14 elements of the transaction would be something that 15the Commission would look at. 16 And, also, the extent to which the 17 purchase is the result of an arms-length 18 transaction. And I don't believe your language that 19 you have here necessarily excludes that, but we 20 would like to see it included. And, again, when we 21 submit our comments we'll include that language to 22 you, but I at least wanted to mention it to you this 23 morning.

MS. CHASE: Okay. We appreciate that, and we certainly will take that into account. I will

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FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

say with regard to taking out the term extraordinary 1 circumstances, the sentence that you referred to in 2 the current rule that says, "In determining whether 3 extraordinary circumstances have been demonstrated, 4 the Commission shall consider evidence," et cetera. 5 That same language we have kept in the first 6 sentence where we say, "Evidence supporting the 7 adjustment, including anticipated improvements," or 8 whatever, they are there. It is just it is reworded 9 10 to take out that troublesome phrase. But we will look forward to a different 11 way of rewording it, you know. We have the same 12 13 intent not to change the bar. MR. KELLY: Okay. I appreciate that. 14 15 Thank you. MS. MILLER: We are going to have a 16 comment period, so that will work. 17 MS. CHASE: Anybody else have comments on 18 19 Section II? Okay. Subsection III is, of course, addressing 20 negative acquisition adjustments. And we have made, 21 you know, a number of changes to this section to 22 accommodate what I was talking about in our opening 23 comments that we want to change how negative 24 acquisition adjustments are done, and separating 25

them into 50 percent of net book value or greater than 50 percent of net book value. So we have made a number of changes here. But under the current rule, the negative acquisition adjustment will not be included if the purchase price is greater than 80 percent of net book value unless there's proof of extraordinary circumstances.

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This has never been implemented. No one 8 has ever tried to show extraordinary circumstances 9 in this particular case. So our staff rule, just 10for clarity we have just eliminated this, and we've 11 made it clear that there will not be a negative 12 acquisition adjustment if it's within 80 percent, if 13 the purchase price is within 80 percent of net book 14 value. 15

We have left unchanged, of course, the 16 provision that a negative acquisition adjustment 17 will be included in rate base if the purchase price 18 is less than 80 percent. So there is a certain 19 statement to that effect. The language that is in 20 the current rule in Subsection 3(b) that describes 21 how the negative acquisition adjustment is actually 22 calculated, we have tried to simplify that language 23 and we have incorporated it into our Paragraph 3. 24 25 And you have comments on that, as well?

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MR. KELLY: Yes, ma'am.

2 Again, J. R. Kelly. I just wanted to make 3 sure. It seems to me that basically the rewording is a trade-off here. In other words, it's a 4 trade-off between proposing some longer amortization 5 periods where the purchase price is less than 80 6 percent of the net book value, and the trade-off 7 being that there is more of an absolute where there 8 will be no negative acquisition if you're in that 9 80 percent -- if the purchased price is equal to 10 80 percent or above of net book value. I mean, is 11 that in a nutshell what you're doing? 12 MS. CHASE: I'm not sure trade-off is 13 quite the word; but, yes, that is what we are doing. 14I think we are trying to make it certain that over 15 80 percent there will not be a negative acquisition 16

adjustment, which has been the case since the rule has been implemented, but that under that there definitely will be -- and then we go on later to describe how that will work.

21 MR. KELLY: Okay. I don't really have any 22 more comments about --- well, one more. In our 23 February 26th submission, in some proposed language, 24 the only thing that we would -- and we're going to 25 put this, again, in writing back to with you with

our final comments, but our only concern is that 1 with absolutes -- and I can't think of any examples 2 3 to give you, but in tying the Commissioners' hands, 4 we were just concerned that there may come some set of circumstances that would warrant adjustments. 5 And just directing you back to language we submitted 6 7 dated February 26th of this year, we had some language that said notwithstanding any provision of 8 9 the rule to the contrary, if the Commission 10 determines that the acquired utility system is 11 neither financially nor fiscally distressed, the Commission may -- again, not an absolute, but may 12 require full recognition of a negative acquisition 13 for ratemaking purposes. And we still feel pretty 14 strongly that that language should be in there so, 15 therefore, it wouldn't be an absolute. And I'll 16 leave it at that. If you have questions, fine, but 17 otherwise we'll put that in our comments with the 18 19 other.

20 MS. MILLER: We looked at this carefully, 21 and what we run into with language that is a may and 22 a lot of discretion is that it may be a violation of 23 Chapter 120. And that it gives -- I mean, we would 24 love all the discretion in the world, but that it 25 gives too much discretion. And usually in rules

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

we're pretty much required to use shall. So if we can come up with when, and also the phrases financially nor physically distressed would probably need to be defined, but that's an issue we run into so often with rulemaking. And as you all know, the Joint Administrative Procedures Committee reviews our rules, and that's one of the key issues they look at.

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MR. KELLY: Thank you.

10 MS. CHASE: Next we will be going over 11 3(a) and 3(b), which in the current rule is the 12 contested language and the uncontested language that 13 has always been difficult to follow and just cumbersome. So we have tried to -- and under the 14 15 staff draft approach, under the approach for our 16 staff draft rule, since we are taking the negative 17 acquisition adjustments and breaking them into the 18 two categories based on the relationship of purchase price to net book value, we just believe that it's 19 just much clearer just to state what we will be 20 21 doing when the calculation of the negative 22 acquisition adjustment reaches either one of those criteria. 23

So we have taken out the language in 3(a) and 3(b), and basically we have replaced it with --

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

which is on Page 4 -- with the language that we have 1 in 4(a) and (b), which goes into the amortization 2 periods, because currently the amortization period 3 for negative acquisition adjustments is five years, Δ 5 and that's all that is included in the rule is just 6 a five-year period. And what we are, of course, 7 proposing is that if the purchase price is within 50 percent of the net book value, then the 8 amortization period will be extended to seven years. 9 If it's greater, if the difference is greater than 10 50 percent, the amortization, half of it will be 11 12 over seven years and half will be over the life of the asset. So that's why we took out 3(a) and 3(b), 13 14 and we basically replaced it with our new approach. Anybody have any questions or concerns 15 about that or how it would work? Okay. 16 17 We have left -- of course, in doing this we have left the same language as far as when it is 18 19 over a seven-year period if the company stays out of 20 a rate case for that seven-year period, you know, it 21 will not be recorded on their books for ratemaking 22 purposes. The last section, which is on Page 6 of 23 the handout, is subsequent modification. And this 24 25 section we have changed because the way it's worded

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

1 now it appears that it would affect both a negative and a positive acquisition adjustment, and we 2 3 believe that -- well, first of all, again, we look 4 out the word extraordinary circumstances, the term, 5 but we also just left it and made it clear that it would apply to a positive acquisition adjustment, 6 because subsequent modifications to the acquisition 7 8 adjustment really relate more to a positive. Ιf 9 they're trying to show extraordinary circumstances, 10 and if those don't materialize or they go away 11 within a five-year period, then this will be 12 reviewed by the Commission, and that's what this is 13 pretty much saying.

As far as negative acquisition adjustments, once they are determined and they are on the books, they will remain on the books. There is no, really, indication of a time when that might be modified and taken out. So that's the only change we made to Number 5, to Section 5. Does anybody have any questions about that or --

21 Well, that pretty much sums up what we 22 have done to the rule, the changes that we have 23 made. And, again, like I said, we're not trying to 24 change the overall intent of the rule, we're just 25 simply trying to make it clear based on some of the

things that we have experienced since the rule has 1 been in place and trying to clarify things. 2 I think Cindy now will talk about the 3 4 comment period and so forth. We do want -- really 5 do want to appreciate the fact that you all are filing comments and that you are here to explain 6 them because it is very helpful. 7 Mr. Kelly. 8 MR. KELLY: I'm sorry, and I apologize. 9 Ι 10 was reading something if you asked for any final 11 comments. The only other comment I was going to 12 make, again, consistent -- and, I'm sorry, J. R. 13 Kelly with OPC -- and it's part of our February 6th filing, the clarification that we had in there about 14 15any transaction or transition costs incurred in 16 connection with the acquisition of a system should 17 be expensed -- shall be expensed and not 18 capitalized. We will just let you know we are still 19 going to include that in our final comments because 20 as we understand -- as I understand it, and I will 21 say I -- that's consistent with Commission practice, 22 and as I understand it from my accountants, it's consistent with GAAP. But we think that should be a 23 24 clarification, and if we put it in the rule then 25 there won't ever be any concerns that may arise down

the road. So it's, again, the same language we submitted on February 26th, and we'll put it in our final comments again.

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4 MS. CHASE: Okay. And, of course, we will consider that. The reason that we did not put it in 5 here is we believe that is really not the place for 6 7 it in acquisition, because this has to do with when transfers are approved, when the acquisition is 8 actually approved and the net book value is set. 9 10 Those costs would be the cost of the acquiring 11 utility. And if they were ever going to try to 12 recoup them, that would be in an upcoming, you know, rate case or whatever, and it would be an issue 13 there. 14

15 So perhaps it's a good thing to have in a 16 rule, I don't know, but we just don't believe at 17 this point that it really belongs in this rule that 18 has to do with acquisition adjustments, but we will 19 take another look at that.

20 MR. KELLY: I appreciate it. Thank you. 21 MS. MILLER: Are there any other comments 22 generally, or alternative suggestions that you all 23 would like to go over?

24 MR. WILLIAMS: John Williams with25 Utilities Incorporated.

Ms. Chase, could you go back over the 1 cases since the rule was adopted and what has 2 occurred? 3 4 MS. CHASE: Certainly. That went kind of fast, and MR. WILLIAMS: 5 I would just like to hear that again, if you don't 6 7 mind. Well, since the rule, which, MS. CHASE: 8 of course, is 2002, there have been no positive 9 acquisition adjustments approved. There have been a 10 number of cases where a positive acquisition 11 adjustment -- where utilities have paid more than 12 rate base, but they have either not asked for it or 13 it has been denied, but nothing has been approved. 14There have been six cases where a negative 15 acquisition adjustment results as a result of the 16 rule. Two of those the acquisition adjustment was 17 not recorded on the books, because they were within 18 that 80 percent of net book value window. The other 19 four, they were recorded on the books of the utility 20 and amortized over the five-year period consistent 21 with the rule. 22 MR. WILLIAMS: John Williams with 23 Utilities Inc. Did rate cases occur within the 24 five-year period? 25

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

MS. CHASE: I don't know that, John. I 1 2 would have to look. I'm suspecting not, but I don't I didn't look into that. 3 know. MR. WILLIAMS: I just would like to make 4 the comment that in today's environment staying out 5 for rate cases for five years is difficult and seven 6 7 years is practically impossible just given the nature -- unless you have a lot of growth or some 8 9 other thing, it seems an unreasonable period of time 10 to expect a utility to stay out from rate adjustments just in the reality of the operation of 11 12 utilities, from our experience. MS. CHASE: Well, yes, I think that would 13 be something a utility would have to weigh. I mean, 14 15 given that if it's -- like in your case, it wouldn't 16 be the only system the utility has purchased, but it would just be a decision. At some point along the 17 way it would have been amortized over some period of 18 19 time. You certainly could come in for a rate case, it's just that it would then be considered as part 20 21 of the test year, you know, at whatever point you 22 came in. Any other comments? 23 I'll be real brief. 24MR. RENDELL: This is Troy Rendell with Aqua Utilities Florida. We're 25

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

here in full support of staff's proposed rule. 1 We think it's very fair, reasonable, and takes all 2 3 comments into consideration. 4 Just one quick point to the Office of Public Counsel's comments on the transitional costs, 5 transactional costs. I believe that is already 6 7 addressed in the NARUC system of accounts, and I think the utilities are required to book that, so 8 9 any change there would require a change to the NARUC 10 system of accounts. MS. CHASE: I'm sorry, Troy, they are 11 12 required to do what? 13 MR. RENDELL: To record those as part of the acquisition cost as part of the plant acquired. 1415 So I would just urge the parties to look at the 16 NARUC system of accounts. 17 MS. CHASE: Do you plan to address that in any subsequent comments to this workshop? 18 19 MR. RENDELL: We can, yes. 20 MS. CHASE: Okay. Thank you. 21 MS. MILLER: Any other comments or 22 alternative suggestions? 23 We've talked about next steps. Our plan 24 is to bring a recommendation for a proposed rule to 25 the Commissioners this summer. If you have FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

additional comments that you want to place in writing, please do so by June 21. And you can send those to JoAnn Chase, again. One of the things we have to do before we -- actually the agency proposes the rule is a statement of estimated regulatory costs, so we will be addressing that. Craig Hewitt is here. He's the staff person who will be working on that. Any other comments or concerns? With that we are adjourned. MS. CHASE: Thank you. (The workshop concluded at 9:59 a.m.) FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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2	STATE OF FLORIDA)					
3	: CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER					
4	COUNTY OF LEON)					
5	I, JANE FAUROT, RPR, Chief, Hearing Reporter					
6	Services Section, FPSC Division of Commission Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the time and place herein stated.					
7						
8	IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I stenographically reported the said proceedings; that					
9	the same has been transcribed under my direct supervision; and that this transcript constitutes a true transcription of my notes of said proceedings.					
10						
11	I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties,					
12	nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I					
13	financially interested in the action.					
14	DATED THIS 27th day of May, 2010.					
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16	VINISTUM					
17	JANE FAUROT, RPR Official FPSC Hearings Reporter					
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