

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In Re: Resolution by City)
Commission of Haines City)
Requesting Extended Area)
Service (EAS) from Haines)
City Exchange to all)
Exchanges within Polk)
County.)
_____)

Docket No. 950699-TL
Filed: February 21, 1997

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF
ELIZABETH ANN TONEY

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**Direct Testimony of
Elizabeth Ann Toney
On Behalf of The City of Haines City
Before the Florida Public Service Commission
February 21, 1997**

Q. Please state your name, business name, address and title.

A. I am Elizabeth Ann Toney. I am City Manager of the City of Haines City. Our business address is 501 Hinson Avenue.

Q. Please describe your educational background and your business experience.

A. My educational background consists of an Associates of Art Degree from Polk Community College, a Bachelors of Art Degree in Political Science from the University of Florida, and a Masters of Art Degree in Political Science/Public Administration from the University of Florida. My business experience includes a management internship with the City of West Palm Beach, and serving the City of Boynton Beach as Assistant to the City Manager and then as Assistant City Manager and as Interim City Manager for a period of time. I served as Deputy City Manager for the City of North Miami Beach. I am currently the City Manager with the City of Haines City, a position which I have held for approximately five years.

Q. Please describe your role as a community leader in Haines City.

A. As City Manager I am in charge of the City's 160-plus employees. We are a

1 full service city providing services for recreation, library, public works, water,
2 wastewater, police, fire, parks, etc. Also in our community, I am active on
3 various committees in the Chamber of Commerce and have served as
4 Chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee on three separate
5 occasions. I am also a member of the Central Florida Economic
6 Development Council and am Chairman of the Polk County City and County
7 Management Association. I am active in the American Legion Auxiliary at
8 both the local and the state level. I also serve my church as a member of the
9 Pastor-Parish Committee; and for two years prior to this, I have served as
10 Stewardship Chairman.

11

12 **Q. Why is it appropriate that the Florida Public Service Commission be**
13 **concerned with the provision of countywide extended area service for**
14 **Haines City?**

15 **A. Countywide extended area service or extended calling service is very**
16 **important for the City of Haines City for a variety of reasons. Haines City**
17 **clearly has numerous "communities of interest" with other parts of the county**
18 **and we have a significant barrier due to our inability to make local telephone**
19 **calls to other parts of the county. I would like to first note that Haines City is**
20 **the fourth largest city, based on population, out of the seventeen**
21 **municipalities in Polk County. Haines City is also statistically the fastest**
22 **growing area of Polk County. Therefore, the communities of interest not only**
23 **exist but will continue to intensify in their importance over the coming years.**
24 **The first item I would like to note is that Bartow is the county seat of Polk**
25 **County. Located within Bartow is the County Administration Building, the**

1 Polk County Courthouse, the Polk County School Board Offices, the Polk
2 County Sheriff's Main Office, and the main office of all Polk County
3 Constitutional officers. In order for the citizens of this City to call Bartow,
4 they must use long distance service. This circumstance is somewhat unfair
5 and isolates this very large part of Polk County from what is the
6 governmental nucleus of Polk County. Also because Bartow is the county
7 seat and houses the County Administration Building, the Polk County
8 Courthouse, the Polk County School Board, the Polk County Sheriff's Main
9 Office, and the main office of all Polk County Constitutional officers, many
10 residents from Haines City commute to Bartow to work. In this scenario, in
11 order to place a call to or from one's office to or from Haines City would also
12 require a long distance telephone call.

13
14 The City of Lakeland which is the largest city, based on population, in Polk
15 County has many doctors offices, a regional hospital, and a major medical
16 clinic. Due to the dynamics of Haines City and the greater Haines City area
17 population, many medical related activities transpire. One item I would like to
18 specifically note is that Haines City does not have a dialysis center and
19 residents of Haines City requiring this treatment have driven to Lakeland to
20 the Watson Clinic in order to receive kidney dilation in order to extend their
21 quality of life. In order to call to make an appointment, to change an
22 appointment or for an inquiry relative to treatment would require said
23 residents to make a long distance telephone call.

24

25 From an economic standpoint Lakeland is a major employment and

1 distribution center with industries like Publix, Watkins Trucking, Peppridge
2 Farms, etc. In the Lakeland area are many employment opportunities for
3 Haines City area residents, and access to Lakeland is very easy due to
4 Haines City's location on 17-92 and its easy access to Interstate 4, both of
5 which are direct routes to the City of Lakeland. Also from an economic
6 standpoint, our City's businesses order stock and supplies from major
7 companies located in Lakeland. Therefore, from both an employment and a
8 business prospective, long distance calls are required of the business
9 community in Haines City.

10
11 Lakeland is also the home of Florida Southern College, which provides our
12 residents with higher education opportunities. Florida Southern College is
13 the largest college in Polk County; and in order to call to gain information
14 relative to registration or activities related to Florida Southern College
15 athletics or performing arts series, residents from this area must place a long
16 distance call.

17
18 The Lakeland Center located within the corporate limits of the City of
19 Lakeland is the most culturally significant facility for cultural and
20 entertainment opportunities in Polk County. In order to make inquiries or
21 reservations would require residents of the Haines City area to make a long
22 distance telephone call. The Lakeland Center continues to be a major focus
23 of the Polk County Tourist Development Council as a major asset to our
24 County and its dynamics. The Lakeland Center is a recipient of a high
25 percentage of the Tourist Development tax dollars. Ironically the area of the

1 county generating the largest percentage of the Tourist Development tax
2 dollars is the northeast part of the county, a/k/a the greater Haines City area.
3 It is truly a statement by the Tourist Development Council to the residents of
4 Polk County that the Lakeland Center is the focal cultural and entertainment
5 point in Polk County based on its decision to allocate a large share of funds
6 for that facility.

7
8 It should also be noted that the Polk County Museum of Art is located in
9 Lakeland. The museum is sponsored by private and governmental donations
10 from throughout Polk County. A Haines City resident would have to make a
11 long distance call to make an inquiry relative to hours of operation, exhibits,
12 etc.

13
14 One of Haines City's two oldest and significant industries is citrus and
15 trucking. Haines City is home to the Haines City Citrus Growers Associations
16 (HCCGA), the largest citrus co-op in the state of Florida. Because of the
17 number of citrus owner's serviced and represented by HCCGA there are
18 constant countywide telephone requirements.

19
20 Secondly, Haines City is known nationwide as a trucking center. Products
21 from throughout the county, state, and nation are brokered out of offices
22 located in Haines City. You will note that when traveling throughout Florida,
23 signs refer to the number of miles to Haines City. The reason for this is the
24 significance of the trucking industry in Haines City. Unfortunately, trucking
25 brokers and drivers in Haines City and Polk County in general are put to en

1 economic disadvantage within their own county due to the fact that they are
2 unable to make local calls throughout Polk County.

3
4 The trucking industry is a communications driven industry and the inability for
5 a trucker in Frostproof, Mulberry, Fort Meade, Bartow, Polk City and
6 Lakeland to call his broker in Haines City is not only inconvenient but it
7 economically affects his/her business.

8
9 I would also note that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) now
10 has right-of-way acquisition monies in the FDOT work program to purchase
11 land so U.S. 27 can be widened to six (6) lanes. Now, and even more so in
12 the future, U.S. 27 will naturally link Frostproof to Haines City.

13
14 Additionally, one of Haines City's strongest assets is its location. We
15 contend that "all roads lead to Haines City." Because of the State highway
16 system, despite its location on the other side of the county, people do travel
17 between Fort Meade and Haines City for employment and shopping. Both of
18 these activities are conducive to the need for telephone contact. In
19 particular, I find it of interest that the Assistant Principle of Fort Meade Middle
20 School is a Haines City resident.

21
22 Another important link between the schools of Polk County is high school
23 athletics. Both Bartow High School and Mulberry High School are two of our
24 biggest rivals. Athletic events certainly do not end with football season and
25 involve both girl and boy participants. School to school cares, parent to

1 parent calls, and friend to friend calls are quelled due to a countywide
2 communication barrier known as long distance telephone calls.

3
4 It is also interesting to note that the General Telephone Electronics (GTE)
5 Governmental Liaison for the Haines City area is located in Lakeland. To
6 contact him by telephone would require a resident of this area to call long
7 distance or to call collect.

8

9 **Q. In what ways will the implementation of countywide extended area
10 service impact your business and community interest?**

11 **A. It is my opinion as City Manager that an extended area or calling service
12 opportunity for the citizens of Haines City would certainly diversify our
13 opportunity to compete with neighboring cities in attracting not only larger
14 businesses but also smaller businesses. This is important in diversifying the
15 business community. Given an opportunity a business will locate in an area
16 where telephone access to more of the county is prevalent. Contact with
17 possible customers and suppliers is facilitated by having the ability to make a
18 local call.**

19

20 **Q. In what ways do you foresee the implementation of countywide
21 extended area service impacting the economy of Haines City?**

22 **A. Without question this will become an economic development selling point for
23 the Haines City area. For so long government representatives from Haines
24 City have heard criticisms that Haines City is difficult to access by telephone,
25 and the irony is that it is easy to access by major roadways, yet difficult in the**

1 quickest way of communication which is by telephone. We would be able to
2 encourage economic exchanges by allowing persons in other parts of the
3 county to call the businesses in Haines City for cost comparisons and
4 business information more easily.

5

6 **Q. Describe what you see as Haines City's growth potential with**
7 **countywide extended area service for local telephone usage.**

8 **A. With or without the extended area or extended calling service, the City of**
9 **Haines City will continue to grow. However, the quality of this growth will be**
10 **greatly enhanced by greater communication opportunities. It is true in any**
11 **business as well as in government that the ability to interact at various levels**
12 **is most important. The consumer to interact with a business, the business to**
13 **interact with a supplier, and governments to interact with each other. In**
14 **those cases, Haines City has been denied that economic opportunity for the**
15 **most important exchange areas in Polk County.**

16

17 **Q. Please describe any additional factors which you believe the Florida**
18 **Public Service Commission should consider with regard to Haines**
19 **City's application.**

20 **A. I believe the Public Service Commission should consider the growth of**
21 **Haines City and how much the potential growth could be accelerated by the**
22 **addition of extended area or extended calling service to the greater Haines**
23 **City area. It also should be noted that Haines City has tremendous economic**
24 **development opportunities. Accordingly, such industries and citizens**
25 **locating in this area not only help Haines City, but Polk County as well as the**

1 **State of Florida.**

2
3 **From an educational standpoint, it is disturbing to think that a student from**
4 **Haines City who wishes to attend a county-wide Magnet School in Lakeland,**
5 **such as Harrison Center for the Performing Arts, would be unable to make a**
6 **local call to the school for any reason. Truly, the lack of extended area or**
7 **extended calling service has been a barrier to the City of Haines City for**
8 **economic, cultural, entertainment, and medical as well as information**
9 **exchange at the governmental level.**

10
11 **Also, the availability for countywide EAS will allow our residents to solicit a**
12 **larger number of medical specialists and to have "local" access to more**
13 **medical facilities for health care.**

14
15 **One item that I feel is especially important to emphasize is that the GTE**
16 **figures on the telephone traffic between Haines City and other Polk County**
17 **cities is not a true representation of ACTUAL traffic flow. There are**
18 **numerous businesses and non-profit agencies that have opted to purchase**
19 **the services of a toll-free line in order for the long-distance issue to be**
20 **partially addressed. As a result, it is ultimately the consumer or taxpayer who**
21 **compensates this expense. Furthermore, not everyone chooses GTE as**
22 **their long distance carrier. Other providers for placement of long distance**
23 **calls are utilized. Additionally, more and more people are utilizing their**
24 **cellular telephones to make telephone calls that would otherwise be local.**
25 **The cost of a cellular call is less than placing the call to or from Haines City**

1 and be assessed a long distance charge. Unless the above-mentioned
2 situations are considered and factored in, a TRUE picture of the traffic flow to
3 and from Haines City is at best incomplete and certainly not reliable.

4
5 The bottom line is that businesses and residents in the fourth largest city in
6 Polk County cannot place a "local" cell to the County Seat (Bartow).
7 Furthermore, the existing economic stress caused by the Haines City
8 business community's inability to communicate county-wide will continue to
9 increase with each passing month. The further enhancement of this
10 condition comes with the creation of magnet schools, and with the increasing
11 focus on the cultural arts in the Lakeland area with the Lakeland Center, the
12 fine arts series at Florida Southern College, and the Polk County Museum of
13 Art. With the compilation of each item discussed in my testimony, imagine
14 each item representing a brick. When all are gathered together a "wall" is
15 constructed that keeps the residents from Haines City from having free
16 flowing communication opportunities relative to county-wide events and
17 activities, educational and medical options, and from having contact with the
18 governmental and social service agencies of Polk County.

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