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JOHNNIE BYRD
Speaker



Charles J. Beck
Deputy Public Counsel

November 18, 2004

Blanca S. Bayo, Director
Division of the Commission Clerk
and Administrative Services
Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Re: Docket Nos. 020896-WS & 010503-WU

Dear Ms. Bayo:

Enclosed for filing, on behalf of the Petitioners, are the original and 15 copies of the Direct Testimony of Richard Letvin.

Please indicate the time and date of receipt on the enclosed duplicate of this letter and return it to our office.

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COMMISSION
CLERK

Sincerely,

Charles J. Beck
Deputy Public Counsel

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FPSC-COMMISSION CLERK

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Petition by customers of Aloha)
Utilities, Inc. for deletion of portion)
of territory in Seven Springs area in)
Pasco County)

Docket No. 020896-WS

In re: Application for Increase in)
Water Rates for Seven Springs)
System in Pasco County by Aloha)
Utilities, Inc.)

Docket No. 010503-WU

Filed: November 18, 2004

DIRECT TESTIMONY

OF

RICHARD LETVIN

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Utilities, Inc. for deletion of portion)
of territory in Seven Springs area in)
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OF

RICHARD LETVIN

1 **BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

2 **Dockets Nos. 020896-WS & 010503-WU**

3 **DIRECT TESTIMONIAL**

4 **OF**

5 **RICHARD LETVIN**

6

7 **Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AND THE NAME OF**
8 **THE UTILITY FROM WHICH YOU GET YOUR DRINKING**
9 **WATER.**

10 **A. Richard Letvin, 1219 Hominy Hill Drive, Trinity, Florida 34655. Aloha**
11 **Utilities provides my drinking water.**

12

13 **Q. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A CUSTOMER OF ALOHA?**

14 **A. I have been an Aloha customer since my house was built in 1998.**

15

16 **Q. ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF WATER IN YOUR**
17 **DOMESTIC PLUMBING?**

18 **A. No, I am not satisfied. The water has a sulfur content that makes it smell on**
19 **occasion and taste foul.**

20

21 **Q. DO YOU DRINK ALOHA WATER FROM YOUR TAPS?**

22 **A. No, we purchase bottled water for drinking. We do have a reverse osmosis**
23 **machine, which supplies our water for cooking and our coffee maker.**

1 **Q. WHAT IS IT THAT DISTRESSES YOU ABOUT THE QUALITY OF**
2 **THE WATER?**

3 A. The smell is the most disturbing aspect of the water. It is most notable in the
4 morning when you first start a shower.

5

6 **Q. HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU EXPERIENCE POOR QUALITY?**

7 A. It is noticeable several times a month. It is most notable after we have been
8 away for a few days and return and turn on the water.

9

10 **Q. DO YOU EXPERIENCE POOR QUALITY FROM BOTH THE HOT**
11 **WATER AND COLD WATER TAPS?**

12 A. Yes, both.

13

14 **Q. UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED**
15 **POOR QUALITY?**

16 A. It is most noticeable in the morning and after we have been away from home
17 for a while.

18

19 **Q. WHAT KIND OF PIPES DO YOU HAVE?**

20 A. Plastic CPVC.

21

22 **Q. DO YOU HAVE WATER CONDITIONING APPLIANCES?**

23 A. Yes, we have a water softener and a reverse osmosis device installed by the
24 builder at his advice.

1 **Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY TYPE OF FILTERS?**

2 A. Yes. Our reverse osmosis system that is installed under our kitchen sink has
3 three filters. A company named Mr. Water regularly replaces them every six
4 months.

5

6 **Q. WHAT KIND OF FILTERS DO YOU USE? WHAT DO YOU NOTICE**
7 **ABOUT FILTERS WHEN YOU REMOVE THEM?**

8 A. Mr. Water of Trinity installs them. I do notice a black substance in them
9 when they are pulled out of the system.

10

11 **Q. HOW DOES POOR WATER QUALITY AFFECT YOU AND YOUR**
12 **FAMILY?**

13 A. We love our house and neighborhood in Trinity. However, we would never
14 buy here or anywhere that Aloha Utilities services again. The poor quality of
15 water leaves us with little confidence in our home. We have to warn guests
16 not to use the water for drinking and have to explain to them the occasional
17 smells from the tap. It makes me feel like I'm in a third world country. In all
18 fairness Nohl Crest, our builder, warned us about the water problem. They
19 recommended the reverse osmosis, a water conditioner, and brass fixtures.
20 They claimed we would avoid black water if we had not copper in the line of
21 water delivery. Consequently we paid over \$2000 extra to have all brass
22 fixtures in our house including the toilets. Our neighbors, who have
23 conventional fixtures with copper fittings, frequently get black water. My
24 brother, John, who lives on the same street as I, filled his bathtub with water

1 during the hurricanes of August 2004, fearing that the water system might fail
2 in the storm. That water in his tub turned black after one day. We have had to
3 get Bayonet Plumbing here to flush out our water heater when the smell
4 became more frequent. They had to treat the tank with chlorine after
5 removing a black scum in the tank.

6

7 **Q. HAVE YOU SOUGHT HELP THE HELP OF ALOHA UTILITY IN**
8 **UNDERSTANDING WHY THE WATER QUALITY IS**
9 **INTERMITTANTLY POOR IN YOUR HOME?**

10 A. Yes, once. I used to pay my monthly bill at their office. I complained once
11 about the smelly water. The clerk had a customer service representative come
12 out to talk to me. He said the problem was my water softener and I should get
13 rid of it. I found his explanation absurd.

14

15 **Q. DO YOU FEEL THE UTILITY HAS GIVEN YOU A SATISFACTORY**
16 **EXPLANATION OF WHY THE WATER QUALITY IS**
17 **INTERMITTANTLY UNSATISFACTORY?**

18 A. No. I felt they just wanted me to go away.

19

20 **Q. HAVE YOU MADE ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE QUALITY OF WATER**
21 **THAT CUSTOMERS OF NEIGHBORING AREAS RECEIVE?**

22 A. Yes. We have friends in Tarpon Springs, Palm Harbor, and Heritage Springs
23 who have either Pinellas water or Pasco water. They have no complaints and

1 know of none from their neighbors. I find when visiting them that their water
2 is potable.

3

4 **Q. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE QUALITY OF**
5 **WATER_IN DOMESTIC PIPES, IF YOU HAVE EVER LIVED IN**
6 **OTHER PARTS OF OUR STATE OR OTHER STATES?**

7 A. Prior to moving to Florida in 1998, my wife, Barbara, and I lived for thirty-
8 two years in Rochester, N.Y. Monroe County Water Authority, a public
9 utility, provided the water there. The water came from Lake Ontario and the
10 Finger Lakes. The water there was of excellent quality and much cheaper
11 than what I pay Aloha. I also have a summer home in the Adirondack
12 Mountains of New York. The water there comes from Adirondack lakes. We
13 eagerly await our return every summer to the Adirondacks to enjoy the
14 scenery and to have good tasting water again. I just assumed after have years
15 of good tasting water from upstate New York that the same would be true here
16 in Florida. To my chagrin I was disappointed in the poor quality product that
17 Aloha provides. It makes me appreciate the good water I used to have living
18 in Rochester, New York.

19

20 **Q. WHO DO YOU THINK SHOULD TAKE THE PRIMARY INITIATIVE**
21 **IN IMPROVING WATER QUALITY?**

22 A. Aloha Utilities should. They own the system and should have the expertise.
23 My son, Eric, is an environmental engineer and an attorney. He is a water
24 system specialist for URS Corporation. He tells me the solution is simple.

1 Aloha needs to build a packed tower aeration system. He has warned me
2 against drinking the Aloha water after reading their water analysis report that
3 Aloha submits to the EPA. He says their water meets EPA standards but says
4 their sulfate count was too high. Based on that, he recommended bottled
5 water to me for drinking. It seems to me if Aloha doesn't have the expertise
6 to solve the problems, they should hire it. Telling customers that it is their
7 fault because of water softeners in their homes does not solve the problem nor
8 is it what I want to hear.

9

10 **Q. HAVE YOU MADE ANY SUGGESTIONS TO ALOHA TO IMPROVE**
11 **YOUR WATER QUALITY?**

12 A. No. After complaining in their office about the smelly water, I didn't believe
13 they wanted to listen. I did attend several meetings of the Citizens Advisory
14 Committee to which Aloha sent a representative. He wanted to talk about
15 water conservation when the audience wanted to talk about water quality.
16 This is not a corporation that wants to listen to customers.

17

18 **Q. IF A REASONABLE INCREASE IN COST IS NECESSARY TO**
19 **IMPROVE WATER QUALITY WILL YOU BE WILLING TO**
20 **ACCEPT AN INCREASE IN WATER RATES SIMILAR TO WHAT**
21 **NEIGHBORING UTILITIES CHARGE?**

22 A. Yes, that goes without saying.

1 **Q. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE CUSTOMER**
2 **SERVICE OF ALOHA?**

3 A. I have already described one previous incident. There was one other. As I
4 mentioned, we are at our summer home in the Adirondacks during June, July,
5 and August. I turn off the water including the sprinklers while we are away
6 from New Port Richey. Yet my bill each month is approximately \$29 for zero
7 gallons. When I called the first time this occurred, the Aloha customer
8 representative told me that was a service charge to keep my account active. I
9 told them that was excessive. I indicated that Bright House cable charges me
10 only \$5 monthly while I'm away to keep my cable account active. She
11 indicated that the Public Service Commission of Florida forced them to charge
12 that and I should complain to them. I then suggested I could cancel the
13 account when I left in June and reconnect when I arrived back in September.
14 She indicated that I would have to be disconnected for more than a year to
15 avoid the monthly charge and then they would charge me \$180 to reconnect. I
16 saw no reason to continue that conversation since I felt I was being
17 manipulated. In all fairness to the Aloha customer service representative, she
18 was courteous, but I deserved a more rational explanation than I received if
19 there was one.

20
21 **Q. HAVE YOU ATTENDED THE RECENT ALOHA CUSTOMER**
22 **WORKSHOPS?**

23 A. Yes, I attended the one that was held in early June, I believe, of 2004. It was a
24 morning workshop in a church community center. Steve Watford, the

1 President of Aloha, was there though a public relations firm chaired the
2 workshop. Everyone in my group had worse stories about black water and
3 smelly water than I have experienced. So it also seemed with other groups in
4 attendance. Nearly all criticized Aloha for their poor quality water and the
5 fact that it has been going on for years. The Aloha experts promoted a new (a
6 –delete) hydrogen peroxide system to clean the water though the audience was
7 skeptical. Most customers there wanted Aloha to sell out to Pasco Water.
8 Steve Watford emphatically stated that wouldn't happen. A few days later
9 Steve Watford was interviewed in the St. Petersburg Times and indicated the
10 workshop was a success and few participants had complaints about Aloha!
11 That was when I realized that the workshop was nothing but spin for Aloha. I
12 stopped attending them.

13

14 **Q. HAVE YOU FOUND THE WATER UTILITY TO BE CONCERNED**
15 **ABOUT SOLVING THE PROBLEMS ITS CUSTOMERS FACE?**

16 A. No!

17

18 **Q. IF YOU HAD A CHOICE IN RECEIVING WATER FROM ANOTHER**
19 **UTILITY AT REASONABLE RATES, WOULD YOU CONTINUE TO**
20 **BUY WATER FROM ALOHA UTILITY?**

21 A. No!

22

23 **Q. HOW DO YOU RATE THE SERVICE OF ALOHA, TAKING INTO**
24 **ACCOUNT THE QUALITY OF ITS PRODUCT, THE CUSTOMER**

1 **SERVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED AND YOUR ASSESSMENT OF**
2 **ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS ITS CUSTOMERS?**

3 A. Poor. I have already illustrated this. Aloha is a monopoly and behaves like an
4 uncaring monopoly. Florida Power, Verizon, and Clearwater Gas are also
5 monopolies. My experience with them has been productive, pleasant, and
6 businesslike. With Aloha I feel that they treat me like a pest and want me to
7 go away.

8

9 **Q. HAVE YOU BROUGHT YOUR COMPLAINTS TO THE ATTENTION**
10 **OF THE REGULATORY AGENCIES?**

11 A. Yes. I attended the last Public Service Commission Hearing on Aloha last
12 winter in New Port Richey. The PSC representatives passed out a blue
13 complaint form and survey. I filled one out and mailed it to them.

14

15 **Q. HAVE YOU ATTENDED ANY OF THE PSC HEARINGS ON**
16 **ALOHA? IF SO, DID YOU HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT YOUR**
17 **COMPLAINTS WERE ISOLATED INSTANCES OF POOR WATER**
18 **QUALITY?**

19 A. No. I was impressed with the sheer number of people who lined up to speak
20 of their water quality problems with Aloha. The line stretched out of the
21 hearing room into the hallway. It appeared that all Aloha customers, no
22 matter where they lived, had black water or smelly water problems or both. It
23 also impressed me that Aloha knew of these problems for years and took little
24 action.

1 **Q. IS THERE ANY OTHER COMMENT YOU WANT TO MAKE ABOUT**
2 **ALOHA, YOUR MONOPOLY DRINKING WATER COMPANY?**

3 A. Yes. Allow Aloha customers to acquire Pasco County water that has been
4 proven fit to drink with no black water or smells. Water is life and we deserve
5 the best that can be delivered.

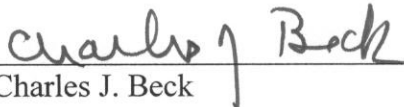
6

7 **Q. IS THAT THE END OF YOUR TESTIMONIAL?**

8 A. Yes.

**DOCKET NOS. 001503-TP and 020896-WU
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a copy of the foregoing has been furnished by U.S. Mail
or hand-delivery to the following parties on this 18th day of November, 2004.


Charles J. Beck

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