

BEFORE THE  
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

DOCKET NO.160222-WS

APPLICATION FOR STAFF-ASSISTED  
RATE CASE IN HIGHLANDS COUNTY  
BY LP WATERWORKS, INC.

\_\_\_\_\_ /

PROCEEDINGS: CUSTOMER MEETING

COMMISSION DALE BUYS  
STAFF: GIOVANNI WOLMERS  
KELLY THOMPSON

DATE: Tuesday, April 18, 2017

TIME: Commenced at 6:00 p.m.  
Concluded at 7:29 p.m.

PLACE: Lake View Clubhouse  
231 Shoreline Drive  
Lake Placid, Florida 33852

TRANSCRIBED BY: LINDA BOLES, CRR, RPR  
Official FPSC Reporter  
(850) 413-6734

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

1  
2           **MR. BUYS:** Good evening. Welcome to the  
3 customer meeting for LP Waterworks. It's April 18th,  
4 2017. The docket number for the customer -- for the  
5 rate case is 160222-WS.

6           I would like to let you know we are recording  
7 this meeting so that we can have a full record to put in  
8 the docket file. My name is Dale Buys. I'm with  
9 Commission staff. This is Giovanni Wolmers, who's also  
10 with Commission staff. And in the back is Kelly  
11 Thompson also with Commission staff.

12           Although the utility will not be participating  
13 in the meeting tonight, this is your meeting for you to  
14 tell us what your opinion is about the company and the  
15 quality of service. They are in the back of the room,  
16 should you wish to address any matters with them after  
17 the meeting.

18           With that, I'll let Gio give you a  
19 presentation, an overview of what the Commission does,  
20 and also go over some basics for the rate case. With  
21 that, I'll let him take over and present to you our  
22 slide show.

23           **MR. WOLMERS:** Good evening. My name is  
24 Giovanni Wolmers with Commission staff. If you plan on  
25 speaking later, please sign up with Ms. Thompson, and we

1 will use that as the record if we need to follow up to  
2 address your concerns.

3 The purpose of the meeting is to take comments  
4 and get your input. But before we do that, I would like  
5 to provide an overview of the process.

6 Let's begin with a little background on LP  
7 Waterworks. The utility last filed for a SARC in 2013,  
8 and the current rates have been in effect since 2015.  
9 The Commission granted the utility certificate numbers  
10 620W and 533S in 2014. The utility was transferred from  
11 Woodlands of Lake Placid, LP, to LP Utility Corporation  
12 in 2014.

13 The staff-assisted rate case was developed by  
14 the Florida Legislature to assist the customers of small  
15 water and wastewater companies. The reason for the SARC  
16 process is because non-SARC rate cases cost a lot of  
17 money. It can cost between 80- to \$100,000 because  
18 utility companies have to hire witnesses, accountants,  
19 and engineers; however, when staff is doing that, we  
20 cannot charge for those services.

21 Okay. So, first, the utility files for an  
22 application, an application. The staff audits the  
23 utility books, reviews the operations, and prepares a  
24 preliminary staff report. Then we conduct a customer  
25 meeting and take input -- then we conduct a customer

1 meeting to take the input, and the case goes through a  
2 process of what we call a proposed agency action, or a  
3 PAA. The staff report is preliminary, and staff's  
4 positions may change based on new information and  
5 customer inputs. Before the customer meeting, we send  
6 out the staff report in advance and give the option for  
7 customers to review so they can raise any concerns.

8 After the meeting, staff goes back and  
9 prepares the recommendation. Then we go before the  
10 Commission at the agenda. At the Agenda Conference  
11 there's five Commissioners. They may ask staff  
12 questions. Customers and the utility may also speak.  
13 If you plan to go to the Agenda Conference, make sure  
14 you let us know.

15 After the vote at the agenda, the Commission  
16 will issue a PAA order within 20 days. There's a 21-day  
17 protest period. If the decision by the Commission is to  
18 raise the rates, the utility cannot protest that order.

19 If there is a protest, the protest will be  
20 filed by the Office of Public Counsel, who represents  
21 the consumers before the Commission. Then a hearing  
22 will be scheduled and it will go through a more  
23 complicated and expensive litigation process. It will  
24 go a through the witness filing, deposition,  
25 cross-examination, and there will be a prehearing

1 conference, and finally go through another hearing.  
2 There will be a lot of billable hours for attorneys and  
3 consultants.

4 So after the hearing, staff will prepare  
5 another recommendation and again go to another Agenda  
6 Conference, and this time the Commission will make a  
7 final decision. Customers and the utility cannot  
8 participate because this will be based on the hearing  
9 record; however, the Commission's vote can be appealed  
10 through the court system.

11 So as you can see, first, staff makes a staff  
12 report, we come before the customers at the customer  
13 meeting, and then we go to the Commission Agenda  
14 Conference for a PAA decision. If the PAA order is  
15 protested, then we go through a hearing process and a  
16 final Commission decision. The decision can be appealed  
17 through the court system. So the whole process is  
18 trying to protect the interests of both the customer and  
19 the utility.

20 Now I'll go through the specifics of this  
21 case. The reason for the proposed increase for the  
22 water system is because revenue is coming at \$107,000,  
23 operating expenses at \$110,000. So there's a net loss  
24 of about \$3,000. And for the wastewater system, the  
25 revenue is coming in at 84,000, the expense is 96,000,

1 and then the net loss of \$12,000.

2 For the water rate impact for a single family  
3 residential connection or 1,000-gallon usage, the  
4 current bill was set back in 2014. It is \$13.45 with a  
5 base charge of 80 -- of \$8.54 for the base charge and a  
6 \$4.91 charge based on usage for 1,000 gallons. For  
7 2,000 gallons it would be \$9.82. For the preliminary  
8 recommended rates, the total bill will be \$15.18. The  
9 base charge is \$9.64, and the charge based on usage for  
10 1,000 gallons would be \$5.54. Please remember that  
11 these are preliminary.

12 For the wastewater bill, the same 1,000 gallon  
13 usage, the current bill is \$17.21. \$12.27 is the base  
14 charge, and \$4.94 is for the usage. The preliminary  
15 recommended rate would be \$22.72. \$14.98 is the base  
16 charge, and \$7.74 is for the usage. So this is a bill  
17 comparison for current versus the preliminary rates.  
18 You can see that chart.

19 Currently the staff recommendation is  
20 scheduled to be filed on June 28th, 2017. The Agenda  
21 Conference is scheduled on July 11, 2017.

22 So now we can transition to the main purpose  
23 of the meeting. If you, if you have any questions,  
24 concerns, comments regarding the quality of service, the  
25 utility's interaction with customers, or the proposed

1 rate increases, please sign up to make comments. And we  
2 will use the sign-up sheet for the order of speech.

3 This right here is a rate case overview. It's  
4 a quick reference of information on LP Waterworks'  
5 staff-assisted rate case. And over there is the blue  
6 little handout that you guys have.

7 This is the back side of that rate case  
8 overview. You can mail your comments to the Public  
9 Service Commission, if you wish and don't want to talk  
10 today. The staff recommendation will be available on  
11 the Commission's website. Please enter the docket  
12 number, or you can Google it and find it that way.  
13 That's -- this is our website.

14 You can, you can even watch the agenda live on  
15 the PSC website, if you'd like. Here's the contact  
16 number and the website address of the Office of Public  
17 Counsel. This is the consumer advocate who represents  
18 all of you before the Commission.

19 Also, here is the Commission's 1-800 number.  
20 And now we can hear any comments or concerns from you.  
21 And please remember that this customer meeting is being  
22 recorded. Customers will be called forward in the order  
23 that they signed up. Come forward to the microphone  
24 with your name -- when your name is called. Give your  
25 name, address, and please spell your last name. And now

1 we can hear from you.

2 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you. Thank you, Gio. And  
3 I'd like to reiterate, we are recording this meeting, so  
4 what we'd like to do is call the first customer who  
5 would like to speak. It looks like we have 15 customers  
6 who have signed up. I think we'll have plenty of time  
7 to let everybody say what they would like to say. And  
8 if you haven't signed up and you would still like to  
9 speak after we go through the first customers who have  
10 signed up, please raise your hand and you can come up to  
11 the podium after they're through.

12 Also, I'd like to remind you to hold your  
13 comments and any applause while the other speakers are  
14 addressing us so that we can get a clear recording on  
15 the recorder. When there's a lot of background noise in  
16 the room, the recording doesn't come out as clear. So  
17 with that, I'd like to call up Mr. Bruce Ridley, if you  
18 would, please, sir.

19 **MR. RIDLEY:** Thank you. First of all, I'd  
20 like to comment to all my members here, my fellow  
21 members, that if you have a question about this process,  
22 we can give you some information, if you care about it,  
23 later on. We can tell you what this -- how this process  
24 works and all because Dave and I have been through it  
25 once before and Ms. Burn.



1 All right. At this time, I'd like to protest  
2 this meeting in the sense that -- yes, I know you  
3 gentlemen aren't available -- not responsible for this.  
4 You didn't pick the time and date. But you've got to go  
5 back to the supervisors and tell them that this is not a  
6 good time to have the meeting. As I promised you  
7 before, had you had this meeting in March or February,  
8 the auditorium would have been full and we'd be looking  
9 for seats for everybody. I'd like to reserve any other  
10 comments until later. Thank you.

11 **MR. BUYS:** Okay. Thank you. The next  
12 customer that signed up to speak was -- I believe it's  
13 Dave Boyle. Mr. Boyle.

14 **MR. BOYLE:** Yes.

15 **MR. BUYS:** Mr. Boyle.

16 **MR. BOYLE:** Dave Boyle, 34 Windward Drive.  
17 What other information did you need?

18 **MR. WOLMERS:** Your last name.

19 **MS. THOMPSON:** Spell your last name.

20 **MR. BOYLE:** Last name, B-o-y-l-e.

21 **MR. BUYS:** Step up to the microphone.

22 **MR. BOYLE:** I don't know about the rest of the  
23 people here, but I suspect some of the comments are  
24 about perceived overbilling. And I presented a write-up  
25 to you gentlemen and also to the water company preparing

1 what I perceived to be just impossible, an impossible  
2 bill that we received for \$640. We received the water  
3 bill for the time frame December 8 through January 3rd  
4 for \$640, indicating 81,000 gallons of usage. The bill  
5 actually had on it 81. And I called the water company,  
6 and I said -- because I was upset that it might be 8,100  
7 gallons. And she said kind of laughed and said, "No,  
8 it's 81,000 gallons." And then I proceeded to go  
9 through my list to explain why -- that this isn't  
10 possible.

11 So I guess my comment is with problem  
12 resolution to perceived overbillings, I don't think the  
13 company does a real good job of it. And I have the rest  
14 of the indications as to why I think it was basically  
15 impossible to use that amount of water, but -- and I  
16 provided a copy of that to you gentlemen also, to the  
17 water company. But 81,000 gallons is more than enough  
18 to fill that swimming pool out there, and we were only  
19 here one week, so.

20 Well, I'll talk to you a little bit about it.  
21 We have no pool. We have no leak. We have a sprinkler  
22 system that wasn't turned on, and we were only at the  
23 billing address for one week of that period. The water  
24 company agent came out to check the meter. He  
25 indicated, in an aside to me, that it was impossible to

1 use that amount of water, and he recommended changing  
2 out the meter. The company billing rep said that he did  
3 the test and the test indicated that the meter wasn't  
4 recording correctly. But the company billing agent said  
5 that the meter was correct and did not know the  
6 recommendation of the field agent.

7 I believe we've been grossly overcharged here  
8 since we made an agreement with the company to pay a  
9 certain amount to get the bill off our records. But I  
10 suspect that there are other people here who also have  
11 been overcharged and you're going to hear more on that.  
12 That's all I have to say.

13 **MR. BUYS:** Okay. Thank you. And I believe  
14 you have also given that information to the utility.  
15 Okay. Thank you.

16 The next person that signed up is Hal Snyder.

17 **MR. SNYDER:** Yes. Hal Snyder, 18 Oak Ridge  
18 Circle. Last name is S-n-y-d-e-r. Just to start of, I  
19 tried to cut down my water consumption. I've completely  
20 turned off my sprinkler system because of the cost. It  
21 got too costly.

22 But let me back -- go back to 2008 when I put  
23 my house in. I put the Culligan water filter in. The  
24 water was fine, no problem. I flush it out every four  
25 weeks, six weeks, I change the -- then the water started

1 getting a funny taste, so I changed the charcoal and it  
2 still wasn't good. We were to the point that we just  
3 could not drink it because of the taste of the water.  
4 So I spent \$1,700 for the reverse osmosis system last  
5 February. So now I can drink the water. I have it  
6 hooked up to the icemaker also, and I do drink a lot of  
7 water. That's the only way I can do it. And the  
8 quality was good before, and it's gone right straight  
9 downhill. Thank you.

10 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you. Excuse me. The next  
11 customer that wished to speak is Ron Holmes.

12 **MR HOLMES:** My name is Ron Holmes,  
13 H-o-l-m-e-s, 37 Windward Drive. I'm not as concerned  
14 with the quality of the water that they're talking  
15 about as I'm trying to figure out the rationale that  
16 sends the first 3,000 gallons we pay at the rate of  
17 4.91, but anything beyond that, we're paying 7.21.  
18 What's the logic that says that when you start pumping a  
19 little more water, it costs half again or better as  
20 much? What's -- how does that work out?

21 It would seem to me in the scheme of things  
22 when you have the economy of scale that the more water  
23 they get out of the same system, the less that they have  
24 to charge per gallon, and it's the other way around.

25 **MR. BUYS:** Yes, sir. I think what -- by

1 statute they have a requirement to try and set the rates  
2 such that -- for conservation purposes with the Florida  
3 Water Conservation Districts, that they're trying to set  
4 tiered rates so it discourages --

5 **MR HOLMES:** So it's a penalty that is --

6 **MR. BUYS:** It discourages a higher use of  
7 water.

8 **MR HOLMES:** So it's a penalty that goes in  
9 their pocket.

10 **MR. BUYS:** Yes. The -- as the customer uses  
11 more water, the rates increase as a conservation measure  
12 that's dictated by the Florida Water Management District  
13 to try and discourage that use.

14 **MR HOLMES:** Okay. Who gets those excess  
15 funds?

16 **MR. BUYS:** This is done for a lot of the  
17 different companies. Every water company that now is  
18 charging for water, even municipals, are under that  
19 now -- that new pricing scheme.

20 **MR HOLMES:** You didn't answer my question.  
21 Who gets those excess funds?

22 **MR. BUYS:** The company gets those. And those  
23 are built into the rates so that when you use less  
24 water, your bills are usually lower.

25 **MR HOLMES:** And in this part --

1           **MR. BUYS:** So overall the rates are designed  
2 such that the company will only get a certain amount of  
3 revenues. Because when we approve those revenues, not  
4 we, but when the Commission approves those revenues,  
5 they're based on the rates that are charged across the  
6 different rate structures. So the company doesn't get  
7 more revenue. It's just those rates are set -- overall  
8 the company is only designed to get a certain amount of  
9 revenue, and the rates are set to guarantee that they  
10 get those revenues.

11           **MR HOLMES:** But if you use water, they get  
12 more revenues.

13           **MR. BUYS:** It --

14           **MR HOLMES:** If the minimum rate goes higher,  
15 it goes in their pocket.

16           **MR. BUYS:** Yes, it would. Now if they do --  
17 to answer your question, if they do earn more than what  
18 their allowed rate of return is, then they have an  
19 overearning situation and they also have to come in and  
20 give a refund, if they do earn more than what they're  
21 allowed. So there are some safeguards so that they  
22 can't over-earn more than what they're allowed.

23           **MR HOLMES:** What is their incentive to make  
24 money? I mean, if they go over -- if they feel that  
25 they're losing some money, so what do they do? Instead

1 of cutting back, like most business, well, they come  
2 right in and ask for more money. What I -- I do want to  
3 say one more comment, and I'll sit down.

4 **MR. BUYS:** Okay.

5 **MR HOLMES:** In this park, this is a seasonal  
6 park. It was what Bruce was alluding to earlier. Many  
7 people are gone right now. The company is receiving the  
8 minimum bill of 20-some dollars for absolutely nothing  
9 from how many people? Two- or three hundred, and it  
10 goes for eight, nine months out of the year, and they  
11 still can't make money? It makes, it makes no sense. I  
12 don't see any incentives for efficiencies, and I think  
13 we're having to subsidize their inability to run an  
14 efficient operation. Thank you.

15 **MR. BUYS:** And thank you for your comments.

16 And the next customer is Marlene Ramos.

17 **MS. RAMOS:** I've been called worse.

18 My name is Marlene Ramos, R-a-m-o-s. I live  
19 in Hickory Hills, 103 Pine Drive.

20 Well, first of all, when I moved in to Hickory  
21 Hills, my bill was only \$6 a month. The minute you guys  
22 took over it tripled. A lot of times we've gone away  
23 for three or four weeks, we do in the summer, and I come  
24 back and my bill is more than when I was in here using  
25 my water. So I call right away. I try to get it

1 resolved, a credit or whatever, but I don't think that's  
2 fair.

3 A lot of times you gentlemen just come around  
4 and they just assume that this is what you used and  
5 don't even look at the meter, they don't read it. So  
6 then I have to call and say, "No," because I read my  
7 meter and I write down the numbers.

8 We get in our bills that say that we have  
9 lead. Where is that coming from? My house is, like I  
10 said, is only 15 years old. I mean, I know there's  
11 older homes in that neighborhood. But if some people  
12 have lead and some don't, why is everybody getting that  
13 in their bill? I've been calling and asking for the man  
14 that signed the letter last year, and I couldn't get --  
15 I couldn't talk to him. I couldn't get his cell phone  
16 number. I couldn't get him to call me. And I kept  
17 calling and calling and calling, and to date I have not  
18 heard from him. Okay?

19 Finally the girl got tired of hearing from me  
20 and she told me, "If I were you, I wouldn't worry about  
21 it." Isn't that what they told Flint? I mean, what's  
22 going on? You guys are raising the rates higher and  
23 higher and higher, and what are you doing for us? I  
24 want to know. Everybody in agreement?

25 (Audience response.)



1           You know, a lot of people leave, their  
2 bills -- I mean, mine has doubled, like, thirty when I  
3 wasn't even home. But some people, like the gentleman,  
4 \$600, somebody else said 200, and they're only there a  
5 week or something. I mean, I don't know. Something has  
6 got to be done. This is just not fair. And that's what  
7 I have to say.

8           Also levels -- for those that have the older  
9 homes in my neighborhood, including those, if there is  
10 an allotted amount of lead in their, you know, in their  
11 water, which I don't think so because I remember when  
12 that came up and it was -- even -- I had a (inaudible)  
13 that had lead in it, and those were -- I threw it out  
14 because I remember when everything back in the '70s, you  
15 know, they just said lead was poisonous, it was this, it  
16 was that, get rid of everything. Okay, so I did. But  
17 those people need to know that if there is a certain  
18 amount, that's okay. They need to know and not just put  
19 it in tiny print. A lot of people haven't even looked  
20 at it probably. And it's tiny, way at the bottom, where  
21 it says that the water has lead. I want to know if my  
22 water has lead because I don't want to get cancer and I  
23 don't want to get anything. To date, I'm healthy, thank  
24 God, but I don't want to get sick. So I want to know,  
25 does it have lead or does it not?

1           **MR. BUYS:** Is this -- did you get that on your  
2 bill or a separate report --

3           **MS. RAMOS:** Yes.

4           **MR. BUYS:** -- from the utility?

5           **MS. RAMOS:** It's from the utility. He's got  
6 his bill. It says it on his bill too.

7           **MR. BUYS:** It's on the bill? Would you be  
8 willing to share that with the utility? Would you be  
9 willing to share that with the utility afterwards?

10          **SPEAKER:** Go ahead and read it.

11          **MS. RAMOS:** Okay. It says, "The LP  
12 Waterworks, Inc., water system found elevated lead in  
13 the drinking water in some of the homes and buildings.  
14 Please read the notice carefully, post it on the  
15 company's website, mywaterservices.com, for additional  
16 information."

17          **MR. BUYS:** And when, when did that bill go  
18 out?

19          **SPEAKER:** This hasn't been paid yet. It's not  
20 even late, so --

21          **MR. BUYS:** Oh, that's a recent bill?

22          **SPEAKER:** A recent bill.

23          **MS. RAMOS:** This started last year. That's  
24 why I told you, I kept calling and calling and saying,  
25 "If my water has lead, I need somebody to come out here

1 and check it out." And the girl had no clue. I was  
2 asking for the man that signed the letter, and she kept  
3 hearing from me daily, daily, daily until she finally  
4 told me, "If I were you, I'd just forget about it."

5 **MR. BUYS:** Okay. We have our engineering --  
6 our engineering department, one of the requirements is  
7 that they look into some of the DEP reports. We will  
8 pass that information along to them, and they will look  
9 into that further.

10 **MS. RAMOS:** Okay. Appreciate it. Thank you.

11 **MR. BUYS:** The next customer is, I hope I can  
12 read this correctly, is Margaret Graham.

13 **MS. GRAHAM:** My name is Margaret Graham,  
14 100 Shoreline Drive. I'm an agent for Mr. Gary  
15 Blackwell, who owns over 100 lots in this park. He also  
16 has had a problem with overbilling on properties that  
17 are not even in use.

18 First of all, it's very hard to reach US  
19 Water. I think a lot of people are having that problem.  
20 And resolving the problem is also difficult. I know our  
21 head office has been dealing with a \$500 bill in a home  
22 that has not been occupied. They have been working on  
23 this problem since last November, and it has not yet  
24 been resolved.

25 The other thing that I would like to find out

1 about is we have over 100 lots, many of which are not  
2 used during the summer. We would like to have a lower  
3 rate for those lots. There is no water at all being  
4 sent through the pipes to anybody renting, so it's just  
5 an empty lot and they're receiving over \$20 for every  
6 lot. We would like to see a rate for people not only on  
7 our lots but, I'm sure, other people in the park who  
8 leave and have no water, why are their bills that high?  
9 So if you could consider a different rate for people  
10 like us who just are not using the water, we would  
11 appreciate it.

12 **MR. BUYS:** If I could clarify, you said the  
13 lots. Are they occupied by a building or anything, or  
14 are they just --

15 **MS. GRAHAM:** No, RV. They're just an empty  
16 lot.

17 **MR. BUYS:** An empty lot?

18 **MS. GRAHAM:** When they're occupied, it's by an  
19 RV.

20 **MR. BUYS:** Okay. So there's nothing there  
21 when nobody is there, so nothing is running or --

22 **MS. GRAHAM:** No, nothing. Nothing.

23 **MR. BUYS:** Okay.

24 **MS. GRAHAM:** For eight months of the year.

25 **MR. BUYS:** Eight months out of the year?

1           **MS. GRAHAM:** Yeah.

2           **MR. BUYS:** Okay. And the next customer is  
3 Mike Seman. Did I read that right?

4           **MR. SEMAN:** Mike Seman.

5           **MR. BUYS:** Seman?

6           **MR. SEMAN:** Thanks for coming. My name is  
7 Mike Seman, 12 Inner Lane here in Lake Placid, Florida.  
8 And I'd kind of like to approach you fellows from a  
9 little bit different point of view. I can't, I can't  
10 complain about the company because I really haven't had  
11 any problems with the company. But what I do complain  
12 about, okay, is the amount of money that we're paying  
13 for one of God's gifts to us, water.

14                   And I'd like to start this out by asking you  
15 to go home and take a look at your water bill, because  
16 I'm going to tell you what my water bills have been.  
17 For the month of January, I had an \$86.81 water bill.  
18 \$44.90 was for the water, 41.91 for the sewer.  
19 February, 86.81 again. The same price for water; the  
20 same price for the sewer. This is a pretty heavy bill  
21 when it comes into a budget, especially for widows, for  
22 people that can't afford, you know, heavy expenses.

23                   Well, let's go on to March, \$111.11. \$59 for  
24 my water, 51.79 for my sewer. Okay? Well, what I did  
25 when I got the \$111 bill was I said, "I'm not watering

1 my flowers or my lawn anymore." My water bill went down  
2 to \$74.66 last month. Okay?

3 Now I'm a little bit concerned about that  
4 because when I took a look at your chart up there, I  
5 think I saw that they lost \$3,000 last year. Was that  
6 correct on that? Yeah, a one-year period, a company  
7 loses \$3,000, and they want a rate increase that's going  
8 to produce a -- well, I haven't calculated it, but I bet  
9 it's more than \$3,000. Don't companies anymore take a  
10 look at what it costs them to do business and adjust  
11 their business according to what is, what is feasible?

12 Okay. We have widows. We have people that  
13 are paying extraordinary water bills. Take a look at  
14 yours. These are -- I don't know if they're the highest  
15 in Florida, but, you know, we don't have a choice. We  
16 can't go someplace else and buy the water. We can't  
17 hook into the public system. We don't have any choice.  
18 This is a monopoly.

19 I talked to them about, "Well, you're charging  
20 me, okay, for the water that I'm putting down on my  
21 ground as part of my sewer bill." And I explained to  
22 you what the sewer bills were. "Well, why don't you  
23 just buy another meter?" Well, ask them what -- I want  
24 to see this company come out publicly and state what  
25 they want to install another meter so that we can, we

1 can subtract that water usage from the money that we  
2 use -- or from the usage that we use in our house.

3 They made it very uneconomical for us to do  
4 that. Okay? It's hundreds of dollars to get another  
5 meter. Why can't they do that? I know that it's a  
6 standard practice in many places, but these are  
7 extraordinary water bills.

8 Okay. I basically have covered my, my  
9 feelings on this whole thing. And I'm asking you, as  
10 the Public Service Commission, not to look at -- \$3,000  
11 they lost, fellows. Come on. They can do business  
12 better than that, can't they? That's \$3,000 in one  
13 year. I mean, that's not a lot of money for a place.  
14 They knew when they were buying into this water  
15 treatment facility the amount of work that it was going  
16 to, that it was going to cost for them to get it going  
17 properly, and I thank God that they -- they're taking  
18 care of that. We appreciate that. Okay? When you  
19 assigned an increase in this water, it doesn't stop.  
20 We're not going to get that money back. It's going to  
21 continue. It's time to put the brakes on. It's time to  
22 say, "Hey, you've got to take a look at this as a  
23 business. And if you want to make a profit, you've got  
24 to run it like a business. You don't need an answering  
25 service. Okay? Maybe you don't need some of these

1 other things." Take a look at the way they're  
2 operating. And if they're operating fine, okay, then  
3 maybe it is warranted. But these are big bills, these  
4 are big bills for people that really cannot afford them.  
5 I thank you for your time, and I'd really like you to  
6 take this under consideration.

7 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you, Mr. Seman.

8 The next customer we have is Dan Wood.

9 Mr. Wood.

10 **MR. WOOD:** My name is Dan Wood, and we live at  
11 53 Hidden Harbor Lane. A lot of the comments that I  
12 would have have been covered. But one of the things  
13 that I've noted, as was noted previously, is that as you  
14 use more water, the rate goes up. It's 28 percent, I  
15 believe, that -- the rate of about 3,000 gallons, which  
16 is a pretty hefty increase.

17 I also noted in your letter that the main  
18 reason that you have come in for an increase is because  
19 of the significant decrease in water consumption. Now  
20 one of the things that, you know, you had talked about  
21 before, and I agree with you, is that, you know, to  
22 consume less, don't waste it. The problem is that it  
23 looks like every year that we do that, we're going to  
24 pay for it in the following year because you don't meet  
25 your target, but the expenses can be flat or going up.



1 I'm not sure, and I have not seen the information based  
2 on the financial reports, what were the operating  
3 expenses other than a summary number that is shown up  
4 there? How were the operating expenses of this utility  
5 in 2004, 2006? What is their record? Do their costs go  
6 up every year? And if so, you can't expect to make a  
7 profit and to allow the Public Utility Commission (sic)  
8 to just go to the customer and ask for more money. I  
9 don't know if it's run efficiently or inefficiently.  
10 But every other business that is involved in today's  
11 economy -- which it's difficult to make money. I mean,  
12 they've lost \$3,000. They've lost \$12,000 on the  
13 wastewater. I can currently see, you put in this rate  
14 increase -- I think it's a minimum of 20 and it goes  
15 higher than that depending on whether you're just the  
16 base rate or you go up and you use more.

17 It just seems to me that there's a lot more to  
18 be looked at before the Public Utility Commission (sic)  
19 gets in and says, "Okay. You customers have got to bear  
20 the expense." So I would really like for you to look at  
21 that. I think the other comments there are -- I would  
22 be just wasting time telling you because they're the  
23 same. Thank you.

24 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you. And, yes, we do look at  
25 the expenses, and the auditors, the Commission auditors

1 look at the company's books and records. And we, we --  
2 the company is allowed their expenses in which they've  
3 proven that they have occurred. So, you know, the  
4 expenses have gone up a little bit for the utility, and  
5 we'll take those concerns into consideration going  
6 forward.

7 And the next, the next customer is Mr. Hugh  
8 Shilliday. Did I pronounce that correctly?

9 **SPEAKER:** Spell it, please.

10 **MR. BUYS:** S-h-i-l-l-a-d-a-y.

11 **MR. SHILLIDAY:** I-d-a-y. Hugh Shilliday,  
12 S-h-i-l-l-i-d-a-y.

13 **MR. BUYS:** Okay.

14 **MR. SHILLIDAY:** 40 Beachfront Lane. My  
15 comments are similar to Margaret's. Being a seasonal  
16 park, you have -- most people are not here all year  
17 long. So every month they're absent, they've still made  
18 \$20.81 for water and sewer that is not being used at  
19 all. That seems like a tremendous amount of profit for  
20 the water company. Some people are only here two or  
21 three months a year. As Margaret said, some of the lots  
22 are not rented at all during the year, yet every month,  
23 \$20.81. It seems like an exorbitant rate. Thank you.

24 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you. The next customer is, I  
25 believe it's Ricardo Ferdinand -- Ferrando, Ricardo

1 Ferrando. Did I pronounce that correctly? Please  
2 excuse me if I didn't.

3 **MS. THOMPSON:** Ferrand.

4 **MR. BUYS:** Ferrand?

5 **MR. FERRANDO:** My name is Richard Ferrando,  
6 F-e-r-r-a-n-d-o, 17 Hidden Cove and 19 Hidden Cove. We  
7 have two houses side by side. We like to keep our lot  
8 as nice as we can. We water both the lots. We live on  
9 one in a park model. The other one is totally empty  
10 except for the water and sewer system. We get bills --  
11 after reducing our water and our grass is actually  
12 turning brown right now, we still get bills around 105  
13 to 125 for both lots because we have to pay for both of  
14 them. And the empty lot has nothing on it, but we use  
15 it to park our vehicles. But we get a sewer bill of 50,  
16 \$60 in that lot, but not a drop goes into our sewer but  
17 we still have to pay for it. To me, it's unfair. They  
18 are charging us for sewer that we do not use.

19 And even in the other -- even in the house  
20 that we live in, most of the water that we use goes into  
21 the water system and we still pay the full rate for the  
22 sewer system. You know, I know you can go (inaudible),  
23 but that's a lot of money. We tried calling and talked  
24 to people about it and we don't get any results. So it  
25 seems unfair to have to pay a sewer system that we're

1 putting not one drop in. That's all I have.

2 **MR. BUYS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Ferrando.

3 The next customer is Perry Johnson.

4 **MR. JOHNSON:** Perry Johnson, 42 Sand Pine  
5 Circle, J-o-h-n-s-o-n. I've sat in front of you guys  
6 many, many times in my career in the natural gas  
7 industry. I know about rate increases.

8 I'm looking at No. 4 here, it says, "It's  
9 predicated on the billing of a resident using 3,000  
10 gallons." The conundrum that this company has when they  
11 bought this place was that probably 75 percent of the  
12 lots that are not here seven months of the year, so  
13 their bills don't come as water and sewer.

14 We had to deal with the billing. I know what  
15 that's all about. The billing is covering for the meter  
16 readers and you pay property taxes, and the water  
17 service (inaudible). They have that understanding. I  
18 don't know if they're spending it on the meter readers.  
19 I don't think they do because we all have a billing  
20 problem. When I had mine, it was only 160-some bucks.

21 We refunded the customer. When we were wrong,  
22 we refunded them. I get it (inaudible), and some of  
23 these other people are fighting the same thing. So how  
24 it's run is nowhere near the way we run a professional  
25 business.

1 I think if it's a minimum (phonetic) charge,  
2 it should be predicated on the cost that they paid for  
3 the property taxes on the services and the meter reading  
4 and whatever. That's fine. The water usage thing has  
5 to stop. The minimum bill -- our minimum bill was for  
6 just that. You didn't burn (phonetic) gas, you didn't  
7 get anything for it. You didn't charge for it.

8 But here basically they're charging for the  
9 meter (inaudible) rolled in as operating costs. It  
10 always says water and sewer. Well, as a lot of these  
11 people know, they're not here. Maybe that's the  
12 problem. They bought a company here, and if you don't  
13 sell a product, you won't meet operating costs. It's as  
14 simple as that. If they ain't selling water, they ain't  
15 making any money. The problem here is they don't sell a  
16 lot of water. We're certainly getting charged for it,  
17 but obviously it isn't enough when they say they need a  
18 rate increase.

19 I think their problem is we ain't using enough  
20 water. They should maybe buy someplace else  
21 (inaudible,) but I think as far as this minimum bill is  
22 a big cause. They don't even operate this thing to the  
23 customers' satisfaction. If you overbill us 400, I  
24 don't know, 400, 600, 150, whatever the amount was, you  
25 go back and make it right. People I didn't talk to, I

1 will agree, (inaudible) service (inaudible) realizes the  
2 misread. I got that credit. I got a credit for 150  
3 bucks. Also I don't pay that minimum bill for a lot. I  
4 think (inaudible) they got someone else's 400 bucks,  
5 they got somebody else's 300 bucks, they got somebody's  
6 whatever.

7 How they're running this business is nowhere  
8 near as legal (phonetic) as ours. Ours was a lot  
9 bigger, a little more professional. They think --  
10 whoever runs this company thought they'd just pick up a  
11 little gold mine and do this, do that, they got the  
12 minimum charge. There has to be something done about  
13 that. You can't tell me that if you're not, you're not  
14 selling a product, you're actually not going to meet  
15 your operating costs and you're just in the wrong  
16 business. If you don't sell cars, you get out of the  
17 car business. If you don't sell water, you better get  
18 out of the water business. That's all I've got to say  
19 about it. Thank you.

20 **MR. BUYS:** The next customer is Jerry Bowers.

21 **MR. BOWERS:** Jerry Bowers, 22 Beachfront Lane.  
22 First question, have you guys ever got a 100 percent  
23 increase in pay?

24 **MR. BUYS:** No, sir.

25 **MR. BOWERS:** Okay. Well, I'm going to

1 complain a little bit different than some of these other  
2 people. I think the company, LP, when they started in  
3 2013 or something and that first raise that they got,  
4 the increase, okay, at that time I sent four letters to  
5 the Commissioners. Okay?

6 The Commissioners never got the letters, the  
7 way I understand it, because I even called trying to  
8 talk to the Commissioners. I get all these other  
9 fellows that I talked to that said, "Oh, no, we're  
10 representing the Commissioners and we take all this to  
11 the Commissioners." Well, that time they got a  
12 100 percent increase.

13 And you go back when the Woodlands, whatever  
14 it was, the company that had it before, and you look at  
15 the first increase, that was even probably more than  
16 100 percent. Now they're asking for another raise on  
17 this, on their revenues. I don't believe some of these  
18 figures. I'll be honest with you. It just isn't right.

19 Now neither one of you are Commissioners;  
20 right?

21 **MR. BUYS:** No, sir.

22 **MR. BOWERS:** Well, here we go again. Even the  
23 last time we were here, my wife jumped up, asked the  
24 young people that were sitting up here, like you guys,  
25 "Can you represent us and go back? You know, why aren't

1 one of the Commissioners here?" "Well, they aren't  
2 going to come. We're here to send a note back to them  
3 and give them what you're saying." Now -- so here we go  
4 again. The same thing is happening again, you know.  
5 You can't -- I don't know -- I just, I think we're just  
6 blowing smoke here because somebody is lining somebody's  
7 pocket. I hate to say that. This is why we keep  
8 getting these increases.

9 You know, the same old complaint about the  
10 wastewater. It goes in the ground. Where does it go?  
11 We can't -- we're going to give them 12 more dollars, I  
12 think it is, per thousand? Gee. That's really nice,  
13 isn't it?

14 So, I'll tell you, it gets kind of bad when  
15 you keep doing that. And, you know, I don't know when  
16 this all started, but I think my four letters got  
17 ignored last time.

18 **MR. BUYS:** Well, I know we have -- your  
19 comments are now recorded and they will be placed, in  
20 the docket file, you know, for the Commission's  
21 consideration.

22 **MR. BOWERS:** I say don't give them another  
23 increase, not anything else. Give us a decrease in  
24 rates. We would appreciate that.

25 (Applause.)



1           **MR. BUYS:** The next customer we have is Tony  
2 Tornatore. I hope I pronounced that correctly.

3           **MR. TORNATORE:** You got it pretty close.  
4 That's pretty close. Tony Tornatore, 12 Hidden Cove.  
5 The last name is spelled T-o-r-n-a-t-o-r-e. The E is  
6 silent.

7           I've lived on my lot for eight years. This is  
8 my eighth year. I've got the same problem everybody has  
9 been complaining about. The billing is terrible.  
10 Eight years ago I was paying \$30 a month for water.  
11 Four years -- well, four years ago I put in a park model  
12 instead of an RV and I put in a sprinkler system because  
13 I wanted nice, green grass around my house. And I  
14 started getting bills for -- every month it was going  
15 up. It went up from 7,000 gallons to 14,000 gallons in  
16 one month. And I said, "How in the world would I be  
17 using that much water?" I said, "I just can't believe  
18 it."

19           So I called the water department, and they  
20 said, "Well, there isn't much you can do. We read your  
21 meter every month, and every month it tells us how much  
22 water you used." I said, "Okay. In that case, the next  
23 time somebody comes to read my meter, I want to go out  
24 there with them." And they said, "Well, we don't know  
25 what day he's coming or what time he's coming or

1 whatever." I said, "That's fine." I said, "But I want  
2 to tell you what I saw. Every month on my, on my water  
3 bill it says, 'actual reading.'" There's a couple of  
4 people here that have actually seen what problem I have.

5 I opened up the lid, which I haven't done  
6 since we put our park model in, and I said, "Where is  
7 the meter?" I couldn't see it. I said, "Well, it's got  
8 to be there. That's where the box is." So I started  
9 taking sand out. The box is full of sand right up to  
10 the top. I took out seven pails of -- 3-gallon pails of  
11 sand. Finally I hit the meter. And I said, "Hmm, they  
12 read this meter every month and it's the same thing,  
13 7,000 gallons every month, except for this month that I  
14 got 14,000." And I says -- you know, I never even  
15 thought that I would have to worry about somebody doing  
16 something wrong with a utility company that serves so  
17 many people.

18 So I decided, well, I'm going to call the  
19 company, the water department, and ask them if they  
20 would come over and look at my meter because something  
21 is wrong. How can they read a meter that's two and a  
22 half feet deep in sand every month and it's never been  
23 touched?

24 So I met with the guy that reads the meters.  
25 I'm not mentioning any names. He was very nice to me.

1 He says, "Well, every month I come over here and I lift  
2 up the little flap and I reach my hand down in there,"  
3 which I would never do, not in Florida, because you  
4 never know what's in that hole, and he said, "I push all  
5 the sand away from your meter so I can read it." And I  
6 said, "What do you do, put it right back?" He says,  
7 "No." He says, "We just push it aside." I said, "You  
8 can't push it aside. I took seven pails of sand out of  
9 here for you to be able to see that meter right now." I  
10 said, "Why am I getting charged for seven -- for 3,050  
11 gallons of water when I've only used 3,000 gallons  
12 because that's what my normal bill is?" So, anyways,  
13 that was my first problem.

14 The water department said they can't do  
15 anything about, it's an actual reading. I said, "I  
16 can't believe it, that your water meter reader, whoever  
17 it is, digs a hole in my backyard just to see if my  
18 meter is right and puts it down as the actual reading."  
19 It's a lie because he didn't do it. That was my first  
20 problem.

21 My second problem is this. I have some  
22 samples. I filter my water. It's a six-, it's a  
23 six-month filter. It's as white as these chairs are  
24 when I put it in. I did it yesterday. This is the  
25 filter that I took out. And I said to them, "I've got

1 something in my water and I don't know what it is." I  
2 can't drink it. I can't do anything with it. We wash  
3 clothes, we water our grass, and we do everything, and  
4 we still get charged -- from \$30 a month, five years  
5 later I'm getting charged, I'm getting charged over \$100  
6 a month for this kind of water.

7 **MR. BUYS:** If I may, how long --

8 **MR. TORNATORE:** So what I did -- I'm not done  
9 yet.

10 **MR. BUYS:** Okay.

11 **MR. TORNATORE:** So what I did was I said,  
12 "Well, I'm going to take a sample of the water before it  
13 goes into this filter," and here it is. And I want to  
14 show you this. You've got to get up close because it  
15 looks like it's clear. But there's all kinds of brown  
16 specks, I don't know what it is, floating around there.  
17 Just take a good look at it and you'll see it.

18 And so I called the water department again,  
19 and I said, "I would like somebody to please come to my  
20 house and test my water. My filter does make it clear  
21 so I can use it to wash clothes and stuff like that, but  
22 I can't drink it. I don't know what that stuff is."  
23 And you know what they told me? "We don't test water."  
24 I said, "What do you mean? You supply me water. I pay  
25 you \$100 a month for my water, and you can't come over

1 here and test my water to make sure it's okay?" And  
2 they said, "No, we can't."

3 So I went a little further, and a friend of  
4 mine, very good friend of mine, told me, "Why don't you  
5 call the commissioner (phonetic) of utilities in the  
6 State of Florida?" He gave me the phone number and I  
7 called them. Of course he didn't answer the phone, but  
8 one of his aides did. I told him my problem. And he  
9 said, "Well, we'll look into it." I've never seen  
10 anybody at my house.

11 And on top of the 7,000 gallons of water that  
12 they charge me extra for, I told them about that, and  
13 they sent me a check for \$14 refund. (inaudible) it was  
14 a gift or whatever for charging me for 7,000 gallons of  
15 water. That's all I've got to say.

16 **MR. BUYS:** I do want to follow up on the meter  
17 reading. Did the meter reading issue get resolved, I  
18 mean, with the sand over the meter?

19 **MR. TORNATORE:** Oh, from now on -- (inaudible)  
20 checked it because I take the sand out if there's any  
21 sand in there so he can read it.

22 **MR. BUYS:** And then I have another question on  
23 the filter. How long was that in the system?

24 **MR. TORNATORE:** I knew you were going to ask  
25 me that. I installed this filter on January 25th of

1 2017, three months ago. I change it -- when I'm here, I  
2 change it every three months, but it's a six-month  
3 filter for a family of five and we're only a family of  
4 two. And I installed a new one yesterday on April 17th  
5 of '17, and I'm going to change it on 10/20, which is  
6 six months from now because I won't even be here but  
7 I'll still be charged for my water bill.

8 **MR. BUYS:** Well, we'll make a note, of course,  
9 we'll make a note of that for engineering to look into  
10 that water quality issue.

11 **MR. TORNATORE:** If you want it for a sample,  
12 you can take it with you.

13 **MS. THOMPSON:** We don't need them. We got  
14 pictures. We don't need them.

15 **MR. TORNATORE:** The same thing happened to  
16 Mr. Jerry Bowers.

17 **MR. BUYS:** He had brown whatever it is in the  
18 --

19 **MR. TORNATORE:** We've all got problems, and  
20 then the fact they want a raise from us? It had to be a  
21 joke.

22 **MR. BUYS:** We have one last customer who did  
23 sign up. Richard Spencer, if you would like to speak.

24 **MR. SPENCER:** I guess mine is not even a  
25 question, but there is a couple of things that irritate

1 me considerably. This is the 18th day of April. My  
2 bill was due on the 2nd of April. To this day, I still  
3 don't have my bill. I called them on the 10th of March.  
4 Not going from memory, my memory is terrible, but I'm  
5 telling you facts. They said, "Well we don't have that  
6 bill yet."

7 Okay. So I waited two days and called them  
8 again. They told me the 3rd. The girl said, "You don't  
9 use much water, do you?" I said, "I sure hope not, but  
10 I'm paying a hell of a bill." And if you don't want  
11 to -- I mean, it's a big (inaudible). But I said, "I  
12 cannot get a bill from these people in a proper time."  
13 This is not the first time. Way back in January of 2016  
14 I went through that same hassle. I paid it the next  
15 month because they billed me for two months, and I got  
16 the bill on time. And after I complained to them, they  
17 seemed to come around a little bit. But they kept  
18 saying to me, "Go back to the U.S. mail." Ha, ha, ha,  
19 what a laugh. It's another company that needs to be  
20 desired (phonetic).

21 I just don't know what to do with these  
22 people. Because I said, "Well, I'm going to pay it on a  
23 MasterCard." "Oh, that will be fine." So, I said,  
24 "Well, I can't put it through the mail but I can put it  
25 through the telephone." And, by God, for four months in

1 a row they charged me a process fee, \$2.60. The cheats  
2 (phonetic). I pay a lot of bills with my MasterCard. I  
3 don't pay any process fee. Only to LP Water, and it  
4 states on their bill.

5 The other thing too was no matter when I get  
6 my bill, which is sometimes a problem, like I'm telling  
7 you, then they want to charge me a late fee. So I went  
8 through a conversation with one of the salesladies. I  
9 said, "I know I'm picking on you and I'm sorry for being  
10 the way I am, but I can't tell nobody else because, damn  
11 it, you're the only one to talk to." I said, "You're  
12 people, I'm going to charge them a \$7 late fee." "Oh,  
13 you can't do that." "Why can't I? It's a simple  
14 matter. I'm just going to take \$7 off my bill. I'm not  
15 going to pay you." "Well, that isn't fair." I said,  
16 "You're telling me something isn't fair? I think maybe  
17 that's why I'm calling you."

18 But, anyway, to make a long story short,  
19 they're terrible on their billing, absolutely terrible.  
20 I've never dealt with a company like them in my life.  
21 They don't know what the hell the way up is, only for  
22 prices. They're getting way too much now because they  
23 haven't earned it. Thank you.

24 **MR. BUYS:** That's all the customers who have  
25 signed up to speak.



1           **MR. RIDLEY:** I reserved. If you don't mind,  
2 I'd like to come back up. I reserved my right at the  
3 beginning. Did I not say that?

4           **MR. BUYS:** If there's anybody that wants to  
5 speak that did not sign up --

6           **MS. THOMPSON:** Excuse me. Excuse me. For the  
7 court reporter, because she's transcribing this, we're  
8 going to need you to sign up on the sign-up sheet, and  
9 then we'll be more than happy to hear anybody that wants  
10 to speak. But if you know now that you want to speak,  
11 if you'll come back here, I'll get you signed up, and  
12 we'll need to follow the same process.

13           **MR. RIDLEY:** I'm already -- I already signed  
14 up. My name is Bruce Ridley, R-i-d-l-e-y, and I'm the  
15 president of the property owners association.

16           We have done a tremendous amount in this  
17 facility. When we got the last notice, the board  
18 decided that they would spend \$2,500 a bathhouse. We've  
19 got seven bathhouses. And so we replumbed them all and  
20 put in modern fixtures because it appears that a lot of  
21 the lead problems in the water are related to the  
22 antiquated pipes and fixtures in the, in the facility.  
23 So we did a lot and we spent thousands of dollars here  
24 on that.

25           And the last thing that I wanted to note, it's

1 too bad that you have a meeting like this and you really  
2 have to listen to all these complaints, but I guess  
3 that's the way business is.

4 We also had a problem in this facility right  
5 here. And, as you've heard, for a good six months of  
6 the year there's nobody here to speak of. And this  
7 building especially is a general activities building and  
8 there is nobody here. A man comes in and uses the  
9 office for eight hours a day, and his job, one of his  
10 jobs is to monitor all the buildings. He goes around to  
11 all of them twice a day: Once to inspect the facility  
12 because he looks for water leaks, and another one is to  
13 look when he drives around to make sure that we aren't  
14 wasting water somewhere. And we've had these things pop  
15 up and we just don't understand. I mean, I think that's  
16 the problem here, that we don't understand how we use  
17 that kind of water, even if it's a leaky toilet.

18 In October of this year we had 39,000 gallons  
19 of usage in here. Now that bill was \$565. A normal  
20 bill, when everybody is here, is \$115, but even when  
21 everybody is here and they're using the facility around  
22 the clock for dancing and all this, and the ladies are  
23 using the restroom and the men are using the restroom,  
24 we're using the kitchen. So the next month we had \$759,  
25 and that was 55,000 gallons. We don't understand where

1 that kind of water -- our pool holds 72,000 gallons. So  
2 we try to keep a list of all these numbers, we monitor  
3 all the water usage by the month so that we can keep  
4 track of it just to see if we can find these things.

5 And this is what happened: The month after we  
6 had the \$760, we spent another 790 here for 58,000  
7 gallons. We -- they said we had a leaky toilet, and we  
8 fixed it the first month. Well, what happened the next  
9 two? I don't know. I don't understand. I just -- I  
10 can't understand it. I can't fathom it. I have talked  
11 to the service people several times. And so we're just  
12 frustrated as a group, as a whole, because we can't  
13 understand where that kind of water goes. A whole pool  
14 full of water, and we have an Olympic pool here, you  
15 know. We just don't understand it. How did we use that  
16 kind of water when we typically use several thousand --  
17 a couple of thousand, you know? Thank you.

18 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you. Yes, sir.

19 (Discussion off the record.)

20 **MR. FERRANDO:** Rick Ferrando, 17 Hidden Cove.  
21 I signed up already. I've got a request too. Everybody  
22 raise their hand that actually drinks the water? Stay  
23 right here.

24 I'm going to give you a situation and let you  
25 know what the company is like. I also said I have two

1 lots, 17 Hidden Cove and 19 Hidden Cove. We paid the  
2 bill. My wife paid the bill. She made out two checks.  
3 On the check she wrote 17 Hidden Cove on it and 19  
4 Hidden Cove on it. One day after the bill was due, we  
5 come home, no water in the house.

6 Well, I call down there and said, "What's  
7 going on here?" This is on a Friday afternoon. "Well,  
8 you didn't pay your bill for your 19 Hidden Cove," which  
9 is the one we live on, "so we shut the water off."  
10 "Wait a minute. Didn't we send you two checks?" Well,  
11 the woman said, "Yeah, let me see." She put the bill --  
12 the money was put all on 17, nothing on the 19, and they  
13 shut the water off. "Well, can you come and turn the  
14 water on?" "We don't have anybody to come until  
15 Monday." "You mean we won't have water all the way till  
16 Monday?" "Yes, ma'am." Well, I found somebody that  
17 worked for the company and I explained it to them, and  
18 they turned the water back on.

19 And they also said, "Well, we're going to have  
20 to charge you 60 bucks for turning the water on." I  
21 says, "Why? Why?" They already said it was off for the  
22 weekend, and they want to charge \$60 bucks to turn the  
23 water back on. Somehow that doesn't seem fair. Thank  
24 you.

25 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you. The next customer who

1 did sign up was Lynne Cadden, C-a-d-d-e-n.

2 **MS. CADDEN:** Hi. I'd like to add this water  
3 to Tony's water. This was yesterday. As I was washing  
4 my dishes, I took this out of my tap, directly from the  
5 tap. I immediately -- well, I called my girlfriend  
6 Cheryl, I hope I didn't put her on the hot seat again,  
7 and asked her, "Check your water." I said, "Mine's  
8 brown." She said hers was fine. So I called Bruce,  
9 left a message.

10 As I was walking the dog later on that  
11 morning, Bruce and John were at Bruce's house -- you  
12 didn't have to (inaudible) -- and I went over and I  
13 said, "John, I still have brown water." And I said, "I  
14 had a bottle, an empty bottle, and I put it in there."  
15 And I said, "Did anybody report anything?" And he said  
16 the only time he had it was when a filter was bad.  
17 Well, I went home, crawled underneath the trailer. The  
18 filter was fine. It's had brown specks in it, I'll  
19 admit that, but nothing like this.

20 **SPEAKER:** What does it smell like? Like the  
21 sewer?

22 **MS. CADDEN:** Yeah. And I understand that they  
23 were working on stuff in the park yesterday. Nobody  
24 told us. So if that was the problem, why weren't we  
25 notified? Thank you.

1           **MR. BUYS:** The next customer is Ed Raynor.

2           **MR. RAYNOR:** My name is Ed Raynor. I live at  
3 Hidden Cove. I'm probably one of the only few that  
4 has a motor home here now that's in the park.

5           I got a bill, the last bill I got, \$147. I  
6 used 13,000 gallons of water. I walked outside to make  
7 sure I had my flotation devices on my motor home. I  
8 don't know where I used 13,000 gallons. I've had a bill  
9 from September all the way through till now for  
10 \$40.51 for 3,000 gallons. All the sudden, boom, I get  
11 this one. I haven't paid it yet because it's not due  
12 until May. How did I use 10,000 more gallons?

13           My check -- they have a voided check. They  
14 take it right out of my bank account, everything like  
15 that, the same way with my electric. But yet when I  
16 leave here, I turn my water off immediately. No water  
17 is used, but I still get a bill for \$20 and some odd  
18 cents. Every month it automatically comes up as a  
19 draft.

20           **SPEAKER:** 20.81.

21           **MR. RAYNOR:** 20.51.

22           **SPEAKER:** 81.

23           **MR. RAYNOR:** 81, 20.81. And that goes out  
24 until I come back probably in November of this year.

25           Something has to be done. Something has got

1 to be done. Because for those months that I'm paying  
2 that \$20, that's another \$100 going into somebody's  
3 pockets. That's all I have.

4 **MR. BUYS:** The next customer is Bert  
5 Rodriguez.

6 **MR. RODRIGUEZ:** Thank you. It's Rodriguez,  
7 R-o-d-r-i-g-u-e-z. I live at 34 Oak Ridge Circle where  
8 my wife and I are full-timers here in the park as of  
9 last year. And we moved here from Broward County, down  
10 in Coral Springs. And our bill -- our home down in  
11 Broward was approximately 1,000 square feet with a  
12 swimming pool. Our bill never went above \$60. So --  
13 and, by the way, we owned here in the park, we owned one  
14 home, we owned two lots, a home and a lot, and we -- I  
15 remember the bills being less. But by comparison, when  
16 you compare one part of the state to another, and here  
17 being the rural area after where we lived in the city,  
18 you would imagine that the water here would be less.  
19 And what we're finding is that the water is more, and  
20 not only that, but as you've seen from the evidence  
21 they've given, you can't drink this water. So we've  
22 actually now -- not only are we paying more for water,  
23 but we're also buying water to drink because you can't  
24 drink this crap.

25 So to be honest with you, I think somebody

1 should audit this water company, and I'll be glad to do  
2 that. I mean, that's what I did for a living for 38  
3 years. And I'll be glad to go down there in order --  
4 I'm sure -- it sounds like there's people here that  
5 would join me and go down there and do that.

6 Obviously -- I was in management with Merrill  
7 Lynch, Bank of America for a long time. I know how to  
8 run a division. And you don't charge people when -- I  
9 mean, we'd be out of business if we did that. You don't  
10 charge people because your expenses are going up. You  
11 control your expenses.

12 And it seems to me that if they're not reading  
13 the meters, that's something that needs to be audited.  
14 And when you have one bill higher than the other, that  
15 needs to be audited. And not talking about once a year,  
16 but actually do this on a regular basis until you trust  
17 these people. That's all I have.

18 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you.

19 The last customer we have is Trudy Butrum.

20 **MS. BUTRUM:** Close. My name is Trudy Butrum,  
21 B-u-t-r-u-m, 106 Holly Hill Drive, Lake Placid. I  
22 wasn't prepared to say anything, so I don't have actual  
23 documentation to be really sure, but in November, the  
24 2nd of November, our neighbor -- we are snowbirds and we  
25 didn't come down until later in the year. Our neighbor



1 called and said we had a water leak. So we called to  
2 see if they could come out and fix the water. And he  
3 said, "Better check your water bill." I said, "Okay."  
4 It's \$8 and however much it is, 64 cents. Like I said,  
5 I don't have the actual amounts. Great. We caught the  
6 leak.

7 Okay. December, \$8 and something. January,  
8 \$8 and something. February, \$8 and something. March,  
9 \$1,200. Okay. So I called, and she said, "Well, you  
10 used it, so we have to charge you for it. We had to pay  
11 for it, so we have to charge you for it." So I kept  
12 arguing with them and arguing with them, and finally she  
13 said, "Well, have you had a major leak?" I said, "Yes,  
14 back in November, but I wasn't charged for it until  
15 March." So the readers are diligent about reading.

16 So she said, "Well" -- and they did -- she did  
17 do -- they did do something. They said that, "If you  
18 can show us that it was repaired by a licensed plumber,  
19 we can cut it down." Well, they cut it down to 600 and  
20 some dollars. "Because you used it, it was -- we had to  
21 pay for it, so you have to pay for it."

22 So -- but I just wanted to say you need to  
23 check your meters because those guys are not reading the  
24 meters all the time. So a lot of this could be somebody  
25 decided to check.

1           And another thing, we're from Indiana, and our  
2 water up there -- when we leave, we call and say, "We're  
3 leaving." They come out and pull the meter, and there's  
4 no charge while we're gone. There's a fee for them to  
5 pull it, but it's a lot less than paying that monthly  
6 fee. And then when we want to go back, we just call  
7 them. And in a week, it doesn't take that long, they  
8 come out, hook the meter back up, and we're back in  
9 business.

10           So read your meters. But that is a thought  
11 with everybody that's getting charged when they're not  
12 using any water, why can't you come up with something  
13 like for when they're not here? That's it.

14           **MR. BUYS:** Thank you. At this time I believe  
15 we've had everybody that wanted to -- that signed up to  
16 speak. Wait. Oh, sorry. We have one more gentleman.

17           **SPEAKER:** I signed up before. Can I ask just  
18 a question?

19           **MR. BUYS:** Yes.

20           **MR. BOWERS:** Jerry Bowers, 22 Beachfront Lane.  
21 I guess my question is in every place I've been before,  
22 when they read a meter, I've always had the meter  
23 reading complete, all the numbers all the way across.  
24 So each month when you get your charges, you can see  
25 what the changes will be. They don't do that here.

1           So, in other words, if you use 70,500 and the  
2 next month it's 75, okay, they're only giving you the  
3 4,000 or 5,000, whatever it ends up being. That's all  
4 you're going to see on your bill. And you see those top  
5 numbers but you don't see the complete reading.

6           I've found several times -- like Ed said, I've  
7 also read my own meter. I haven't had any problems in  
8 the last year since the complaints and since all the  
9 letters I sent over the years, but I stay on top of it.  
10 It has been correct.

11           But I also look at the complete thought of  
12 this on the increases and the amount of money that they  
13 make. If they do what they're doing, it amounts to a  
14 few more pennies more that they're making each month on  
15 the meter readings also by doing this method. Now, you  
16 know, that starts adding up when you're talking about  
17 all these customers. Because I think that includes Winn  
18 Dixie and -- I don't know who else, you know, on this  
19 complex, on this water company.

20           But I guess is that legal to make the meter  
21 reading just for the top number and not the whole  
22 number? That's my question?

23           **MR. BUYS:** I believe a lot of the meter  
24 readings are rounded up and they bill them in either  
25 100-gallon increments or 1,000-gallon increments. So if

1 it's below the actual 1,000 or 100 increment one month,  
2 it might be a little bit above the next month, but over  
3 the course of a year it will average out. See, they  
4 just round it up and they, and they --

5 **MR. BOWERS:** Okay. That's the way they do it  
6 here in Florida?

7 **MR. BUYS:** Yes.

8 **MR. BOWERS:** Okay.

9 **MR. BUYS:** Now the next customer is Mr. Ray  
10 Ramos.

11 **MR. RAMOS:** My name is Ray Ramos, R-a-m-o-s.  
12 I think I want to address the group rather than you guys  
13 is, and I see this on television all the time, people  
14 have problems and generally they sell something  
15 (inaudible). You know, we're on Social Security.  
16 (Inaudible) and the government gives us a .03 percent  
17 raise and you guys are going to take it all away.

18 There's also a guy in Tampa, his name is John  
19 Morgan. He does a lot of class action lawsuits, and I  
20 think that's what we need because I think the proof is  
21 here. Thank you.

22 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you.

23 **MR. JOHNSON:** I was up here before. Perry  
24 Johnson, 42 Sand Pine Circle. I want to approach this  
25 from the utility side of it. So that was my business.

1 And what I see, you've heard about a poor product, dirty  
2 water, meter reads that don't jive, things that get  
3 done -- don't get done. The billing rate, I told you  
4 how I feel about minimum bills, and there has to be a  
5 minimum bill. I understand that. (Inaudible.) But  
6 we're talking about a lot of other things. I can state  
7 the crux of this program where in the recent years  
8 they're looking for a rate increase. Well, I think you  
9 get a rate increase when you start acting like a  
10 business.

11 I grew up in a business that said you do what  
12 you know, and I don't think these people bought -- LP  
13 Waterworks didn't know the first thing about it other  
14 than, man, they can sell water and you pay for it. We  
15 don't have to read meters, we don't have to do anything.  
16 The way I see it and how they're running this thing --  
17 when they start operating like a utility should operate  
18 with respect to the customer, re-do your the bills, get  
19 responses to bills and things like that, I can see it.  
20 They need a change on their billing to what it really is  
21 and start running this thing like a utility and not some  
22 fly-by-night.

23 I don't know who these people are. I think  
24 they thought they bought something -- you know, they may  
25 have been car dealers before this. But do what you

1 know. They don't know the first thing about running a  
2 utility.

3 **MR. BUYS:** Okay. Thank you.

4 Yes, ma'am. After this, this will -- her  
5 comments will conclude the meeting.

6 **MS. GRAHAM:** Margaret Graham. I spoke before.  
7 We have 14 homes and we regularly find the meters buried  
8 under sand, and we turn them off and on when our renters  
9 come and go. Almost always they're buried under sand,  
10 which doesn't make any sense if they're reading the  
11 meters.

12 (Inaudible comments from audience.)

13 **MR. BUYS:** Thank you. At this point, I'd like  
14 to conclude the meeting. I think we've heard from  
15 everybody that signed up.

16 I just want to reiterate that the  
17 recommendation, the staff's recommendation will be filed  
18 on June 28th, and the Commission will vote on the  
19 recommendation on July 11th. And all of you are welcome  
20 to watch the proceeding on the Commission's website on  
21 the internet. I think it's also on the Florida Channel.  
22 You can also fill out comments and send them in to the  
23 Commission if you want to address some of your concerns  
24 after this meeting. And at that time, the Commission  
25 will vote on the record.

1           And with that -- I'm sorry, we're not going to  
2 take -- if you have questions, we can address them  
3 afterwards.

4           **MS. THOMPSON:** The meeting is concluded at  
5 7:28.

6           **SPEAKER:** I want to know why if we went there  
7 --

8           **MR. BUYS:** Oh, yes, ma'am you can attend --  
9 I'm sorry. Yes, you can attend the Commission  
10 conference in Tallahassee on July 11th. Customers are  
11 welcome to attend and voice their concerns as well at  
12 the Commission Conference before the Commissioners. We  
13 would just like to know if you do, we have to know that  
14 you're going to be there and we have to know that you're  
15 there so we can make arrangements for you to do like you  
16 did here to present your comments and your concerns to  
17 the Commissioners during that Agenda Conference.

18           **SPEAKER:** Is that the website that you have up  
19 there?

20           **MR. BUYS:** That is the Office of Public  
21 Counsel. They are the representative for the customers.  
22 They also speak -- they represent the customers who  
23 speak on behalf of -- for the customers.

24           **SPEAKER:** What website?

25           (Inaudible comments from the audience.)

1           **MR. BUYS:** For -- yes, for the -- you have it.  
2 Go back further.

3           **SPEAKER:** This is the website.

4           **MR. BUYS:** Yes, that's -- I believe that's in  
5 the rate case overview.

6           **SPEAKER:** Can I ask who the people are sitting  
7 back there at the table by themselves?

8           **MR. BUYS:** Those are the utility  
9 representatives.

10          **SPEAKER:** Just like you.

11          **MR. BUYS:** We are from -- we're from the  
12 Florida Public Service Commission.

13          **SPEAKER:** And who are they from?

14          **MR. BUYS:** LP Waterworks.

15          **SPEAKER:** Oh, they do exist, and you can talk  
16 to them.

17          **MR. BUYS:** Yes, ma'am, if you would like to.

18          **MS. THOMPSON:** This meeting concluded at 7:29  
19 p.m.

20                   (Customer meeting concluded at 7:29 p.m.)  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25



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