

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Petition by Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) for authority to charge FPL rates to former City of Vero Beach customers and for approval of FPL's accounting treatment for City of Vero Beach transaction.

DOCKET NO. 20170235-EI

In re: Joint petition to terminate territorial agreement, by Florida Power & Light and the City of Vero Beach.

DOCKET NO. 20170236-EU

**PETITIONER CIVIC ASSOCIATION OF INDIAN RIVER COUNTY'S  
NOTICE OF FILING AND CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

The Civic Association of Indian River County, Inc. ["CAIRC"], pursuant to Rule 28-106.204, Fla. Admin. Code, files the Testimony of Jens Tripson.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the above and foregoing has been filed and forwarded via email this 7<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2018, to: PARTIES listed below.

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1 **FPSC DOCKET NO. 2017-0235, 0236**

2 **DIRECT TESTIMONY OF JENS TRIPSON**

3 **ON BEHALF OF**

4 **THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION OF INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, INC.**

5 **SEPTEMBER 7, 2018**

6  
7 **Q. Please state your name, address, and occupation.**

8 A. Jens Tripson, 2525 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vero Beach, FL 32960. I was born in Vero  
9 Beach, and I have lived here my entire life. My maternal grandfather, Waldo Sexton,  
10 came here in 1912. Currently I'm retired. I owned a landscape nursery 1988-2005, ran  
11 a stained glass studio 1980-1987, and Tripson Dairies 1964-1973. I was a member of  
12 Pelican Island Audubon Society 1986-2010, President of PIAS 1992-2002. Involved  
13 in City and County government meetings 1986-2012. Member of the Indian River  
14 County Planning and Zoning Commission from 2009-2012.

15 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony in this proceeding?**

16 A. On November 3, 2017, FPL filed a petition with this Commission for authority to  
17 charge FPL rates to former COVB customers and approval of their accounting  
18 treatment for the COVB transaction, and to alter territorial agreements. The Civic  
19 Association of Indian River County [CAIRC] protested in that docket. My testimony  
20 is in support of their efforts to protect the public interest of our City and County  
21 residents, as I believe the current City government is not doing so.

22 **Q. Please summarize your testimony.**

23 A. As an informed and active member of the public, I speak to the details of how  
24 this sale has evolved, the lack of information made available to the public, and the  
25 unreliable and destructive nature of our local government's actions. FPL has not

1 provided good or accurate information, nor has the City, leaving the public out in the  
2 cold on an issue of tremendous local importance.

3 **Q. Have you kept informed on the proposed utility sale to FPL?**

4 A. I am aware of and have followed the proposed sale of the COVB Utility system  
5 and vehemently oppose it.

6 **Q. What is your impression of the process being used by the City to sell its  
7 utility to FPL?**

8 A. I think that the information put out by the current and previous city council, the  
9 current and previous City Administrator, the citizens group that want the city out of  
10 business and the Press Journal have only given the general public information that  
11 makes the sale appear positive. None of them have mentioned how the city will make  
12 up the shortfall in revenue without the income from the power plant. They have talked  
13 at length about how high the city electric rates are but they have never mentioned that  
14 the base rate is lower than that of FPL, nor that the higher bills are based on cost of  
15 fuel adjustments. This latter issue also shows the ineptitude of the previous councils  
16 regarding signing contracts that were not in the City's best interest.

17 **Q. As someone deeply involved in local government, how would you assess the  
18 actions of the last two city councils as far as handling the sale and informing  
19 their constituents about those actions?**

20 A. I believe the current and previous city council have made their decisions based  
21 on one-sided information, and that is the only information they give to the public. I  
22 would give them a very low grade for their business acumen, concern for the public  
23 interest, and neglect of their duties of office.

24 **Q. What questions do think have not been answered about the proposed sale?**

1 A. So many. Why would any person representing the City agree to put into a  
2 contract a clause that sells off a portion of the system if the full sale doesn't go  
3 through? This is of absolutely no benefit to the City, nonetheless these council  
4 members agreed to something that will harm the City if the sale doesn't occur.  
5 However, when you see the thousands of dollars that their campaigns have received  
6 from Indian River Shores residents, questions arise as to whose interests are foremost  
7 in this Council's agenda. I don't understand the logic in selling a profitable part of an  
8 asset. The clause in the contract that allows for this to happen was a dereliction of  
9 duty by everyone involved from the City of Vero Beach. Once again, this was  
10 driven by unproven promises to Indian River Shores and County residents that FPL  
11 was going to deliver lower rates. Much of the information we've seen on this is  
12 already proving to be false. They also have continued to claim nearly unanimous  
13 support for a sale, but they've ignored anyone who questions their tactics or  
14 motivations. They actually shut down public input on a subject as important as this.  
15 Nothing could be more outrageous or damaging to our citizens.

16 **Q. What has been your experience with the rates and services provided by**  
17 **COVB electric?**

18 A. My family has been here since the first power plant was built. I have had no  
19 problem with the rates charged by the city for electricity. I am on a fixed income and  
20 paying an average of \$120 per month is quite reasonable whether I am using my  
21 heating or cooling system. We all would like it to be really cheap or free but reality is  
22 you need to pay someone. As for the service provided by the city on a day to day  
23 basis, it is superb. If there is a problem, the line men are out there quickly day or night  
24 to remedy the problem. In storm events the city has responded in an exemplary  
25 fashion. I believe in most cases the City has restored service much faster than FPL.

1 **Q. You've received service from both utilities on your different properties, can**  
2 **you compare those experiences with those you've received from FPL?**

3 A. My family and I have had various agricultural in the southern and western parts  
4 county over the past 50 years or more and found FPL service to be adequate for  
5 general or localized outages but it is quite slow in wider spread storm event outages.

6 **Q. What do you think this sale will mean to the City, the quality of life found**  
7 **here, and the future for all our residents?**

8 A. I think my grandfather, Waldo Sexton, a founding father of Vero Beach, would  
9 be disheartened at the sale of the city power plant. He lived here before the city utility  
10 was created and believed its establishment helped in the growth of the city, providing  
11 a good atmosphere in which businesses could thrive. It seems clear the sale will  
12 inevitably cause a large increase in taxes to make up for the loss of income or services  
13 to be cut so drastically that our present life style will be degraded. Those promoting  
14 the sale cheer for our demise, and even if Vero Beach survives, it will be a less  
15 wonderful place to live, raise families and operate a local business. I can't see how  
16 that is in the public interest.

17 **Q. Has anyone demanded more information on the FPL issue?**

18 A. Other than the Civic Association, no other person or group has spoken up for the  
19 citizens' right to be informed.

20 **Q. Does this conclude your pre-filed testimony?**

21 A. Yes.

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