BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

DOCKET NO. 20240025-EI

PETITION FOR RATE INCREASE BY DUKE ENERGY FLORIDA, LLC.

Pages 1 through 39
Wednesday, June 12, 2024
10:00 a.m. to 10:46 a.m.

Location:

Citrus County Auditorium 3610 South Florida Avenue Inverness, Florida

STENOGRAPHICALLY REPORTED BY
TERRI L. FERREIRA, COURT STENOGRAPHER

Job No.: 365269

1	Page 2 APPEARANCES:
2	On Behalf of the Florida Public Service Commission:
3	
4	Commissioners:
5	CHAIRMAN MIKE LA ROSA
6	ART GRAHAM
7	ANDREW GILES FAY
8	GARY F. CLARK
9	GABRIELLA PASSIDOMO
10	
11	Also present: Shaw Stiller and Major Thompson, PSC staff Austin Watrous and Octavio Ponce, Office of
12	Public Counsel
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Page 3 1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Good morning. Well, 2 thank you everyone for being here today. Certainly a special thanks to Citrus County 3 Government for giving us the opportunity to be 4 hosted here. This is a little bit of a road show 5 for the Florida Public Service Commission as we 6 come out to the territories to make sure we're 8 here in front of customers and hearing their feedback in the service area, so, again, thank you 9 very much to Citrus County for giving us the 10 11 opportunity to be here today. I know we get a little bit limited on some of the technology that 12 we can utilize when we're here, so I apologize if 13 there's any interruptions or maybe things don't go 14 15 as smooth as they normally are. I know our IT 16 staff and tech staff came out early and jumped in 17 front of everything and they do a great job, so 18 I've got confidence that we'll be good and ready 19 for today. I am Mike La Rosa, I am the chairman of the 20 Florida Public Service Commission. Along with me 21 22 here, with me are my fellow commissioners. here as chair because they've appointed me, I'm 23 24 grateful for that. 25 I'm going to go ahead and allow our

Page 4 commissioners to just quickly introduce 1 2 themselves, Mr. Graham. 3 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: Good morning, all. Ι 4 guess I'm a little loud. My name is Art Graham and I am one of the 5 five commissioners on the Public Service 6 Commission. I just want to take a minute to let 8 you guys know that this customer meeting is for 9 you guys. We're here to hear what you have to say about the utilities. We want to hear all of the 10 good stuff. We want to hear all of the bad stuff. 11 We want to hear what you think about this rate 12 increase, for or against or why. I mean, I know 13 it's difficult a lot of times to come to the 14 15 podium and speak in public like this, take your 16 time, articulate as well as you can, just let us know what you think. This is your time. 17 Please 18 share with us the good, the bad and the ugly so we can use that information when we make the 19 20 determination about this rate increase. Thank 21 you. Good morning. 22 COMMISSIONER CLARK: Thank you, 23 Mr. Chairman. My name is Gary Clark, also a member of the Florida Public Service Commission. 24 25 Just echo Mr. Graham's sentiments that we greatly

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Thank you.

Page 5 appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to 1 2 be here with us today and we look forward to hearing your comments. 3 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO: Thank you, 4 everyone. My name is Gabrielle Passidomo, I'm 5 another one of the commissioners here. I echo my 6 colleagues in thanking you-all for being here 8 understanding that it's difficult to, again, what Mr. Graham said, speaking in this context, but we 9 10 really do want to hear from you. You also have 11 the opportunity to write into our offices at any 12 point up through the hearing of this case and we look forward to that. We appreciate you being 13 14 here. 15 My name is Andrew Fay. COMMISSIONER FAY: 16 I'm the last commissioner introduction. Just want to reiterate thank you for your time being here. 17 18 I know it's not necessarily easy for your 19 schedules, the logistics. We thought it was 20 important to be here in person, so thanks to everyone locally, also our chairman who's on our 21 22 team, who has a whole IT set up over here to make 23 sure things function properly, so we really do

appreciate you taking the time to be here today.

1	Page 6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: We scare our IT when we
2	start making changes up here; they see the
3	commissioners start messing with the technology,
4	they get a little nervous. I think you guys
5	should be able to hear me a little bit better now.
6	Right? Thumbs up. Awesome.
7	So, staff, let's go ahead and read the
8	notice.
9	MR. STILLER: By notice issued, May 24,
10	2024, this time and place has been set for
11	customer service hearing in document number
12	docket number 20240025EI. The purpose of the
13	meetings are fully set forth in the notice.
14	CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you. Let's next
15	take appearances from counsel. I will recognize
16	that in the front row we do have other
17	participants, so thank you guys for working with
18	us and I know it's a little bit unorthodox, but
19	lets start with Duke Energy.
20	MS. TRIPLET: Good morning. Diane Triplet
21	on behalf of Duke Energy Florida.
22	CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Also public counsel.
23	MR. WATROUS: Austin Watrous and Octavio
24	Ponce on behalf of the office of public counsel.
25	CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Florida Rising and

Page 7 1 LULAC. Jordan Luebkemann and MR. LUEBKEMANN: 3 Bradley Marshall on behalf of Florida Rising and 4 LULAC. CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Staff counsel? 5 Shaw Stiller on behalf of PSC 6 MR. STILLER: staff and I'd also like to enter an appearance for 8 Major Thompson. 9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: And I'll just double-check that there's no other intervenors 10 11 that are here, just the parties? Seeing none, let 12 me begin by thanking each of you again for taking the time out of your schedule to attend and share 13 with us your experience the quality of service 14 15 provided by Duke. In August, there will be a more 16 technical hearing where the commission will hear 17 from witnesses about the evidence of the case and ultimately more detail will, of course, you know, 18 19 continue to come out at that point. 20 We encourage you-all to watch the hearing, it's available on our website; that will help you 21 22 better understand the process in ultimately how we come to making our decisions. 23 24 This meeting will be transcribed and will 25 become part of the official record; as such I will

Page 8 swear you in before you share your comments. 1 2 Please note that your comments are also subject to cross-examination, meaning that you may be asked 3 questions by either the parties or the commission. 4 That's -- by all means, it's not intended to 5 intimidate you, it's to make sure that we clearly 6 understand your perspective and things that you've 8 said to of course include in the official record. In addition to sharing your comments here, 9 10 you may also provide comments and additional 11 material by traditional mail or by email. 12 contact information by mail, you can find a pre-addressed comment card for download on our 13 website or you can email us at clerk@psc. 14 15 State.fl.us. Again, clerk@psc.state.fl.us. 16 sure to include the docket number 20240025-EI. That's 20240025-EI. Please include that docket 17 18 number in the subject line, that will help keep things organized and not missed. 19 20 Whether your comments are made verbally today or are received in writing, be assured that 21 22 they will be reviewed and considered in our evaluation of this case. 23 24 Lastly, if you have specific services or 25 billing issues, Ms. Carol Cornell, director of

Page 9 customer experience, from Duke and her staff is 1 2 here to assist you. Certainly signifies that is the case through your testimony. 3 If you need to speak with commission staff, 4 Sissy Galloway from our economics division is here 5 today along with her technical staff and legal 6 staff. 8 So before we hear from the customers, I'd like to offer just opening statements from the 9 parties that are here and involved. We're going 10 11 to allow three minutes for each of the parties and let's start off with Duke. 12 Thank you. Hello again. 13 MS. TRIPLET: I'm Diane Triplet, I represent Duke Energy Florida. 14 15 And our filing is more fully explained in the online synopsis, but in summary, we filed a rate 16 17 adjustment to make investments for the benefit of 18 our customers and so we are pleased to hear from 19 some of those customers here today. 20 With me again is Carol Cornell. We also 21 have several Duke Energy teammates in the back, 22 one of whom speaks Spanish and so they're ready to 23 assist you today. If you cannot stay to speak 24 with them and you need further assistance, please 25 email consumer affairs, the number

- 1 two@duke-energy.com,
- 2 consumersaffairs2@Duke-energy.com so we can get
- 3 you what you need. Thank you so much.
- 4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Office of Public
- 5 Counsel.
- 6 MR. WATROUS: Hello, my name is Austin
- 7 Watrous, and I'm an attorney with the Office of
- 8 Public Counsel. I'm accompanied here today with
- 9 my colleague, Octavio Ponce.
- 10 For those of you who are not familiar with
- 11 our office, the Office of Public Counsel was
- 12 created by the Florida Legislature and responsible
- 13 for representing the customers of Duke Energy
- 14 Florida in matters before the Florida Public
- 15 Service Commission.
- We're here today because Duke Energy
- 17 Florida has filed a request for a variety of
- 18 changes to their rates. The Office of Public
- 19 Counsel has hired expert witnesses to address
- 20 multiple aspects of Duke's requested rate
- 21 increase.
- We have engaged in extensive discovery and
- 23 we have deposed many of the utility witnesses in
- 24 order to identify cost savings for customers. We
- 25 will continue deposing witnesses, conducting

Page 11 discovery and preparing for trial right up to the 1 date of the hearing. The utility's original proposal would 3 result in base rate increases every year for the 4 years 2025, 2026 and 2027. If the original 5 6 proposal is accepted, on January 1st, 2025, Duke's base rates would be increased by \$593 million, 98 million more on January 1st of 2026 and then 8 another 129 million on January 1st of 2027. 9 is challenging the legality and lack of supporting 10 11 evidence for these increases. 12 Duke has made several projections years into the future and presented those projections to 13 the commission for the purpose of setting rates in 14 15 2026 and 2027. OPC has challenged the reliability and speculative nature of those rate increases for 16 17 the future distant periods. Duke is entitled to a reasonable return on 18 19 equity; however, the utility has requested an 20 excessive rate of return of an 11.15 percent. Our research indicates that Duke only requires as 21 22 return on equity of just under nine-and-a-half percent, which is consistent with the current 23 24 market for electric utility operations and is more 25 than adequate for Duke to maintain its financial

- 1 integrity and creditworthiness.
- 2 Duke has proposed to adding 14 new solar
- 3 plants at the cost of \$118 million per facility
- 4 within the next three years. OPC is challenging
- 5 the substantial lack of detailed evidence to
- 6 support the amounts requested for solar projects
- 7 and the need for the projects and the Duke's
- 8 ability to get this many projects into service
- 9 within this time frame.
- 10 There are more issues that we are
- 11 challenging in this rate case to reach the best
- 12 possible result for customers. It is important to
- 13 keep in mind that the law places the burden on
- 14 Duke to provide the evidence to support a finding
- 15 that every requested dollar is both reasonable and
- 16 prudent. The job of your Office of Public Counsel
- is to challenge all of those areas that don't
- 18 satisfy this burden of proof.
- 19 And, customers, please remember that today
- 20 is your hearing, this is not the commission's
- 21 hearing and this is not my hearing, it is also not
- 22 Duke's hearing. This is your customer hearing and
- 23 all of your sworn testimony is evidence, not idle
- 24 commentary. Please take advantage of this
- 25 opportunity and Public Counsel Walt Trierweiler

Page 14 functions like a high fixed charge. 1 In practice, it means that no matter how much electricity you may save, your bill will never be less than \$30. 3 This petition punishes low energy users like those 4 who have invested in energy efficiency or those 5 who leave the thermostat higher than comfortable 6 to afford their bills. It's also regressive, as 8 it primarily impacts low and fixed income households who can least manage to afford extra 9 10 charges. 11 Duke argues that the high charge is 12 necessary because the utility has many fixed costs; yet, many other businesses with high fixed 13 costs don't charge fixed charges at all. 14 15 instance, when was the last time that you paid a 16 monthly subscription to a mall or an airline? 17 Duke's documents show that the true and 18 fair fixed charge should \$14 per month or less. 19 Then there's an excessive return on equity 20 or ROE that Duke is seeking. ROE refers to how much profit Duke is allowed to charge customers 21 22 for each dollar of shareholder money they spend on new grid construction. The real cost of these 23 24 projects doesn't change with Duke's ROE, you just 25 get the privilege of paying extra for the same

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June 12, 2024 Page 15 stuff if Duke is granted a higher ROE. 1 2 In this case, Duke's request for an 11.15 percent midpoint and 12.15 percent maximum sticks 3 out against a decades' long trend of lower ROEs. 4 An ROE exists to ensure that the utility makes 5 just enough profit to attract investors to fund 6 7 future projects. 8 The reason ROEs have been going down is that utility commissions all across the country 9 recognize there's just not that much risk in 10 11 investing in a monopoly utility with no 12 competition, quaranteed profits. 13 Another major driver of Duke's requested rate hike is a \$3.3 billion spending spree on new 14 15 transmission, distribution and generation 16 projects. While some of this spending may well be reasonable, the fact is that Duke hasn't 17 18 demonstrated the actual need for many of these 19 projects and hasn't performed a transparent comprehensive benefit cost analysis for virtually 20 any of them. This is no way to let a utility 21 22 spend your money. The commission should deny all new projects 23

unless and until Duke shows that each is necessary

to serve the system and that Duke will cost --

(800) 676-2401

Page 16 Duke will accomplish each in a cost effective way 1 that minimizes customer expense instead of maximizing Duke's profits. Thank you. 3 4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you. So normally, we -- we ask if there are any 5 elected officials in the room to give them an 6 7 opportunity to speak first. Not seeing anybody 8 jump at the opportunity, so I'll make the assumption that there are no elected officials. 9 10 With us, as you've already heard from him, 11 is the public counsel and Mr. Watrous from the public counsel's office, he's your voice in this 12 process; he will be helping us today. When it is 13 your turn to speak, he will call your name in the 14 15 order in which it was signed up, not necessarily 16 in alphabetical order. He will call three names 17 at a time so that you can be prepared and be ready 18 to obviously make your comments. Please make sure 19 that you make your way towards the microphone and 20 when you do come, for the folks that have signed up online have been sworn in, but the folks that 21 22 have not signed up online and signed up today in person have not been sworn in, so I guess I'd like 23 24 to ask if anybody here to speak that did not sign 25 up online, do you mind standing and taking a quick

Page 17 oath to be sworn in? Anybody intend to -- thank 1 2 you. Do you swear and affirm that you will 3 present the truth in this matter and that you are 4 a customer of Duke? Yes? 5 Awesome. Thank you. 6 All right. Mr. Watrous, I'll go ahead and 7 turn it over to you and you can go ahead and call 8 the first three. Let's start with the folks that signed up online and then we'll go to the folks --9 I think you have a copy of the ones that are here 10 11 today. 12 MR. WATROUS: Yes. 13 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. There were I believe six 14 MR. WATROUS: 15 total speakers who signed up online and currently 16 it shows we only have three here in person, so do 17 we want to start the three here in person right 18 now and then go to the ones who may not be here 19 right now? 20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Let's go to the ones 21 that signed up online and if they're not here, 22 then we'll go to the folks that are here. Okay. 23 MR. WATROUS: So the first three to 24 provide sworn testimony are Sandra Harris, Don 25 Taylor and Thomas Caffery.

Page 18 1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Sandra Harris, are you 2 Sandra Harris? Seeing no Sandra Harris, here? Don Taylor? Don Taylor, are you here? Okay. Go 3 4 to Thomas Caffery. Thomas? Thank you. 5 MR. CAFFERY: Good morning. So that means I get to take the time that they were allocated; 6 7 right? 8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: It doesn't work that way, but all yours, sir. 9 10 MR. CAFFERY: My comments are fairly brief, so I don't think I'll take too much of your time. 11 I'm Thomas Caffery, Tom Caffery of Orlando, a Duke 12 Energy customer, and representing the Florida 13 Group of Third Act, a national organization of 14 15 elder citizens concerned about the climate. 16 My overall view is that -- of the Duke plan 17 is that we don't have 20 years to wean ourselves 18 off of fossil fuels. We may not even have ten 19 years to prevent catastrophic climate effects; we 20 need to move faster. 21 My general comments about the documents submitted by Duke Energy, which seem pretty 22 imposing, I'll admit, I can't claim to be an 23 24 expert on this, but a few things did jump out at 25 me, so if you'll humor me.

Page 19 I think they noted that the Duke 1 2 residential rates are the highest in Florida, at least for the lower end consumers, but while 3 natural gas prices have been dropping and the 4 5 percent that's generated by cheap solar power has been going up, why would the rates still be going 6 7 up. 8 The proposed rates increase 7.4 increase 9 next year and 12.4 percent over the next three years, that's more than double the current 10 11 consumer price index rate of inflation. That just 12 doesn't seem fair on the face of it. I hope that the PSC auditors are looking closely at this to 13 verify the Duke numbers. 14 15 The rate hikes for lower users of 16 1,000 kilowatt hours are greater than for the heavy users, 3,000 kilowatt hours, and I wondered 17 18 why that is. I was interested in previous discussions to 19 20 hear about the amortization schedule for the new solar farms that are being put in; glad to hear 21 that they -- it sounds like they're being 22 amortized over their full life, which I'm in favor 23 24 of, but at the same time, I have to wonder when 25 are the energy cost savings for the solar

- 1 investments going to start reducing consumer
- 2 rates.
- 3 We would suggest that you adjust your
- 4 business model rooftop solar and solar parking
- 5 lots and solar in developed urban areas, rather
- 6 than investing in solar farms; open spaces have
- 7 their own value.
- 8 Statewide, the PCS forecast for year 2032
- 9 shows 56 percent of electric generation coming
- 10 from natural gas, that's down from 70 percent in
- 11 year 2022. I like the direction that is headed,
- 12 but we feel like the transition needs to be made
- 13 much faster.
- 14 At the same time period, renewables are
- 15 shown increasing from six percent to 28 percent
- 16 over the same ten-year time frame. Again, we feel
- 17 like this could be done much faster.
- 18 It seems that FPL is going into solar much
- 19 more enthusiastically than Duke is. FPL is
- 20 shooting for 36 percent renewables in 2032
- 21 compared to Duke's target of 24.5 percent. I've
- 22 wondered why is the difference.
- 23 The financial analyses for rates reflect
- 24 only the direct cost to the consumers related to
- 25 energy costs, capital and operating costs. The

- 1 indirect costs suffered by all Florida consumers
- 2 and residents related to climate change, higher
- 3 temperatures, stronger storms and sea level rise
- 4 are all significant and should be considered when
- 5 selecting the source of the energy used in our
- 6 grid.
- 7 And that's all of my formal comments. I
- 8 would like to just offer an invitation since I
- 9 live in Orlando, if you-all would be willing to
- 10 have a hearing in the Orlando area where there are
- 11 a lot of Duke Energy customers, we'd like to see
- 12 that; give more opportunity for our residents in
- 13 Orlando to testify. That's all I've got. Thank
- 14 you for your attention.
- 15 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
- 16 testimony.
- Move to the next three.
- 18 MR. WATROUS: The next three witnesses to
- 19 provide sworn testimony are Robin Orlandi, William
- 20 Luna and Dee Von Quirolo.
- 21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Robin Orlandi.
- 22 MS. ORLANDI: Good morning. Thank you for
- 23 this opportunity to speak to you today.
- I'm speaking as a Crystal River resident
- 25 who lives nine miles from Duke Energy's power

- 1 plant there.
- 2 Duke needs to retire the coal burning units
- 3 four and five that remain at that location by the
- 4 current 2030 deadline, rather than requesting a
- 5 rate increase to continue maintaining them.
- 6 These units have been in use for decades
- 7 and are outdated, unhealthy and more expensive to
- 8 run than other options.
- 9 The cost of coal drives up electricity
- 10 rates and those higher costs are getting passed on
- 11 to Duke's rate payers.
- 12 These units are causing air and
- 13 environmental pollution for Citrus County
- 14 residents and others in the region. EPA data
- 15 shows us that in 2022 alone, Crystal River's coal
- 16 unit emitted five million tons of carbon dioxide,
- 17 climate warming, climate changing gas, and 2,300
- 18 tons of nitrogen oxide in addition to other
- 19 chemicals and mercury. This exhaust is harmful to
- 20 both human and environmental health.
- 21 Coal plant exhaust has been identified by
- 22 EPA as a known contributor of nitrogen loading to
- 23 local waterways, which is a specific Citrus County
- 24 and Florida concern. Excess nitrogen feeds algae
- 25 blooms that degrade our spring and coastal waters

Page 23 and the marine habitat that's vital to our economy 1 2 in this county. The state of Florida is spending huge amounts of money to administer water quality 4 protection including nutrient and algae reduction 5 efforts and local government volunteers and 6 organizations have also invested huge amounts of 8 money and man hours cleaning up Kings Bay and other local springs that are the underpinning of our economy, so when Duke continued -- Duke's 10 11 continued dependence on coal fired energy works 12 against these goals and adds to the burden of cleanup borne by Florida tax payers. Instead of 13 doing that, instead of continuing to invest in 14 15 coal, expand renewable energy facilities and 16 update the electrical grid, including power 17 charging stations and rooftop solar for residents, update the electrical grid to support clean energy 18 initiatives statewide. And federal funding 19 20 incentives, I'm sure you well know, exist to do this. 21 The atmospheric contaminates emitted by 22 coal-burning plants also directly contribute to 23 24 warming of our planet and oceans. As the previous 25 speaker said, warmers fuel hurricane formation,

- 1 rapid intensification, increased storm surge.
- 2 We've seen recent examples of this with Hurricanes
- 3 Ian and Idalia and the billions of dollars in
- 4 cleanup costs those incurred.
- 5 Duke cosponsored the 2023 Tampa Bay
- 6 Resiliency Summit, a statewide effort to prepare
- 7 Florida cities and counties for the coming impacts
- 8 of climate change and sea level rise. Science is
- 9 real whether people want to say the words or not.
- 10 As we enter another hurricane season, Duke
- 11 needs to walk their talk and commit to initiatives
- 12 that reduce climate impacts in their operations
- and invest in clean energy technologies rather
- 14 than ask for more money to continue patching up
- 15 outdated infrastructure.
- Replacing coal plants with renewable energy
- 17 would result in cleaner, healthier air and new
- 18 construction jobs, not only in Citrus County, but
- 19 across the state.
- There's really no reasonable justification
- 21 to further delay retiring the Crystal River units
- 22 three and four. We kayak out in the bay all the
- 23 time and we see the plant there and we see the
- 24 smoke coming out of it. A major utilities like
- 25 Duke, as citizens of our community, as power in

- 1 our communities, it's far beyond any of our small
- 2 voices, have a moral obligation to do the right
- 3 thing for future generations.
- 4 I look at those stacks and I look at those
- 5 roseate spoonbills and young people that are out
- 6 with us kayaking and I think what's coming out of
- 7 the stacks, why couldn't this be better, where is
- 8 the will to do this and so you have power as
- 9 individuals we lack and I would urge you to follow
- 10 your conscience and I know business has to
- 11 prosper, but there's a better way and it is
- 12 possible if we all row the boat in the same
- 13 direction.
- 14 Thank you very much.
- 15 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
- 16 testimony. If there are any questions, please
- 17 feel free to chime in, same for the parties.
- 18 Next up is William Luna. William Luna.
- 19 Not seeing William, Dee Von Quirolo. I apologize
- 20 if I didn't say the name correctly.
- 21 MS. QUIROLO: Thank you acceptably.
- 22 Usually they don't pronounce my name properly, but
- 23 it was perfect.
- Good morning, everyone. My name's Dee Von
- 25 Quirolo and I'm a Brooksville, Florida, Duke

Page 26 I'm also chair of the local 1 Energy customer. Sierra Club Venture Coast Group who are directly impacted by this proposal, but today, I speak for 3 4 myself. Florida's the sunshine state. 5 6 clean energy now and no more coal. 7 respectfully request that you consider, in this 8 rate increase deliberation for Duke Energy, a real strong questioning of the need for our continuing 9 10 to pay for maintenance and operation of two coal 11 burning plants, units four and five, at the 12 Crystal River power plant. These expensive, outdated and unhealthy plants generate coal 13 pollution in our community that could easily be 14 15 eliminated. 16 Duke Energy seeks to charge customers over 17 \$50 million in the next two years on equipment 18 maintenance on these coal burning plant -- units. This funding could be spent on clean emergency. 19 20 We recommend that Duke shut down these coal burning facilities by 2030 and invest in clean 21 22 beneficial energy instead. 23 Federal funding is now available for 24 shutting down such plants and replacing them with 25 clean energy solar and batteries that could reduce

Page 27 1 the cost that customers pay to Duke Energy to 2 provide energy that won't pollute our air. These plants are causing air and 3 environmental pollution in Citrus County. Burning 4 coal generates tons of pollution, including 5 particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, mercury, 6 arsenic and other toxic heavy metals. Crystal River carbon dioxide emissions are 8 equivalent to the annual carbon dioxide emissions 9 of 1,196,845 cars. We don't even have that many 10 cars in this area. 11 12 These serious pollutants cause serious 13 health issues that harm the human respiratory system and make breathing difficult and can cause 14 15 premature death for those with heart or lung 16 disease, as well as heart attacks, irregular 17 heartbeat, aggravated asthma, decreased lung function and coughing. Why are we doing this? 18 Burning coal emits significant greenhouse 19 gases such as carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide 20 that add to the accelerated climate crisis that 21 threatens Florida's Gulf Coast cities and towns 22 with stronger storms, hurricanes, sea level rise 23 24 and increasing heat. 25 These coal plants also release waste, toxic

- 1 coal ash and wastewater that leech into
- 2 groundwater systems and create sinkholes. Coal
- 3 ash must be stored in lined ponds to prevent
- 4 leakage. Duke's Crystal River plants are linked
- 5 to two old coal ash ponds that aren't lined. Let
- 6 that sink in. They have the potential to
- 7 contaminate ground water with toxic arsenic,
- 8 boron, lithium, nonlithium, radium and sulfate.
- 9 Use your oversight authority to require
- 10 that Duke stop burning coal by planning now to
- 11 retire its coal units by 2030. Replacing these
- 12 coal plants with cost effective, clean, beneficial
- 13 renewal energy is a no-brainer that would result
- in cleaner, healthier air, new local jobs and
- 15 lower bills.
- 16 Duke Energy should also be investing in
- 17 charging stations and grid upgrades to help large
- 18 fleets electrify and provide more rebates for
- 19 households, businesses, state and local
- 20 governments to install chargers for electric
- 21 vehicles.
- Thank you for the opportunity to speak
- 23 today. Appreciate it.
- 24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
- 25 testimony.

Page 29 1 Let's move to the next three, and I know 2 you've got a list that I have here, so we can go off yours. 3 MR. WATROUS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. 4 5 The next three customers to provide sworn 6 witness testimony are Noa Adera, Michelle Leeper, and Tom Gotterup. 8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Noa Adera, recognized on 9 the record. Come up. 10 MS. ADERA: Hello, everyone. My name is 11 Noa Adera, I'm 16 and I'm a prior student at the 12 Academy of Environmental Science here in Crystal River, and I'm also just a local resident of 13 Citrus County. I would like to thank everyone for 14 15 being here and thank you to the commissioners for 16 listening as well. 17 I came here today to educate myself and 18 learn more, but I also came to express my concerns 19 as a young person for our future generations. 20 This decision won't just affect present day, but inevitably affects our future as well, whether 21 22 that's short-term or long-term respiratory health 23 issues, the impacts on our environment from 24 pollution, whether that being air pollution or 25 runoff into our waterways.

Page 30 Not only environmental issue impacts, but 1 also economic too. Like said earlier, by Duke maximizing its profit, it's also hurting local 3 Citrus County people, especially our low income 4 5 areas. This is the sunshine state; we love it 6 because of how beautiful it is. It's the same 7 8 reason we have tourism that brings money into the state, but Florida will only stay beautiful if we 9 make strides to protect it. If we keep doing 10 11 things that will negatively affect our 12 environment, there won't be anything left to protect it. 13 So before you bring Duke into the equation, 14 15 I ask that you please keep our environment in 16 mind. And I'm not the only young person concerned 17 with this idea, my friends and my peers are also 18 worried, but we young people are here and we are 19 listening. Thank you. 20 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Thank you for your 21 testimony and thank you for the courage to get up 22 in front of public officials to make those 23 comments. I know that's not easy. As a 16-year 24 old, I sure as heck could not have done that, but 25 thank you for both wanting to learn about the

- 1 process and for your advocacy.
- Next up I believe is Michelle Leeper.
- 3 Recognize on the record.
- 4 MS. LEEPER: Thank you. My name is
- 5 Michelle Leeper. I happen to know -- she is one
- 6 of our wonderful students at the Academy of
- 7 Environmental Science, which I sit on the chair of
- 8 that board, but I'm here to speak as a business
- 9 owner as well. I'm not going to be popular with
- 10 this because I'm not necessarily talking about the
- 11 environment, just talking about basics.
- 12 This area is growing and it's expanding
- 13 faster than I even like, but we have to prepare
- 14 and that includes electricity, as well as water
- 15 and that sort of thing, we have to take all that
- 16 into consideration, but I do know that as a
- 17 business owner, the cost of things has changed
- 18 drastically; ask anybody who's called a plumber.
- 19 We own an air-conditioning business. Systems that
- 20 we put in two-and-a-half years ago are now doubled
- 21 and it's not just because of materials; it's labor
- 22 and it's fuel and those things are not changing.
- I do believe we have to plan for the future
- 24 and expand where we can. I've got 900 homes going
- 25 behind my business, they're just starting to do

Page 32 that and that's just one small area in the county. 1 2 I encourage Duke, as well as any other enterprise, if they're going to do something here 3 for the future, do not wait, like our road systems 4 are completely inadequate for what the traffic is 5 coming in, the amount of people that are moving 6 I'm not going to dispute what's been said 8 here already as far as energy, I'm not going to I know battery backup, battery 9 support it either. chargers, I have not found evidence where the 10 11 batteries that we have to make for those systems 12 are really costly to the environment as well. I'm going to speak as the academy board 13 chair right now. Duke has been a great 14 15 philanthropist for us. We do require -- our 16 particular school requires fundraising to meet our 17 requirements for maintenance; they have been one 18 of the better service providers for that. They 19 qladly do that. They don't just do it with us, 20 they do it with all parts of the county, all school systems. So they do give back to the 21 22 community. As a business owner, I can't give the 23 same amount they give back to the community, I don't make the same amount of money, but it's all 24 25 percentages and I know they will continue that in

Page 33 the future, but I ask you to not just always look 1 at the -- the environment is very important to me as well. I've been in this state for 50-something 3 years and I have seen the changes and we do need 4 to maintain what we have, but we have to plan for 5 the future; if we do not, we're going to get 6 caught short in this state and -- it's just 8 expanding hourly and I think there's like 800 families moving in every day, a lot of them are in 9 Citrus County, Levy County and all the surrounding 10 11 counties, but I appreciate the opportunity to 12 speak. I have Duke Energy personally and I have it 13 at the academy. We've had very little problems 14 15 with loss of energy even during storms from the 16 big hurricanes. We've been very fortunate in my 17 personal home and the service has been -- you 18 know, I can call if I have a problem and, yes, I 19 get impatient because I don't like to go without 20 air-conditioning in a storm, but they get out in a timely manner and I appreciate that. They have --21 22 I'm sure they have laborers too -- they have gone up on their prices since 2021. We've had to go up 23 24 on our prices within the last two-and-a-half 25 years, so I think it's just a matter of balance

- 1 and I believe that the -- trying to plan ahead
- 2 because, again, if you don't, we're going to have
- 3 a real mess on our hands. Thank you.
- 4 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Thank you for your
- 5 testimony. Next up is I think, Tom Gotterup.
- 6 Sorry, Tom, I'm trying to read your handwriting.
- 7 Gotterup.
- 8 MR. GOTTERUP: Thank you for hearing me.
- 9 My name is Tom Gotterup. I'm a Crystal River
- 10 resident and also a board member of AES. AES is
- 11 the Academy of Environmental Science.
- 12 I'm here to say thank you to Duke for what
- 13 you have done and continue to do for the Academy
- of Science that helps us turn out young ladies
- 15 like that. We have a school of 120. We're a
- 16 public charter school. This young lady, I didn't
- 17 know she was going to be here, represents 120
- 18 young people that want to study and work in the
- 19 environment. Many of our students have gone on to
- 20 the environmental field.
- 21 Every time we have had a need, Duke Energy
- 22 has responded in a very positive, gracious and
- 23 professional manner. That means a lot to a small
- 24 school that sits on the water and if you get a
- 25 high tide, you got to float in your kayaks almost.

Page 35 You folks have been wonderful. Thank you is a 1 free word. Nobody wants to see rates go up, but if the rates have to go up, I would ask that those 3 rates -- that money would be utilized for 4 5 environmental purposes. As Michelle Leeper, she's president of our 6 board and it's a tough situation when you're told 8 you need a half-a-million dollars, we need this. We don't get tuition. It's a free public charter 9 The only money this school receives is 10 11 from the state with pupil allocation and donations 12 and Duke in many, many ways leads the way. So I'd like to say thank you from the 13 Thank you from the board, 14 board -- excuse me. 15 thank you from the faculty and thank you from the 16 parents that allows us, the board, to produce 17 young people like that. Thank you. 18 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Thank you for your 19 testimony. 20 Mr. Gotterup? 21 COMMISSIONER FAY: Just a quick question 22 for you. You are also a residential business 23 customer too? MR. GOTTERUP: I'm a resident of Crystal 24 25 River.

Page 36 1 COMMISSIONER FAY: Can you speak to your 2 engagement with conversations that --MR. GOTTERUP: 3 I'm sorry, say again. COMMISSIONER FAY: Can you speak to your 4 5 engagement with them as a customer; have you had outages that you reached out to them for different 6 things and that response. 8 MR. GOTTERUP: Years ago, before Duke 9 bought Progress Energy, so I consider it the same, we had a severe hurricane here, severe flooding 10 11 where I lived at the time. We lost power. 12 power was out at our residence for seven days. Every time we called, we were told the power had 13 Finally, I had to go out and there 14 been restored. 15 was one of the trucks, service trucks, and I said, 16 hey, guys, we don't have power. The response I received was magnificent. They jumped in the 17 18 truck, they said we're showing it's restored. One 19 of the breakers that was covered by trees was 20 never seen, but they went out, they found it, just on one person talking to a gentleman in the middle 21 22 of a rehab on the flood and everything and bingo It wasn't, oh, go call, talk to the 23 it was there. 24 customer service; they took it on themselves, 25 those gentlemen, and they found out the cause, and

25

Page 37 by doing that, they helped, I believe it was about 1 six homes that were shut down still. So does that 3 answer your question? 4 COMMISSIONER FAY: Yes, sir, thank you. Thank you. Anything else? 5 MR. GOTTERUP: COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: We're good. Thank 6 you for your testimony. 8 MR. GOTTERUP: Thank you. 9 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: All right. Go to 10 the next three. 11 My records indicate that we MR. WATROUS: 12 only have one more customer who wants to provide sworn testimony and that is Thomas Ramage. 13 14 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Mr. Ramage, you're 15 recognized whenever you're available. Mr. Ramage. 16 I believe he had to leave. 17 So is there anybody out -- anybody else in 18 the audience that would like to speak? Anybody 19 else in the audience? Okay. Not -- not seeing 20 any, again, thank you all for the opportunity today to hear from you and thank you all for 21 22 coming out. I know folks traveled from multiple distances and it's good to be here out in the 23 24 public.

If there's no further business -- anything

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            Okay. Then I think that we are adjourned.
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     else?
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     Thank you.
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            (The hearing concluded at 10:46 a.m.)
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1	Page 39 COURT CERTIFICATE
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3	
4	STATE OF FLORIDA)
5	COUNTY OF CITRUS)
6	
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8	I, Terri L. Ferreira, Court Stenographer,
9	Notary Public, State of Florida at Large, certify that I
10	was authorized to and did stenographically report the
11	foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true
12	and complete record of my stenographic notes.
13	
14	Dated this 25th day of June, 2024.
15	
16	
17	Juli L. Gerreira
18	Terri L. Ferreira, Court Stenographer
19	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
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