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BEFORE THE  
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

DOCKET NO. 20240099-EI

Petition for rate increase by Florida  
Public Utilities Company.

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PROCEEDINGS: SERVICE HEARING

COMMISSIONERS  
PARTICIPATING: CHAIRMAN MIKE LA ROSA  
COMMISSIONER ART GRAHAM  
COMMISSIONER GARY F. CLARK  
COMMISSIONER ANDREW GILES FAY  
COMMISSIONER GABRIELLA PASSIDOMO SMITH

DATE: Wednesday, December 4, 2024

TIME: Commenced: 1:00 p.m.  
Concluded: 1:55 p.m.

PLACE: Fernandina Beach City Hall  
204 Ash Street  
Fernandina Beach, Florida

REPORTED BY: DEBRA R. KRICK  
Court Reporter and  
Notary Public in and for  
the State of Florida at Large

PREMIER REPORTING  
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA  
(850) 894-0828

1 APPEARANCES:

2           BETH KEATING, ESQUIRE, Gunster Law Firm, 215  
3 South Monroe Street, Suite 601, Tallahassee, Florida  
4 32301; appearing on behalf of Florida Public Utilities  
5 Company (FPUC).

6           WALT TRIERWEILER, PUBLIC COUNSEL; CHARLES  
7 REHWINKEL, DEPUTY PUBLIC COUNSEL; PATRICIA CHRISTENSEN,  
8 ESQUIRE, OFFICE OF PUBLIC COUNSEL, c/o The Florida  
9 Legislature, 111 West Madison Street, Room 812,  
10 Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1400, appearing on behalf of  
11 the Citizens of the State of Florida.

12           SUZANNE BROWNLESS, ESQUIRE, FPSC General  
13 Counsel's Office, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard,  
14 Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, appearing on behalf of  
15 the Florida Public Service Commission.

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## 1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Good afternoon, everyone.  
3 Welcome. This is the Florida Public Service  
4 Commission's FPUC service hearing, so thank you all  
5 for coming out.

6 Today, our service hearing is obviously a big  
7 part of the rate adjustment process that FPUC has  
8 requested. Of course, you are very important to  
9 us.

10 I am just going to give you an idea, an  
11 introduction of who we are. So to my right is  
12 Commissioner Fay, Commissioner Graham. I am  
13 Chairman Mike La Rosa. To my left is Commissioner  
14 Clark and Commissioner Passidomo Smith. To my far  
15 right is our legal staff who is here request us.  
16 And then to my far left is the Office of Public  
17 Counsel. We will have an introduction from them  
18 here in a few minutes.

19 So let's go ahead and get us started, and,  
20 staff, if you want, please start by reading the  
21 notice.

22 MS. BROWNLESS: By notice issued on November  
23 20th, 2024, this time and place has been set for a  
24 Customer Service Hearing in Docket No. 20240099-EI.  
25 The purpose of the service hearing is set forth

1 more fully in the notice.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Excellent.

3 At this time, let's go ahead and start by  
4 taking appearances of the parties. Let's start  
5 with FPUC.

6 MS. KEATING: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,  
7 Commissioners, everyone. My name is Beth Keating  
8 with the Gunster Law Firm, and I work with Florida  
9 Public Utilities. Also here with me are several  
10 members of the FPUC team that are in the room, as  
11 well is Mr. Mike Cassel, who is the Vice-President  
12 of Governmental and Regulatory Affairs for the  
13 company.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.  
15 Office of Public Counsel.

16 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Good afternoon. Patty  
17 Christensen with the Office of Public Counsel. I  
18 would also like to put in an appearance on behalf  
19 of Walt Trierweiler, the Public Counsel and Charles  
20 Rehwinkel, the Deputy Public Counsel.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Great.  
22 Staff.

23 MS. BROWNLESS: I am Suzanne Brownless,  
24 special counsel for the staff with the Florida  
25 Public Service Commission.

1           CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Excellent. Well, thank  
2           you. Counsel.

3           Thank you all for participating today and  
4           sharing your experiences in the quality of service  
5           that's been provided by FPUC. In addition to  
6           sharing your comments here, you can also provide  
7           written comments and additional material by paper  
8           mail or by email. The rate case overview includes  
9           instructions to how to provide written comments to  
10          the Commission. Rest assured that your written  
11          comments will also be, of course, made available  
12          for us for review.

13          If you have any specific service or billing  
14          issues, here with FPUC today is Eileen Cassidy and  
15          Joanne Agustic -- I hope I am saying that  
16          correctly -- if you have any billing issues or  
17          anything that you would like to bring up to them.  
18          Commission staff is also here and present to answer  
19          any general questions that you may have also on the  
20          case as well.

21          Let's move into opening statements. Each  
22          party will have three minutes for introduction.  
23          Let's start with FPUC, Ms. Keating.

24          MS. KEATING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
25          Actually, I would like to turn it over to Mr.

1 Cassel.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Sure. Absolutely.

3 You are recognized, sir.

4 MR. CASSEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
5 Commissioners, and thank you to our customers who  
6 are here as well. Thank you for participating in  
7 this process. This is a very important process in  
8 the overall rate proceeding, so we appreciate that.  
9 We value your comments and your concerns, and would  
10 like to hear those personally.

11 As Beth said, I am the Vice-President of  
12 Government and Regulatory Affairs for Chesapeake  
13 Utilities Corporation. That is the parent company  
14 of Florida Public Utilities. I have been with the  
15 company a little over 16 years now.

16 We are here today because our company has  
17 requested a rate increase, and we believe the  
18 current rates are no longer sufficient to allow for  
19 the investment necessary to ensure that we continue  
20 to provide the same reliable customer service and  
21 service to our customers that we have.

22 Our last rate case for FPUC was conducted in  
23 2014. And since then, we have made significant  
24 capital expenditures, particularly those associated  
25 with our reliability improvements. The company

1 has, over that same period, faced increased  
2 operating and maintenance costs, and those costs  
3 are associated to a significant degree with  
4 customer service improvements, also increased  
5 regulatory requirements and system improvements to  
6 enhance reliability to you, our customers.

7 Inflation over the last 10 years has also had  
8 a significant impact on our costs. The company,  
9 over the years, we are trying to control these  
10 costs in delaying this filing and continued its  
11 efforts to address other cost mitigation processes,  
12 and those will directly have impact on you, our  
13 customers.

14 One benefit of the company's ability to delay  
15 this rate case until now, shortly after a rate case  
16 associated to the ability to shorten the timeframe  
17 here, we have been able to remove the surcharge for  
18 the Hurricane Michael surcharge that's been on  
19 here, which you have seen in the last several  
20 years. This should mitigate the overall total bill  
21 impact for you, our customers, as well as help us  
22 control the costs that we have experienced and the  
23 costs -- excuse me -- that we have experienced and  
24 have notable cost increases over the time  
25 associated not with just that, but with our

1 insurance costs as well. These costs, after  
2 implementation of technology include --  
3 cybersecurity is also included in those.

4 The company is invested in the electric  
5 transmission and distribution systems to help  
6 ensure that it's able to continue to provide the  
7 same reliable and safe service that we have done  
8 for our customers.

9 Rate relief is also ensuring that our capital  
10 intensive reliability projects won't be delayed or  
11 end, or any miss on those, it's so important to our  
12 system.

13 And our commitment to you this afternoon is to  
14 listen, learn, respond and know what your service  
15 concerns are, and how many you have and what we can  
16 do to address them.

17 We are honored to be your electric company,  
18 and we strive every day to fully understand your  
19 needs so we can better serve you. We understand  
20 that everyone is facing rising costs right now, and  
21 nobody wants to pay higher prices. It's important,  
22 though, that we recover our costs for those  
23 investments so that we can continue to grow and  
24 improve this system.

25 Today with us, we have Eileen Cassidy and



1 Joanne August, they are our customer service care  
2 service team. They are both here to ensure that  
3 any questions you have, and any concerns you might  
4 have, can be answered as quickly as possible. We  
5 also have members of the operational staff here in  
6 case there technical questions.

7 With that, I thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

9 Let's go to OPC.

10 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Good afternoon. Again, my  
11 name is Patty Christensen. I am with the Office of  
12 Public Counsel. Our office was created by the  
13 Legislature to represent the customers in rate  
14 cases before the Commission.

15 As the Chairman discussed, we are here today  
16 because the Florida Public Utilities Company, FPUC,  
17 has filed a request to increase their base rates  
18 using the Commission's Proposed Agency Action  
19 process, or PAA process.

20 In the PAA process, the Commission staff  
21 reviews the utility's request, asks questions,  
22 eventually writes a recommendation on the utility's  
23 rate request Commissioners' consideration. At this  
24 point in the PAA process, the Office of Public  
25 Counsel, OPC, monitors the case and reviews the

1 company's responses to the staff's data requests  
2 and the staff's recommendation.

3 Based on the Commissioners' PAA decision, the  
4 Public Counsel and OPC staff will make a  
5 determination whether it is in the customers' best  
6 interest to protest this PAA order, taking into  
7 consideration multiple factors.

8 However, we are here today to listen to you,  
9 the customers. The testimony today will be sworn  
10 under oath, and we ask that you address the quality  
11 of service you receive from the company, the  
12 affordability of the utility's services and any  
13 other issue you wish the Commissioners to consider  
14 in its decision. This is your opportunity to  
15 provide the Commission with your true opinion, good  
16 or bad, about the company and the rate increase.

17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

19 We will now hear customer testimony. Your  
20 comments will become part of the official record,  
21 as just stated. So that means that may be open for  
22 cross-examination. That just simply means that we  
23 may ask some questions to make sure we get the  
24 record clear. So don't be intimidated by that  
25 process.

1           I do have to swear you in. If you do plan on  
2 speaking, I have right now in front of me nine  
3 speakers, or if you are not one of the nine and  
4 also plan on speaking, if you don't mind maybe  
5 standing up and we will just kind of quickly take  
6 an oath all at once. If you don't mind raising  
7 your right hand.

8           (Whereupon, Chairman La Rosa administered the  
9 oath to the witnesses.)

10           CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Excellent. Awesome. You  
11 may have a seat.

12           To make sure that all your neighbors have  
13 equal time, we will give everyone about five  
14 minutes or so to offer their comments. I won't cut  
15 you off abruptly, of course finish your thoughts as  
16 necessary.

17           Representatives from OPC will be here helping  
18 me today. They will go ahead and call your name in  
19 the order in which you signed up. They will call  
20 two names at a time so that you can all be prepared  
21 as those names are called, just be ready if you  
22 hear your name second, be ready to jump in front of  
23 the microphone here to my right, to your left.

24           When you speak in front of the microphone, I  
25 am understanding that it's a little bit hard to

1 hear, it's a little bit sometimes hard for us to  
2 hear. We want to make sure that it's picked up on  
3 the recording that's happening in the room. So  
4 just adjust it if you can, and certainly speak into  
5 the microphone.

6 Are there any elected officials that are here  
7 with us today that are planning to speak? Okay.  
8 Normally we let the officials speak first.

9 Not seeing any, let's go ahead and we will  
10 start with the first folks that you have got, Ms.  
11 Christian, if you will read the names.

12 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Certainly. I am going to  
13 call the first two names. If I mispronounce your  
14 name, I apologize. The first name is Philip  
15 Chapman. And then following Mr. Chapman will be  
16 Kathleen Ross.

17 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Welcome, Mr. Chapman.  
18 Thank you, sir.

19 MR. CHAPMAN: I am Philip Chapman. 2120  
20 Florida Ave.

21 The brochure that I was handed coming in, it  
22 says that they are requesting this rate increase to  
23 recover the cost of operating. My issue is with  
24 one of your contractors, and that's the companies  
25 that trim the trees. I have, on many, many

1 occasions, driven by them with them sitting in  
2 their trucks on their phones. I would challenge  
3 anyone to please come by my street and tell me why  
4 it took them three days to trim the trees on my  
5 street.

6 I went out after they left, and they had left  
7 a mess on my neighbor's lawn. I saw a supervisor  
8 and I asked him, I said, look at the mess they  
9 made. He said, oh, well, I had to be in a meeting.  
10 I wasn't here. And then he looked at the work they  
11 did. His words: They didn't trim these trees  
12 according to the requirements, and they left a  
13 mess.

14 So I asked him, I said, why are they so many  
15 times sitting in their trucks on their phone. And  
16 he went through this whole litany about heat, and  
17 regulations, and this and that and the other thing.  
18 And I am like, yeah, okay, I guess, you know,  
19 federal.

20 And then I thought about it. If that's true,  
21 why can I ride by, I believe it's Pike Contracting  
22 doing the high tension wires, and they are always  
23 working. You very rarely find them sitting in  
24 their trucks on their phone. And I have never seen  
25 them sitting in their trucks on their phones.

1           Now, that's got to be a fairly big expense to  
2           FPU. And to be honest, full disclosure, I wish  
3           they wouldn't trim the trees, because I spend three  
4           bucks on a whole house generator and I get --  
5           (inaudible) -- when the power goes out and I can  
6           get my money back.

7           But for my neighbors and things, I just don't  
8           understand why they are not better monitored. When  
9           I was a school teacher, and when I sat up there as  
10          a City Commissioner, I was often told, I pay your  
11          salary. Well, you know, thinking about it, when I  
12          pay my electric bill, I am paying the salary of all  
13          the tree trimmers to sit in their trucks on their  
14          phones, and I don't find that acceptable.

15          As far as the company, they are delivering  
16          power, I love it. I have a disabled daughter who  
17          lives on the island. When she loses her power,  
18          bam, she has it in almost no time. And I truly  
19          appreciate that. She had a hanging wire, they  
20          came, bang, took care of it. I appreciate that.  
21          But I wish somebody from the company would go  
22          around when these guys are out trimming to make  
23          sure that they are putting in eight hours of work.  
24          That's all my complaint.

25                 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

2 Are there any questions of Mr. Chapman?

3 MR. CHAPMAN: Sorry.

4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: No. No. Thank you, sir,  
5 for your testimony.

6 MS. CHRISTENSEN: The next speaker was  
7 Kathleen Ross, and the person following her will be  
8 Laurence Troiano.

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ma'am, you are recognized.

10 MS. ROSS: Good afternoon. My name is  
11 Kathleen Ross, and I live at 828B Tarpon Avenue. I  
12 live with my sister, unfortunately have a pool, the  
13 pool runs off my electric. I am afraid these rates  
14 will have increases -- get to that later when my  
15 sister speaks. But when we go over a thousand  
16 kilowatt hours, your rate just about triples. And  
17 I don't know when I go over a thousand kilowatt  
18 hours. I have no way of knowing that. Maybe there  
19 is a way that I don't know, but I just don't know  
20 how to tell when I am. And that's basically what I  
21 have to say, just that the rate seems to be pretty  
22 steep the more you use, and how do you know what  
23 you are using?

24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your

1 testimony.

2 Commissioners, any questions?

3 Awesome. Thank you very much.

4 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Laurence Troiano and --

5 MR. TROIANO: You said it right. Troiano.  
6 Yeah, you got it right.

7 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Oh, I did? Okay. And Leah  
8 Ward-Lee will be after --

9 MR. TROIANO: I didn't know whether to start  
10 with a joke, Laurence Troiano, 1511 Coastal Oaks  
11 Circle. Not far from here, garden city, city  
12 resident for the last few years. And like  
13 everybody else, I hate the rate increase. Why  
14 don't have a senior over 70 discount? So that's my  
15 first comment.

16 I understand there used to be a franchise  
17 office here in the City that was part of the city  
18 charter, or something, and I was looking at this  
19 kind trying to find it and I couldn't. And  
20 supposedly an agreement had been made with the City  
21 Commissioners prior that somebody would be there  
22 staffing or manage to answer the phones, or  
23 questions and complaints and everything. And I  
24 have not been able to uncover that, so I was hoping  
25 as part of the comments that you would be able to



1 determine whether there should still be presence  
2 here instead of off-site. And I say off-site,  
3 because I am getting to that part.

4 Does anybody know, or anybody heard of that?  
5 So it came to my attention and I made a note and  
6 was hoping you could check it out, because most of  
7 the people in the city -- (inaudible) -- of the  
8 situation, and since here -- (inaudible) -- but  
9 having lived in Florida, when the power goes down  
10 for days and days and days, utility and power  
11 becomes very important, and getting information is  
12 just as important.

13 When I lived in South Florida, I would --  
14 (inaudible) -- the power is off, the power is on.  
15 So in this case here, this is about a  
16 year-and-a-half ago, and this is a good and not so  
17 good comment.

18 Good was that the utility -- (inaudible) --  
19 who checked our house for the gas had made an error  
20 and somehow misread the number manually wrote it  
21 down, and I got a 200 and some dollar gas bill. So  
22 I call them up, and the lady was really good. I  
23 took a picture of it. She read off the usage, and  
24 she goes, oh, my. The good news was we got it  
25 fixed. The bad news was I get my \$200 back, I had

1 to leave it in the bank there so you all can draw  
2 the interest on it and charge me for it. So I went  
3 through the -- (inaudible) -- which was okay. I  
4 really didn't have a problem with it, especially  
5 since the customer service person really did a  
6 descent job -- (inaudible) --

7 14th and 15th Street, there was a power  
8 outage -- (inaudible) -- and that gentleman may  
9 have answered my question for me. Somebody came  
10 out, and the power was out, electricity, and we  
11 live near the hospital, we are on that grid, and  
12 they have generators, and it was four hours,  
13 probably between the hours of 7:00 or 8:00 up until  
14 about one o'clock at night. This was about a year  
15 ago -- (inaudible) -- and I called on Monday or  
16 Tuesday, one of my neighbors happening to be  
17 talking in the street, and they asked, did you get  
18 power? And I said, yeah. I said, no, I went to  
19 bed. To heck with it, I didn't really care. And  
20 he said, well, we were taking some -- (inaudible)  
21 -- TV programs and that sort of thing. So three or  
22 four of us agreed there was a power outage.

23 So when I called FPU service number, I didn't  
24 really find out if it was -- (inaudible) -- proper  
25 answer electric -- (inaudible) -- and I asked the

1 question, what happened in the power outage on  
2 Sunday night? And the lady got a little bit snippy  
3 with me and said, there was no power outage. And I  
4 said, I beg your pardon, but there is four of us  
5 here, we had a power outage.

6 So she pulls up the computer, which a lot of  
7 people do today, and since you are all sitting  
8 behind computers, the real world is out there,  
9 somebody did not log it in. So there was no record  
10 of a power outage on 14th and 15th Street that  
11 particular night.

12 I kind of let it go, and I really didn't think  
13 about it until this meeting, but whoever was in the  
14 office kind of acted like why am I bothering you.  
15 Plus it took 40 minutes to get through, so --  
16 (inaudible) -- if I am going to wait 40 to 50  
17 minutes on something that I am just asking a  
18 question, I don't expect that attitude, but I also  
19 expect to get a descent -- (inaudible) --

20 So it could have been one of the contractors,  
21 like who is trimming the trees, was out there  
22 fixing it, and four hours later they got it fixed.  
23 And I am not -- I am pretty sure none of you work  
24 on Sunday night from the hours of 6:00 to midnight.  
25 So obviously there was no staffed there to record

1           it or log it in.

2           So those are my two concerns and comments for  
3           now. And hopefully there is a number or somebody  
4           in the City where we can call and get information  
5           in Fernandina Beach, especially after a hurricane  
6           -- (inaudible) --

7           So those are my comments, and hopefully they  
8           have some meaning. Thank you for letting me share  
9           them. I really appreciate y'all being here.

10          CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

11          Any questions?

12          Thank you very much.

13          MS. CHRISTENSEN: Leah Ward-Lee followed by  
14          Sharon Baris.

15          CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Ward-Lee, you are  
16          recognized.

17          MS. WARD-LEE: Leah Ward-Lee, 2162 White Sands  
18          Way, Fernandina Beach.

19          My question has to do with how these numbers  
20          were calculated, because they just don't seem to  
21          make sense when you compare them with things going  
22          on. For example, in every caseload, fuel charge  
23          has gone down, and it's not just gone down a little  
24          bit, it's gone down significantly. So how can it  
25          be? How can there a projection of having a fuel --

1           maybe there is a formula, but we don't know what it  
2           is, so it's really hard to assess the change.

3           The other one is, okay, the base rate charge  
4           goes up but the fuel rate goes down. So how are  
5           these numbers derived? And if there was just a  
6           simple explanation where somewhere to that, I think  
7           we would have the information that we need to  
8           understand what this really means to us.

9           Thank you.

10          CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

11          Any questions?

12          Thank you, ma'am.

13          COMMISSIONER FAY: Mr. Chairman, I don't have  
14          a question, but maybe our staff -- (inaudible) --  
15          can provide some clarity -- (inaudible) -- the  
16          charges are always complicated, an opportunity for  
17          somebody to explain that --

18          CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Sure. Sure. We have got  
19          staff here. Is that possible that maybe somebody  
20          can help us understand the fuel of cost and base  
21          rate cost?

22          MS. CHRISTENSEN: Sharon Baris, and then  
23          following her will be Walter Sturges.

24          MS. BARIS: Thank you.

25          I have three questions, the questions are

1 short, the answers may not be.

2 Fuel charges are inconsistent to the levels of  
3 usage, and I don't quite understand why that  
4 happened. For instance, on this blue sheet, 1,000  
5 kilowatts, your charge is 75.05, 1,500, is that --  
6 that's not the fuel charge for running ships and  
7 boats, that's for actually running your power,  
8 correct?

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yeah. I don't know. I  
10 can't answer the questions directly, but if you --

11 MS. BARIS: -- (Inaudible) --

12 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Yeah -- (inaudible)  
13 -- the questions and then if we can have someone  
14 answer them --

15 MS. BARIS: That's my first question.

16 Second question is: What's the difference  
17 between the charges here on this blue sheet that we  
18 picked up today and this mailer we received a  
19 couple of weeks ago with residential proposing  
20 increased as high as 43 percent, which is way above  
21 the inflation cost. That just seems highly  
22 outrageous. I would love an extra 43 percent to my  
23 Social Security.

24 And the last question: Isn't there -- wasn't  
25 there federal funding for building the

1 infrastructure with the electrical and telephone?  
2 Wasn't it federal funding available for that? Do  
3 you still get federal funding for this? And if so,  
4 how much? And why are we supplementing federal  
5 funding?

6 That was my three questions.

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Excellent.

8 Are there any questions of Ms. Baris? I am  
9 not seeing any.

10 MS. BARIS: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

12 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Mr. Walter Sturges, and then  
13 following him will be Michael Fletcher.

14 MR. STURGES: Good afternoon. I am Walter  
15 Sturges. I am a city resident and lived on the  
16 island for 72 years. In that time, I have paid  
17 bills to our Florida Public Utilities for over 50  
18 years. During that time, I have been happy with  
19 Florida Public Utilities. They have done an  
20 outstanding job. The service is fantastic. They  
21 come out when your power is out -- (inaudible) --  
22 the first time I get a chance -- (inaudible) --  
23 within a day or two, no matter what, during a  
24 hurricane. And that's fantastic compared to some  
25 people who are out there that -- (inaudible) --

1           The problems I'm having are with the  
2           administration. Used to be there was a building on  
3           South Bay Street. You could go and answer any  
4           question you wanted to, you could pay your bill  
5           there. They decided they had to move it out to the  
6           airport. The guy at the airport had a building out  
7           there where you could go out there and ask any  
8           question you wanted to and pay any bills you wanted  
9           to out there. But now they have done away with  
10          that. Then decide to go have a drop box out there  
11          that you could put your bill into and take care of  
12          it that way. Well, they had to do away with the  
13          drop box. Now they decided they had to move out to  
14          -- (inaudible) -- stepchild, it should be to the  
15          other way around, where can pay their bills, paying  
16          for over 50 years, it should be local back to us.  
17          But now we have to go out to you the new people out  
18          there, and make all of our people drive out there  
19          45 minutes out there one way and 45 minutes back,  
20          and it ain't but a couple minutes out that way. If  
21          you try calling on the phone, it takes forever.

22                People -- (inaudible) -- anymore because of  
23                the problems between here, and that's a concern to  
24                some of these people. And I think a few of them  
25                are scared to come up here because they are afraid



1 lo and behold they might turn the power off --  
2 (inaudible) -- and I have that feeling.

3 Once again, I try my best to be positive and  
4 talk positive about Florida Public Utilities, and  
5 the people that work with them out on the streets  
6 out there have done a fantastic job. I don't know  
7 why in the world, it's simple enough, that they  
8 can't have a drop box out there, and once a week to  
9 go pick up the payment out there, and making  
10 people, oh, you can go to Walmart, you can go to  
11 here and there to pay your bill. Yeah, you can go  
12 and pay your bill if you pay in cash, and, okay,  
13 you pay a service charge for that service. Why do  
14 you have to pay a service charge to pay your bills  
15 -- (Inaudible) -- or better, if you have more than  
16 \$750, you can't pay one bill, you have to pay it  
17 twice and pay double the service charge for a bill  
18 over \$750 if have you happen to have that. So I  
19 don't -- (inaudible) -- pay two service charges for  
20 a bill that's over \$750 as far as that goes.

21 All I want is to have someplace here on the  
22 island that the people can address their concerns,  
23 instead of having to -- (inaudible) -- out there  
24 for the services out there.

25 As far as the rate increase goes --

1 (inaudible) -- everybody is -- (inaudible) --  
2 that's not something that's uncommon, and they  
3 haven't gotten one since 2014, they probably need  
4 an increase in their bills, but I want some  
5 customer service here on this island is what I  
6 want, instead of being out there in Wildlife. If  
7 someone could help me with that, I know that's not  
8 the board's concern, but I want somebody here to  
9 speak to some of these elderly people that are  
10 having problems, they don't want to go out there.  
11 It's that simple. At least they would have -- even  
12 if they came here once a week, we had some place  
13 where somebody can talk to them here on this island  
14 and communicate. I appreciate it.

15 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Can I ask a question?

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes, sir.

17 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Mr. Sturges, can I ask you a  
18 real quick question?

19 MR. STURGES: Yes, ma'am.

20 MS. CHRISTENSEN: When did you -- when were  
21 you last able to make complaints or pay bills on  
22 the island, when did that change?

23 MR. STURGES: You can still pay your bill on  
24 the island. You can still, if you want to go to  
25 Walmart and you want to go pay, you know, somebody

1 four or five different stations that you can go and  
2 pay, you are going to pay a service charge to do it  
3 from this island as far as paying your bill at.  
4 And that's, you know, that's one concern.

5 It's been, I don't know, probably at least six  
6 months ago that they did away with the drop box out  
7 there, you could drop your payment in the drop box  
8 out there and they would come pick it up, you know,  
9 and take care of the charges -- (inaudible) -- and  
10 that's my biggest concerns is I have. You send a  
11 bill, if you want to mail your bill, you can send  
12 it to someplace, you know, around the country. The  
13 way the mail service is now, half the time it  
14 doesn't get paid, or whatever happened, because  
15 it's late getting there, and you have war story on  
16 that one.

17 My wife sent something to one of our relatives  
18 up in Atlanta, you know, and it was a gift that was  
19 sent up, and it was sent back to us three months  
20 later, and sent back to my home three months later.  
21 It never did make it there. So, you know, used to  
22 be you mailed everything, now that's changed too.

23 I am just concerned on the island, I want to  
24 go speak to somebody here, or I can take care of a  
25 question or something. You know, no one wants to

1 answer the phone anymore, that's almost unheard of  
2 somebody to pick up the phone. You know, you send  
3 me an email, or send me a text, or something else  
4 -- (inaudible) -- people, you know, that's a  
5 concern -- (inaudible) -- they are not --  
6 (inaudible) -- unfortunately you are getting older  
7 and older, not getting younger and younger.

8 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Sir, one more question.

10 COMMISSIONER FAY: Sir, you mentioned that  
11 having a location isn't our problem as the board.  
12 This is a customer service meeting. Customer  
13 service quality is extremely important to us. It's  
14 actually a specific point of this meeting, so  
15 that's taken into account when we review the rate  
16 case. So please don't hesitate to provide that  
17 feedback.

18 And I also appreciate that you said you try to  
19 be a positive person, because I am an FSU fan, and  
20 I am not wearing -- so I appreciate your openness.

21 MR. STURGES: Thank you, and I -- (inaudible)  
22 -- everybody has their ups and downs.

23 COMMISSIONER FAY: That's right. He is a  
24 Georgia Tech fan.

25 Thank you, Mr. Sturges.

1 MR. STURGES: Thank y'all. Appreciate your  
2 time.

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your  
4 testimony.

5 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: Just to maybe help. I  
6 believe they shut down the office here on the  
7 island because of COVID.

8 COMMISSIONER FAY: Yeah.

9 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: And it never came back.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Christensen, does that  
11 help?

12 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Yes, it does actually.

13 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

14 MS. CHRISTENSEN: The next speaker is Michael  
15 Fletcher and Jack Imber.

16 MR. FLETCHER: Hello. I am Michael Fletcher.  
17 I live at 1874 Anchorage Place here on the island,  
18 and I have lived here for about 19 years.

19 I am really here more for billing issue than  
20 anything. And I am a solar customer, and  
21 initially, I would get a bill that showed a  
22 negative balance with my account, but now I -- in  
23 those few months during the summer, where I  
24 actually produced more electricity than I used,  
25 just get a line fee now -- I think it's \$17, or

1 something like that -- and no -- no true accounting  
2 that I could figure out. Well, how much did I make  
3 so that it's taken away from my next bill, or  
4 whatever?

5 And I have talked to FPU several times on the  
6 phone about this. And they say, oh, no, we don't  
7 -- we don't give you credits. They did when we  
8 first got our solar panels, and I want to know why  
9 we don't get a credit. It doesn't seem like we  
10 should -- I know you don't -- you know, most  
11 companies don't pay the same amount that they  
12 charge for our electricity that we make, but why  
13 are we not given and accounting, and why, it  
14 appears, do they not take it away from your next  
15 bill? That's my main concern.

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

17 Is there any questions?

18 Okay. Thank you very much.

19 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Jack Imber and Coleman  
20 Langshaw.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Sir, you are recognized  
22 when you are ready.

23 MR. IMBER: Jack Imber, 1003 Broome Street in  
24 Fernandina -- (inaudible) -- as much as I hate  
25 seeing you, I have to really thank you guys because

1           you guys have done a terrific job. I am known as  
2           the complainer on the island, but service-wise, and  
3           the guys that come out and do the reinstalling the  
4           power once the power is out, you guys have to give  
5           feedback back to them. They do a terrific job.  
6           Everybody -- (inaudible) -- lines, reports and  
7           everything, it's extremely impressive.

8                     I have to say I agree with Mr. Chapman about  
9           the tree service, specifically -- (inaudible) --  
10          they spent in my neighborhood about two weeks for  
11          one block and they were in the truck very often,  
12          and they kind of need to be given their walking  
13          papers, because in some way for the down line, we  
14          are all paying for that, and it's really wasting  
15          money.

16                    So the other contractors that come in and trim  
17          the trees pre hurricane season, they come in, they  
18          do the mitigation, they don't practically kill the  
19          tree like -- (inaudible) -- tree did. It's  
20          atrocious the way they hacked up those trees, but  
21          anyways.

22                    So my question is the Vogtle plant in Georgia,  
23          the first nuclear plant in 30 years, there is a  
24          reason why there is there hasn't been a nuclear  
25          power plant in 30 years in my opinion. For myself,

1 I kind of mistrust the whole nuclear power thing.  
2 It hasn't really been successful in the long run,  
3 and I am wondering how much we are paying for that  
4 if we are connected on that thing, because I have  
5 just got conflicting reports, whether we are  
6 directly paying for Vogtle to power our system.

7 And that's pretty much it. I appreciate you  
8 guys. I have to say that here in Fernandina, we  
9 are a small town, but we have a lot of really  
10 intelligent people here, and oftentimes we are  
11 conferring with a dog and pony show. We  
12 encountered it with FDOT when we were doing some  
13 sidewalks down Atlantic, you know, just to show up  
14 and just kind of say that they answered the  
15 questions, and stuff like that.

16 We have a -- (inaudible) -- who is trying to  
17 bring in bioethanol regardless of the safety  
18 concerns of the community. But I appreciate you  
19 guys, because I know your reputation and your  
20 responses here today show otherwise, and we really  
21 appreciate you.

22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Any questions?

24 MS. CHRISTENSEN: No.

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.



1 MS. CHRISTENSEN: Coleman Langshaw, and then  
2 our last speaker will be Ron Bowman.

3 MR. LANGSHAW: Thank you for letting us talk  
4 to you guys. I don't know the full extent of your  
5 purview and your responsibilities. All I can say  
6 is the nature of the beast is that we have a  
7 monopoly here, okay, and I guess we have no way of  
8 controlling that. But monopolies, in my world, are  
9 a terrible thing, not capitalistic at all, and so  
10 we are at the mercy of the monopoly particularly in  
11 this case.

12 I know they can be -- other companies may be  
13 here, but for us, we have one source. So they can  
14 say, we got all of these costs. We got to get more  
15 money. Sorry, folks, you are going to have to pay  
16 for it, but we are constantly getting dinged left  
17 and right. People remember last summer, sure,  
18 temperatures were up a little bit, fuel prices were  
19 up some, but that's already noted, the fuel price  
20 is going back down. There is not a lot of  
21 consistency in that.

22 And then I was reading this, okay. So you  
23 guys may understand this. I don't know about you  
24 guys. This is the most incredible bunch of grid  
25 that I have ever seen. You know, I don't know what

1 a general service large demand, you know, these  
2 categories. And then these are just amazing for  
3 all of us lay people to try to go through a  
4 shoebox. I didn't know a shoebox cost 9.52, and I  
5 don't even know what all of this is meant to tell  
6 us. This is going to explain why we have to pay  
7 more money? It's not user friendly. That's -- you  
8 know, we are kind of like taxpayers supposedly,  
9 except for the monopoly. Don't mention monopoly  
10 the utilities are. I think that these hikes are  
11 pretty curious. I really don't understand how  
12 these numbers slide through to us.

13 You know, I look at the five big guys who are  
14 part of the big corporation, I guess up there in  
15 Delaware, whatever, I looked at some numbers in  
16 2023, five principles made seven point -- 77 point  
17 -- or -- I am sorry, their network \$77.2 million  
18 according to Wall Line.

19 Okay. I know they deserve some money, but you  
20 know what, there is a lot of money. And a lot of  
21 what I read is based on things like targets, and  
22 stock. Stock. Okay, the value of the stocks going  
23 up, what drives that up profitability of companies  
24 and corporations.

25 You know, the misnomer of public utilities I

1 think is kind of ironic, but I hope that the term  
2 Public Service Commission has teeth. And if you  
3 tell these guys they should be doing a little more,  
4 in my opinion, for preparations for all of this.  
5 We all have to prepare going forward for inflation  
6 and everything else, and then -- but in this case,  
7 we have to take whatever the monopoly tells us.

8 I really hope that you take it to heart that  
9 we are not just complaining. Yes, the service, I  
10 will say, has been great. I agree with what a lot  
11 of people have said in the past. But this graph,  
12 as far as I feel, and I could be wrong, but I know  
13 there are a lot of people here who felt the pinch  
14 of late, and we really need you to guys to look  
15 long and hard at this, and is it really our  
16 responsibility to bear the burden? Are they doing  
17 enough of their own homework? And they could be  
18 cutting a little more fat somewhere inside, instead  
19 of passing it off to us.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your  
22 testimony, sir.

23 MS. CHRISTENSEN: The next speaker is Ron  
24 Bowman, and we have an additional speaker Pete  
25 Wilking.

1           MR. BOWMAN: I have got a couple of things,  
2           and I want to say thank you for last tropical  
3           storm. You got things done. Great.

4           I just wonder why we don't just ask for a CPI,  
5           like, every year from a utility company, because  
6           that would alleviate a lot of these hearings, and,  
7           you know, Social Security is based on CPI, and that  
8           sort of thing.

9           As far as the tree trimming goes, the guys  
10          that trim -- I live on the, I guess the river to  
11          the ocean trail. And those guys did a really good  
12          job, and they have a very dangerous job. So if  
13          they take 15 minutes to take a break every hour,  
14          that's great.

15          I just want to say the coal-fired plants, is  
16          that going to affect the rates down the road with  
17          the -- with those being closed? A lot of them are  
18          being closed.

19          CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yeah, I won't be able to  
20          offer you an exact answer to your question. The  
21          intentions of today is you offer testimony, us to  
22          absorb it, and then take that into the --

23          MR. BOWMAN: Okay.

24          CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: -- decision-making process  
25          in the --

1           MR. BOWMAN: Well, is this going to affect  
2 future rates? Is this going to happen again next  
3 year because of propane prices, I guess is the  
4 question?

5           And I guess the last question is, does the  
6 utility companies normally have a sinking fund, or  
7 some kind of fund that in the event had a major  
8 disaster that they would have the money to pay the  
9 bills and to repair things? Is that something that  
10 you all regulate to make sure they have enough  
11 money to, you know, to do another major storm? So  
12 these rates should ensure that by them funding the  
13 pot.

14           That's the final question.

15           CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, sir.

16           Any questions? Thank you, sir.

17           MS. CHRISTENSEN: And the last speaker we have  
18 signed up to speak is Pete Wilking.

19           MR. WILKING: Good afternoon. My name is Pete  
20 Wilking. I live at 1551 East Lisa Avenue, on the  
21 island for 28 years now, and I am President and  
22 Founder of A1A Solar Contracting, Incorporated,  
23 based here in Florida.

24           First off, I want to thank FPUC. They have  
25 done, in over 15 years of business, a very good job

1 supporting us. We have to do grid interconnection  
2 agreements, and the administration has been, by and  
3 large, very favorable to us as a company.

4 I guess one of the concerns that I had, and I  
5 have heard -- I've got a customer, Mr. Fletcher --  
6 some of my customers, and we have a lot on the  
7 island as well as north Florida, expressed a  
8 difference in their billing.

9 Right now, per Florida Constitution, it says  
10 to recognize net metering, which is the net amount  
11 of kilowatt hours to be billed at on there.  
12 Florida has been kind of a mess when it came to  
13 solar billing, and I am curious to see if it's  
14 going to be following the stat -- the Florida  
15 Constitution as it is written.

16 In my opinion, net metering, the term has been  
17 bastardized over the years. Net metering one and  
18 two, or things. So the definition of net metering  
19 needs to be reestablished on what it actually means  
20 from a billing standpoint.

21 Another note, because of the rate increases,  
22 we get it, as a business owner, insurance is crazy.  
23 Employees are crazy. Energy efficiency, I  
24 understand you have an energy efficiency agreement.  
25 A1A Solar has redirected to help out with energy

1 efficiency in addition to solar, water heaters  
2 insulation, attic fans to help reduce consumption  
3 in buildings.

4 Is FPUC going to further that energy  
5 efficiency program? I know they don't do the  
6 contracting part. But those are some of the things  
7 that your clients and ratepayers, me being one of  
8 them, can benefit from on that as well.

9 So that's all I have. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

11 I will help real quick on the billing issues  
12 -- (inaudible) -- we have got Eileen here from the  
13 company, if you guys want to maybe discuss with  
14 them privately kind of how that sort of works,  
15 since that's maybe specific to how they bill it on  
16 their bills -- (inaudible) -- what the company  
17 does. I am hoping there is some clarity that can  
18 be brought to that today.

19 I'm assuming there is no questions for this  
20 gentleman.

21 MS. CHRISTENSEN: No questions.

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Is there anybody else --  
23 that was the last speaker I had registered. Is  
24 there anyone else in the room that would like to  
25 speak that has not signed up?

1           Yes, ma'am. If you don't mind, just filling  
2           out some paperwork, do it afterwards, but when you  
3           come to the microphone, just identify yourself, we  
4           will make sure we get you signed up.

5           You have not taken an oath. Would you mind  
6           just raising your right hand?

7           (Whereupon, Chairman La Rosa administered the  
8           oath to Libby Drury.)

9           MS. DRURY: Yes, I do.

10          CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Awesome. Go ahead and you  
11          are recognized when you are ready.

12          MS. DRURY: Hi. My name is Libby Drury. I  
13          live at on the island at 138 North 19th Street.  
14          And my question is similar to, I think Mr.  
15          Bowman's. I also have solar, and I am just  
16          wondering the cost of connecting to the grid has  
17          gone up as well. It used to be \$15. Now it's up  
18          \$24. So I was just wondering what is an  
19          explanation for that?

20          It's also net metering. I do have A1A Solar,  
21          and it's been wonderful, and I do appreciate all  
22          the work that you have done on trees trimmed --  
23          tree trimming -- but I wondering basically what a  
24          fair rate of return on investment is, because I  
25          realize you haven't raised an increase in many --



1           since 2014, but I agree that it's probably a solid  
2           monopoly is, you know, powerful in this area with  
3           FPUC, but what is considered a fair rate of return  
4           on investment?

5           So that's it.

6           CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Well, thank you. And we  
7           have got customer service here if you would like to  
8           chat with them on the solar question.

9           And don't forget to also sign in so we make  
10          sure we have got your information correct.

11          Is there anyone else in the room that hasn't  
12          had a chance to speak that would like to?

13          Okay. Not seeing any, I will turn to staff.  
14          Were there any exhibits that need to be entered  
15          into the record?

16          MS. BROWNLESS: No, sir.

17          CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: No exhibits to be taken  
18          care of.

19          Okay. Commissioners, do we have any questions  
20          or final thoughts before we conclude today? Not  
21          seeing any.

22          I just want to just, again, say thank you all  
23          for coming out today. Again, your testimony  
24          matters to us. We come to the community for this  
25          purpose, right, to engage with each and every one

1 of you, so thank you. You have a beautiful  
2 downtown. Beautiful area.

3 Yes, sir.

4 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: One more question, when  
5 will a decision be made?

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: What does our timeline look  
7 like? I don't have the specific date.

8 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: You were hoping we  
9 wouldn't ask that.

10 MS. BROWNLESS: This is a Proposed Agency  
11 Action procedure, which means that the Commission  
12 will come up with a -- will produce a  
13 recommendation -- we, the staff, will produce a  
14 recommendation, then it will be voted on at a  
15 Commission Agenda Conference. And I believe the  
16 first Agenda Conference which is the one that  
17 establishes the revenue requirements will be in  
18 March of next year.

19 UNIDENDIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: The final decision won't  
21 come until --

22 MS. BROWNLESS: And the subsequent decision,  
23 which is the decision on the rate, will probably, I  
24 think, be three weeks after that.

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: So early in the process,

1 but thank you very much.

2 To the City of Fernandina Beach, thank you for  
3 hosting us, right. We are not normally on the  
4 road, so it's a little tricky for us, I am from  
5 Tallahassee, so thank y'all for hosting us here and  
6 allowing us to use your facilities.

7 Not seeing any other business before us, this  
8 meeting is adjourned. Thank y'all very much.

9 (Proceedings item concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER


STATE OF FLORIDA )  
COUNTY OF LEON )

I, DEBRA KRICK, Court Reporter, do hereby  
certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the  
time and place herein stated.

IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I  
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same has been transcribed under my direct supervision;  
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I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative,  
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financially interested in the action.

DATED this 27th day of December, 2024.

  
DEBRA R. KRICK  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
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EXPIRES AUGUST 13, 2028