

1 STAFF CONFERENCE

March 1, 2021

2 CHAIR MITCHELL: Good morning. Let's come  
3 to order, please, and go on the record. I'm Charlotte  
4 Mitchell, Chair of the Utilities Commission, and with  
5 me this morning are the following Commissioners. When  
6 I call your name, please announce your presence.  
7 Commissioner Brown-Bland.

8 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Did you did call  
9 on me?

10 CHAIR MITCHELL: I did. Commissioner  
11 Brown-Bland is here. Commissioner Gray.

12 COMMISSIONER MCKISSICK: I'm here as well,  
13 Madam Chair, if I missed the roll call.

14 CHAIR MITCHELL: I haven't gotten to you  
15 yet, Commissioner McKissick, but Commissioner  
16 McKissick is here for the record. Commissioner  
17 Clodfelter.

18 COMMISSIONER CLODFELTER: Yes, good morning.

19 CHAIR MITCHELL: Commissioner Duffley.

20 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Good morning.

21 COMMISSIONER HUGHES: Commissioner Hughes.  
22 Commissioner Hughes, are you with us?

23 COMMISSIONER GRAY: While we're waiting on  
24 Commissioner Hughes, I'm here as well, Chair Mitchell.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

1 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Commissioner  
2 Gray.

3 COMMISSIONER HUGHES: I'm sorry. Technical  
4 difficulties. I'm here.

5 CHAIR MITCHELL: We're off to a rough start  
6 this morning. There's Commissioner Hughes.

7 In compliance with the State Government  
8 Ethics Act, I remind members of the Commission of  
9 their duty to avoid conflicts of interest, and inquire  
10 as to whether any member of the Commission has a known  
11 conflict of interest with respect to matters coming  
12 before us?

13 (No response)

14 The record will reflect that no conflicts  
15 have been identified, so we will proceed with Public  
16 Staff, Electric Item P1. Mr. Metz, I believe we are  
17 with you.

18 MR. METZ: Good morning. I'm Dustin Metz  
19 with the Energy Division. Item P1 is for a  
20 Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public  
21 Convenience and Necessity and a waiver of the notice  
22 and hearing requirements.

23 The Public Staff recommends that the  
24 Commission issue the Public Staff's proposed order

1 waiving notice and hearing and issue the Certificate.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Move approval of  
3 the recommendation.

4 COMMISSIONER GRAY: I'll second.

5 CHAIR MITCHELL: It's been moved and  
6 seconded that the item be approved as recommended by  
7 the Public Staff. Any there any questions or is there  
8 any discussion?

9 (No response)

10 Hearing none, I'll call the roll for a vote.  
11 Indicate your support for the motion with an aye and  
12 your opposition with a no. Commissioner Brown-Bland.

13 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Aye.

14 CHAIR MITCHELL: Commissioner Gray.

15 COMMISSIONER GRAY: Aye.

16 CHAIR MITCHELL: Commissioner Clodfelter.

17 COMMISSIONER CLODFELTER: Aye.

18 CHAIR MITCHELL: Commissioner Duffley.

19 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Aye.

20 CHAIR MITCHELL: Commissioner Hughes.

21 COMMISSIONER HUGHES: Aye.

22 CHAIR MITCHELL: Commissioner McKissick.

23 COMMISSIONER MCKISSICK: Aye.

24 CHAIR MITCHELL: And for the record I

1 support the motion as well and the motion carries.

2 (MOTION PASSES)

3 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Metz.

4 We will proceed now with Public Staff, Water  
5 Item P1. Mr. Junis, you're up.

6 MR. JUNIS: Thank you, Chair Mitchell.

7 Charles Junis, Engineer with the Public Staff, Water,  
8 Sewer and Telephone Division. Water Items P1, P3 and  
9 P4 filed by Aqua North Carolina, Inc., in Docket  
10 Number W-218, Subs 462, 532, and 534, respectively,  
11 are Notifications of Intention to begin water and  
12 sewer utility operations in contiguous service areas.

13 The Public -- the Commission Staff has  
14 brought to our attention a concern regarding the lack  
15 of language in the Subs 462 and 532 proposed orders  
16 addressing requirements for the collection of income  
17 tax on contributions in aid of construction.  
18 Therefore, the Public Staff has provided amended  
19 proposed orders for these items which add the  
20 following sentence to finding of fact number five, and  
21 I quote, "pursuant to the Commission's August 26th,  
22 2019 Order in Docket Number W-100, Sub 57, a utility  
23 is not required to collect income tax on CIAC from a  
24 contributor unless contributions were contracted for

1 on or after October 5th, 2018". And the Commission  
2 should have those amended proposed orders available to  
3 them.

4 It is recommended that the Commission issue  
5 the proposed orders recognizing these contiguous  
6 extensions.

7 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Move approval of  
8 Public Staff Items 1 -- P1, P3 and P4 as amended by  
9 Mr. Junis.

10 COMMISSIONER GRAY: Second.

11 CHAIR MITCHELL: It's been moved and  
12 seconded that Public Staff Water Items P1, P3 and P4  
13 be approved as amended by Mr. Junis here this morning.  
14 Any questions or discussion?

15 Mr. Bennink, I see you'd like to be  
16 recognized.

17 MR. BENNINK: That's correct. I might need  
18 to call on Mr. Poole. The Company, as far as I know,  
19 was not aware of this change before this morning, at  
20 least personally, speaking for myself personally, that  
21 this is the first I've heard of this. And I don't  
22 know whether Mr. Poole is in a position to respond at  
23 this point. I'll ask him if he is. We may need a  
24 little bit of time to talk about this afterwards and

1 get back with you.

2 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Bennink.  
3 Mr. Poole, you may proceed.

4 MR. POOLE: Hey. Good morning. I did not  
5 have a chance to review the language. From the sound  
6 of it I do not believe we would have an objection, but  
7 I would like to request of you to read the language  
8 just to verify that my understanding of what  
9 Mr. Junis' recital was is correct.

10 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Madam Chair, I  
11 would move to table my motion.

12 CHAIR MITCHELL: Mr. Junis?

13 MR. JUNIS: Madam Chair, I would say that  
14 this is consistent with discovery responses and emails  
15 exchanged with Mr. Poole. Although we did not share  
16 the specific language, it would be my representation  
17 that this language is consistent with that email  
18 exchange in terms of what was understood, and the  
19 difference between Subs 462, 532, and then 534 being  
20 different than those two items.

21 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Junis.

22 With that, we'll give the Company an  
23 opportunity to review the specific language that has  
24 been proposed for the orders and we will table these

1 items for consideration at a future date.

2 Let's proceed with Public Staff, Water Item  
3 P2. Mr. Junis, I believe we are with you.

4 MR. JUNIS: Yes, Madam Chair. Water Item  
5 P2, filed by Aqua North Carolina, Inc., in Docket  
6 Number W-218, Sub 509 is an Application seeking a  
7 Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to  
8 provide water utility service in Wetrock Farm, Phase  
9 1, Subdivision in Durham County and approval of rates.

10 It is recommended that the Commission issue  
11 the proposed order granting the franchise and  
12 approving rates.

13 I would just add as a slight complicating  
14 factor, in that ordering language it assumes that all  
15 four of these items would be issued together and so  
16 that language addresses the amount of bond consistent  
17 with those four items, and so that would require a  
18 modification if a decision is made regarding Item P2  
19 while the other three are tabled. So, just to make  
20 everybody aware, either we can table all four, I don't  
21 think anybody would have a problem with that, or that  
22 item needs a modification as opposed to being issued  
23 as written.

24 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Junis.

1           Mr. Bennink and Mr. Poole, I see you all  
2 would like to respond.

3           MR. BENNINK: The Company would look at  
4 these items quickly and we'll be prepared to, assuming  
5 there's not a problem, respond by email say to  
6 Commission staff so that rather than having to bring  
7 these items back, if there's no problem, you know,  
8 we'd like to have them -- go ahead and the orders be  
9 issued. And so we would be prepared to respond as  
10 quickly as possible on our four agenda items by email  
11 to Commission Staff and with copies to the Public  
12 Staff.

13           CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Bennink.  
14 Then what we're going to do is this, we're going to  
15 table consideration of Item P2 until we have sign off  
16 from the Company on the language proposed for Items 1,  
17 3 and 4.

18           Mr. Poole, did you want to be recognized?

19           MR. POOLE: We don't have a problem with  
20 that being tabled.

21           CHAIR MITCHELL: Okay. Thank you,  
22 Mr. Poole.

23           The Commission has before it for approval  
24 its minutes of February 22nd, 2021 Staff Conference.



1 COMMISSIONER GRAY: Move approval.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Second.

3 CHAIR MITCHELL: Any questions? Discussion  
4 on the minutes?

5 (No response)

6 Hearing none, all in favor of approving the  
7 minutes indicate with an aye.

8 (All Commissioners say aye)

9 CHAIR MITCHELL: Any opposed?

10 (No response)

11 Our minutes of February 22nd, 2021 are  
12 approved.

13 At this point in the agenda, we are going to  
14 hear from gas and electric companies on their recent  
15 experience with the U.S. Postal Service and whether  
16 the Companies have been experiencing any difficulty  
17 similar to those we've heard of from the water  
18 companies.

19 Ms. Fentress, I see you are on camera, so I  
20 will call on you to proceed first.

21 MS. FENTRESS: Thank you. Good morning,  
22 Chair Mitchell and Commissioners. I am Kendrick  
23 Fentress appearing on behalf of Duke Energy this  
24 morning and by Duke Energy I'd like to be clear I'm

1 appearing on behalf of Duke Energy Carolinas, Duke  
2 Energy Progress, and Piedmont Natural Gas on this  
3 issue.

4 Duke Energy appreciates the opportunity to  
5 come and describe to the Commission how we have stayed  
6 on top of the issue of potential delays and postal  
7 deliveries since that issue first emerged in the  
8 media. I don't want to steal Mr. Lawrence's thunder,  
9 but what you will hear from Mr. Lawrence today is the  
10 good news that we have not experienced widespread  
11 postal delays, but Mr. Lawrence will describe further  
12 to the Commissioners how we have responded and will  
13 continue to respond to issues concerning any postal  
14 delivery delays. And with that, I will turn it over  
15 to Mr. Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence is the Companies' Vice  
16 President of Revenue Services and Metering in our  
17 customer services organization. Thank you.

18 MR. LAWRENCE: Well, good morning and thank  
19 you for the opportunity to speak today. Because the  
20 postal service is such an integral part of both our  
21 billing and payments channels, it's something that we  
22 pay a lot of attention to at Duke whether there's a  
23 pandemic or not, and so I'm glad that it's getting  
24 attention here. And as Ms. Fentress stated, I'm happy

1 to report that there are no widespread issues that  
2 we've had to take drastic action to respond to.  
3 However, in order to kind of set the stage I want to  
4 first give you a little context.

5 So we, Duke Energy, we have our own central  
6 cash remittance facility for all of Duke Energy's  
7 affiliates and it's based in Charlotte, North  
8 Carolina, and that is the location that processes all  
9 the paper checks that are sent in for payment. In  
10 addition, we have a bill production vender whose  
11 facilities in Piscataway, New Jersey produce the bills  
12 for DEC and DEP, and whose facility in Dallas, Texas  
13 produces the bills for Piedmont Natural Gas. They  
14 have the capability and do report to us postal  
15 delivery times from any outbound mail that they send  
16 on our behalf.

17 So what we do is we regularly monitor the  
18 postmarks that are coming in into our central cash  
19 remittance facility to make sure that we aren't seeing  
20 any significant outliers that would give us cause for  
21 concern. Additionally, we receive regular reports  
22 from our vender on the scan data on the mail pieces  
23 that they have sent as well, and I'll share those data  
24 with you on the next page here shortly.

1           In addition to that, we meet regularly, the  
2     customer services leadership team, to just talk about  
3     any emergent issues that may arise as a result of  
4     customer feedback that we're hearing from inbound  
5     calls. And once the media started to cover potential  
6     postal delays back in the fall, we were actually  
7     explicitly requiring with the -- with our customer  
8     care associates on a daily basis to determine whether  
9     there are widespread reports of customers experiencing  
10    delayed bills.

11           So just a little bit more context here. We  
12    are talking about approximately 73 percent of Duke  
13    Energy customers in North Carolina and South Carolina  
14    receive paper bills. In other words, 36 -- a little  
15    bit more than 36 percent receive eBills. And Piedmont  
16    Natural Gas customers, 30 -- about 32 percent of them  
17    receive eBills so we're approximately at 68 percent of  
18    Piedmont Natural Gas Company customers across our  
19    three states. And I'm sorry, I think I said 70 --  
20    it's 63 percent of Duke Energy customers that receive  
21    paper bills. And as Ms. Fentress and I mentioned, the  
22    data indicate that there were no widespread delays.  
23    We received only isolated reports from North Carolina  
24    customers calling us about delivery times. They were

1 relatively few and far between. And in our daily and  
2 weekly monitoring of the inbound postmarks, they were  
3 all predominantly within the normal windows which is  
4 within two to three days, sometimes a day or two more,  
5 but largely within that period, even around the  
6 holidays as well.

7           So given the fact that we had not observed  
8 any widespread postal delays impacting our customers,  
9 we decided to manage this on an exception basis and  
10 basically instructed all of our customer care  
11 specialists that if they received any inquiries from  
12 customers about delayed bills or if a customer stated  
13 that they felt that they mailed their payment on time  
14 and it did not post to their account on time, that our  
15 customer care specialists were automatically  
16 authorized to suspend late payment charges, which we  
17 know isn't really relevant right now in North Carolina  
18 because they are currently suspended across the board,  
19 and also could suspend any pending disconnections on  
20 any customer account, again who made that contact.

21           So this next graph just shows the data that  
22 we received from our bill production vender. You can  
23 see the lines represent the total volume. That's just  
24 to put into context the number of pieces that were

1 being mailed on our behalf in each month by our  
2 vender. And then the stacked bars, the columns  
3 represent the average data delivery from those data.  
4 And the blue represents Duke Energy Carolinas, Duke  
5 Energy Progress, again, those pieces coming from New  
6 Jersey. And as you can see there, there was an  
7 increase from the low to mid 3's up until a peak in  
8 December of about 4.5 days, but certainly well within  
9 the service level that we would expect, and then that  
10 came down -- has come down significantly since the  
11 peak in December. On the -- from the pieces coming  
12 from Dallas on behalf of Piedmont Natural Gas, the  
13 performance actually was better. You can see that  
14 those bars actually only start in November and that's  
15 because we moved to the current vender. We  
16 consolidated the contract with our current vender at  
17 Piedmont on November 5th. So prior to that, we were  
18 actually working with an additional vender and did not  
19 have the same tracking capabilities. But as you can  
20 see there, the delivery times were actually even more  
21 efficient coming from Dallas to the North Carolina  
22 area.

23 I do want to share one specific instance  
24 though and this just happened within the last two

1 weeks. So as we know there was a pretty serious  
2 winter storm that hit the Texas area and it impacted  
3 Dallas, Texas where that bill production facility is  
4 that serves Piedmont Natural Gas. On the evening  
5 of -- I'm sorry, on February 16th, we were notified by  
6 our vender that the Texas postal facility that  
7 revenues those Piedmont Natural Gas bills was  
8 temporarily shut down due to loss of power. On the  
9 17th, they took delivery of those bills so there was a  
10 one-day delay but that actually included bills from  
11 the 15th, 16th and 17th because of the President's Day  
12 holiday. And then on February 18th, the United States  
13 Postal Service posted on their website that that site  
14 was back to business as usual. However, based on our  
15 discussions with our vender and our desire to continue  
16 to err on the side of customers, we made the decision  
17 that we would be suspending disconnections for any  
18 customers in that five-day window just because it  
19 would be some time until we have an indication as to  
20 whether those pieces suffered any significant delay  
21 and impacted the customers' ability to pay timely.

22 And so, with that, that's the information  
23 that I have to -- that I prepared to share. I'm happy  
24 to take questions you may have.

1 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Lawrence.  
2 Thank you, Ms. Fentress. Questions for Duke Energy  
3 from any of the Commissioners?

4 (No response)

5 It looks we have no questions for you all.  
6 Thank you again for this update. We appreciate your  
7 time this morning and your willingness to keep us  
8 apprised.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: Thank you.

10 CHAIR MITCHELL: Ms. Grigg, I see you are  
11 now on camera so we will hand it over to you.

12 MS. GRIGG: Thank you, Chair Mitchell, and  
13 good morning, and good morning to the Commissioners.  
14 I am Mary Lynne Grigg with the Law Firm of  
15 McGuireWoods appearing on behalf of Dominion Energy  
16 and that is Dominion Energy North Carolina electric  
17 and Dominion Energy North Carolina gas, or PSNC.  
18 Presenting information to the Commission on behalf of  
19 the Companies are Mr. Frank Hinckle who is General  
20 Manager of Customer Service for Dominion Energy North  
21 Carolina electric, and Mr. Sam Dozier who is General  
22 Manager for Customer Service for DENC gas or PSNC.  
23 With that, I will turn it over to Mr. Hinckle.

24 And I will note, Mr. McCoy, my share



1 function is not working currently so if you could  
2 allow me to share in just a few minutes I'd appreciate  
3 it.

4 MR. HINCKLE: Good morning. This is Frank  
5 Hinckle, the General Manager of Customer Service for  
6 North Carolina Electric. I'd like to thank you for  
7 the opportunity to appear before the Commission this  
8 morning to discuss the USPS mail delays and the  
9 impacts to our electric customers that we experienced  
10 in North Carolina.

11 For Dominion Energy, mail delays started  
12 around the mid part of December, and I will note that  
13 they did return to normal around the February 10th  
14 timeframe. We started noticing -- or when we started  
15 noticing these delays rather, we contacted the USPS  
16 processing and distribution center. This is the  
17 location that the majority of our mail-in payments for  
18 our customers in North Carolina goes through. And  
19 then we also reached out to one of our local post  
20 offices. A small portion of our mail-in payments for  
21 our electric customers in North Carolina are sent to  
22 some designated PO boxes at this particular facility.

23 Based on the USPS updates that we were  
24 given, the main reasons for the delays were two-fold.

1 Higher than normal mail volume as well as staffing  
2 shortages due to Covid-19. After this initial contact  
3 to both the distribution center as well as the local  
4 Post Office, we did continue to reach out to our  
5 contacts at these two locations to voice concerns  
6 about the delays as well as to inquire about updates  
7 on the mail delivery and when this mail delivery would  
8 return to normal.

9 To ensure that our customer service agents  
10 were prepared to respond to any questions that our  
11 customers in North Carolina might have regarding the  
12 mail delays, we updated our knowledge management  
13 system with talking points for our agents. This  
14 knowledge management system is our online resource  
15 tools where we post various alerts for the agents,  
16 updates, talking points, as well as any other useful  
17 information that would be available or needed for the  
18 agents to serve our customers.

19 If we -- and if we did receive a call from a  
20 North Carolina customer and they were inquiring about  
21 the status of their payment and they had a disconnect  
22 notice on their bill, we ensured that any disconnect  
23 order that might be in the system is canceled, and we  
24 noted the account accordingly.

1           We also received -- our records show we also  
2       received about 26 calls from our electric customers in  
3       North Carolina voicing concerns that they had not  
4       received their bill. Our agents informed these  
5       customers of the mail delays and that we are not  
6       currently assessing late fees, and then we also took  
7       an opportunity to speak to these customers about the  
8       benefits of eBill and ePayment.

9           As the slide -- I think the slide is coming  
10      up now. Maybe if we could advance to the next slide,  
11      please. There we go. Thank you. As represented on  
12      this slide, you'll see on the left-hand side about  
13      61 percent of payments received from our electric  
14      customers in North Carolina between the timeframes  
15      mentioned on this slide were received electronically.  
16      On the right-hand side of this slide, this represents  
17      the percentage of bills that are delivered  
18      electronically which is about 30 percent. And this  
19      was on some data from January the 31st.

20           We do take various opportunities throughout  
21      the year using various communication channels to  
22      promote electronic billing and electronic payments.  
23      For example, we sent targeted emails to customers who  
24      are enrolled in manage account, which is our online

1 customer portal but are not enrolled in eBill. We  
2 also have various eBill and ePayment promotions in our  
3 electronic newsletters. And then also we have ongoing  
4 promotions in monthly communications such as bill  
5 messages, bill inserts and, also, we do promotions on  
6 our bill envelopes.

7 As we approach all the holidays this year,  
8 we are going to be closely monitoring as we always do  
9 mail delivery, and we'll have a heightened sense of  
10 awareness of any delays that we notice. And if we do  
11 notice these delays, we will once again make sure that  
12 our customer service agents are prepared to respond to  
13 any questions or concerns from our customers. And  
14 then, in addition, we will also reach out to our  
15 contacts at both the distribution facility as well as  
16 the local Post Office to report delays. And with  
17 that, I will take any questions.

18 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Hinckle.

19 Any questions from the Commission for  
20 Dominion?

21 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Madam Chair, I do  
22 not have questions for either company, but I would say  
23 that I'm appreciative, and it's good to know that both  
24 Companies do look at these particular issues and items

1 as a regular part of operations, so that's very good.  
2 And I would request that if they do note a change in  
3 mail norms, such that the Commission should respond by  
4 any need to change any of our timing rules that relate  
5 to mail, that they would bring that to our attention  
6 so that we might act on it promptly and accordingly.  
7 So thank you very much for coming and addressing these  
8 issues with us.

9 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Commissioner  
10 Brown-Bland.

11 Any other questions from Commissioners?

12 (No response)

13 Well, I would reiterate Commissioner  
14 Brown-Bland's request. Please do keep us apprised.  
15 We asked the same thing of the water companies last  
16 week when they were here with us. And please make  
17 sure we are made aware of any delays or other causes  
18 for concern associated with billing and incoming  
19 payment situations. And to the extent that we need to  
20 take action or otherwise consider the rules currently  
21 in effect, we need to hear from you all on that.

22 At this point in time, I will see if there  
23 are any --

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Madam Chair?

1 CHAIR MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: I just noticed as  
3 you were speaking, I saw the third - I think it was  
4 the third - slide popped up and it was related to PSNC  
5 Dominion or Dominion PSNC, and it seemed the numbers  
6 were similar but there was a greater percentage  
7 enrolled in eBill, so that all looked good. And I  
8 just wanted to note that we saw that slide.

9 MS. GRIGG: Thank you. Chair Mitchell, this  
10 is Mary Lynne Grigg again. Mr. Dozier is happy to  
11 present on that slide and was prepared to do so.

12 CHAIR MITCHELL: I'm sorry, Ms. Grigg, we  
13 didn't give you all a chance to finish.

14 Mr. Dozier, you may go ahead. I apologize.

15 MR. DOZIER: Not a problem at all, Madam  
16 Chair. And, in fact, if that's the worst thing that  
17 happens to me this week, I think we'll all be okay.

18 My name is Sam Dozier. My responsibility is  
19 primarily like the other gentlemen have mentioned this  
20 morning, mine is specific to PSNC or the gas company,  
21 Dominion's Gas Company in North Carolina, and the  
22 points are very similar.

23 We experienced some mild delay. I do  
24 appreciate Mr. Lawrence's comments as well as

1 Mr. Hinckle's around the fact that it was fairly  
2 minimal the delay we've seen. And we directed our  
3 reps to certainly if a customer were to indicate to us  
4 that the mail delay has in fact affected them, we  
5 would cancel the disconnect, cancel credit action,  
6 whatever it may be, and that's generally our mode of  
7 operation for any similar issues.

8           There is a good story to tell on our  
9 customer mix and how they make payments. Only 18 --  
10 17 percent, sorry, of our payments are made through  
11 the mail and that's something that we have worked very  
12 hard on for a number of years to encourage our  
13 customers to use a more efficient or effective means  
14 for payment processing. They certainly have a number  
15 of options that they can use, but through time only --  
16 we've gotten to the point that around 17 percent of  
17 payments are being made via the mail. Eighty-two  
18 percent of the payments as you would expect are made  
19 through electronic channels and that grows every year.  
20 We're really proud of that. And then the fact that  
21 46 percent of our actual bills are delivered  
22 electronically or paperless is something that we're  
23 really proud of.

24           We did, throughout the pandemic a number of

1 times, specifically reached out to customers who may  
2 still be getting a paper bill, but they do have an  
3 online account, or they have an email address  
4 associated with their account. We did encourage them  
5 to receive their bills through electronic means and  
6 many of them have converted if you will to non-paper  
7 bills. So it's a good story there and it is a  
8 consistent story, but we have seen a lot of success  
9 there.

10 One additional point I'll point out -- and  
11 by the way we look at regular speech analytics to  
12 ensure whether it's this specific issue or any other  
13 issues, what are customers telling us. And we've got  
14 a number of ways to do that, and one is doing speech  
15 analytics to see what customers are mentioning to us  
16 when they do in fact call us, but no meaningful  
17 concern there as it relates to postal delays.

18 Somewhat similar to Mr. Lawrence's comments  
19 about Texas, mid-February when the weather was pretty  
20 tough in Texas, we did get notification from our  
21 payment processing vender, now this is the vender that  
22 primarily processes debit/credit cards payments  
23 because of PCI compliance, that they were experiencing  
24 some intermittent issues. They had to move their data



1 center as well as their contact center to other  
2 locations because of power outages. What we did on  
3 our end was suspended disconnects just out of an  
4 abundance of caution. We really think it probably  
5 only could potentially have affected a handful of PSNC  
6 customers, but just to ensure that that were not the  
7 case we did suspend disconnects mid-February, so we  
8 did have that issue. And then as you know from the  
9 most recent order, residential disconnects are not  
10 being worked in the month of March. With that said, I  
11 am more than happy to answer any specific questions.

12 CHAIR MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Dozier.

13 Questions for Mr. Dozier?

14 COMMISSIONER HUGHES: Chair Mitchell, I have  
15 a short question.

16 CHAIR MITCHELL: Commissioner Hughes.

17 COMMISSIONER HUGHES: I really appreciate  
18 the analytics that you provided us, and it really  
19 helps understand what's going on. I have a related  
20 question though and you don't have to answer it now.  
21 With all of this data collection that you do, is it  
22 also possible to see what percentage of all of those  
23 different payment streams, particularly the mail and  
24 the electronic, are made with credit card versus paper

1 check? I just was curious if that was something that  
2 was very easy to produce.

3 MR. DOZIER: I'll speak on our behalf. I  
4 would say it's easier, Commissioner Hughes, to provide  
5 that information. For the most, any of those  
6 mailed-in payments as well as possibly walk-in  
7 payments, which was only 1 percent for us, would be  
8 checked. I don't -- to your specific question, there  
9 may be some mailed-in payments that someone is writing  
10 a debit or credit card on their paystub, but most of  
11 those would be checked, but we can probably get you  
12 that information at a later date.

13 COMMISSIONER HUGHES: Thank you.

14 CHAIR MITCHELL: Any additional questions?

15 (No response)

16 Again, thank you all very much for your time  
17 this morning. We appreciate hearing from you and the  
18 information you've shared with us.

19 With that, is there any additional business  
20 for the Commission this morning?

21 (No response)

22 Hearing none, we will be adjourned. And  
23 let's go off the record, please. Thank you.

24

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 WHEREUPON, this conference is adjourned.  
3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 C E R T I F I C A T E

5 I, KIM T. MITCHELL, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that  
6 the Proceedings in the above-captioned matter were  
7 taken before me, that I did report in stenographic  
8 shorthand the Proceedings set forth herein, and the  
9 foregoing pages are a true and correct transcription  
10 to the best of my ability.  
11

12 Kim Mitchell \_\_\_\_\_

13 Kim T. Mitchell  
14 Court Reporter  
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