

PLACE: Via WebEx Videoconference

DATE: Monday, August 3, 2020

TIME: 6:30 p.m. - 8:26 p.m.

DOCKET NO.: W-218, Sub 526

BEFORE: Commissioner ToNola D. Brown-Blair, Presiding
Chair Charlotte A. Mitchell
Commissioner Lyons Gray
Commissioner Daniel G. Clodfelter
Commissioner Kimberly W. Duffley
Commissioner Jeffrey A. Hughes
Commissioner Floyd B. McKissick, Jr.

IN THE MATTER OF:

Application by Aqua North Carolina, Inc.,
202 MacKenan Court, Cary, North Carolina 27511,
for Authority to Adjust and Increase Rates
for Water and Sewer Utility Service in
All of Its Service Areas in North Carolina.

VOLUME: 10

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24

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S
E X A M I N A T I O N S

CINDY ROSADO	PAGE
Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	19
Cross Examination By Ms. Sanford.....	26
ERIC THORNTON	PAGE
Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	30
Cross Examination By Ms. Sanford.....	34
KIRSTEN PAVLICH	PAGE
Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	36
Cross Examination By Ms. Sanford.....	41
Examination By Commissioner Duffley.....	45
Examination By Commissioner Hughes.....	46
ALISON SQUIRES	PAGE
Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	47
JAMES MCREYNOLDS	PAGE
Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	52
Cross Examination By Ms. Sanford.....	56
Examination By Commissioner Hughes.....	57
Examination By Commissioner Duffley.....	58
Examination By Commissioner Brown-Bl and.....	58
CHARLES AVERY	PAGE
Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	60

		Page 5
1	ALBERT MEYER	PAGE
2	Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	64
3	ERIC GALAMB	PAGE
4	Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	71
5	Cross Examination By Mr. Bennink.....	75
6	LACHIA MORELAND	PAGE
7	Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	80
8	Cross Examination By Mr. Bennink.....	85
9	WENDY STEVENS	PAGE
10	Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	88
11	Cross Examination By Mr. Bennink.....	93
12	Examination By Commissioner Hughes.....	95
13	Examination By Commissioner Brown-Bl and.....	95
14	CAROL HORROCKS	PAGE
15	Direct Examination By Mr. Creech.....	100
16	Examination By Commissioner Brown-Bl and.....	101
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		

1
2
3
4
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P R O C E E D I N G S

COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
Good evening. Let's come to order and go on the record.

I am Commissioner Tola D. Brown-Bland, presiding Commissioner for this docket. And with me this evening via remote connection are Chair Charlotte A. Mitchell, and Commissioners Lyons Gray, Daniel G. Clodfelter, Kimberly W. Duffley, Jeffrey A. Hughes, and Floyd B. McKissick, Jr.

I now call for hearing Docket Number W-218, Sub 526, In the Matter of Application By Aqua North Carolina, Inc., 202 MacKenan Court, Cary, North Carolina 27511, for Authority to Increase Rates for Water and Sewer Utility Service in All of Its Service Areas in North Carolina.

On December 31, 2019, Aqua North Carolina, Inc., hereafter Aqua, Company, or the Applicant, filed an application with the Commission seeking authority to increase its rates for water and sewer utility service in all of its North Carolina service areas.

On February 14, 2020, the Commission

1 issued an order establishing a general rate case,
2 scheduling hearings, and requiring customer notice.
3 The order scheduled six public hearings throughout
4 the Company's service territory for the sole
5 purpose of hearing from customers regarding the
6 Company's application and quality of service. The
7 order scheduled a hearing in Raleigh to begin on
8 June 23, 2020, at 9:30 a.m. to receive testimony
9 from the parties' expert witnesses.

10 On March 31, 2020, the Commission issued
11 an order postponing the public hearings in response
12 to the issuance of the Governor's Executive Order
13 Number 116 which declared a state of emergency in
14 North Carolina to coordinate responsive and
15 protective actions to prevent the spread of
16 coronavirus, and which restricted public gatherings
17 in an effort to contain the spread of the virus.

18 The hearing for receipt of expert
19 witness testimony began on June 23, 2020, in
20 Raleigh as scheduled. But, in order to comply best
21 with the State's protections against the spread of
22 the virus, the hearing was recessed prior to
23 receipt of evidence until July 6, 2020. Notice was
24 given at that time that the hearing would resume by

1 virtual means using the WebEx electronic format.

2 On June 29, 2020, the Commission issued
3 an order rescheduling the public hearing portion of
4 the proceedings and requiring customer notice. The
5 public hearing was rescheduled to be held today,
6 August 3, 2020, in two sessions; earlier this
7 afternoon from 1:30 to 4:30 and this evening from
8 6:30 until 10:30.

9 Subject to the presiding Commissioner's
10 discretion, each session -- each one of the
11 sessions will end at the conclusion of the last
12 witness' testimony or at or about the designated
13 time for conclusion, whichever is earlier.

14 In addition to the Company, the formal
15 legal parties participating in these proceedings
16 are the Public Staff whose intervention and
17 participation on behalf of the using and consuming
18 public is recognized pursuant to North Carolina
19 General Statute 62-15(d) and Commission Rule
20 R01-19(e), and the North Carolina Attorney
21 General's Office whose petition to intervene was
22 filed and recognized pursuant to North Carolina
23 General Statute 62-20.

24 At the request of the Company and the

1 Public Staff, the expert witness portion of the
2 hearing resumed on July 8, 2020, by WebEx rather
3 than on July 6, 2020. Evidence introduced by the
4 Company, the Public Staff, and the Attorney
5 General's Office was admitted and received into
6 evidence during the course of the expert witness
7 hearing.

8 Now, for the benefit of the public and
9 those wishing to testify before the Commission
10 tonight, I will provide a brief summary of the
11 Company's application for an increase in rates.

12 In its application as filed, the Company
13 requested an 11.2 percent increase over the total
14 revenue generated by the current rates with the
15 exception of approved tariff revisions to bulk
16 purchased water and sewer systems.

17 The application stated that the
18 requested increase was necessary primarily due to
19 increased capital investment and operating costs
20 required to comply with service and regulatory
21 obligations, increased operating expenses to
22 maintain or upgrade the existing level of service,
23 and changes in consumption which occurred during
24 the test year and continued through the application

1 filing.

2 Also in its application, Aqua sought,
3 among other things, approval of a consumption
4 adjustment mechanism and proposed a conservation
5 rate pilot program for residential customers in
6 four systems in its Aqua water rate division as
7 well as its Fairways water rate division. Aqua
8 requested to reset to zero its Commission-approved
9 water and sewer improvement surcharges until
10 approval of a subsequent semi annual water and sewer
11 improvement application as allowed by statute.

12 The Company also requested elimination
13 of certain adjustments to calculate and disallow
14 excess capacity cost in its Aqua sewer rate
15 division made in the Company's last rate case.

16 Before the expert witness hearing
17 resumed on July 8th, the Company had withdrawn its
18 request for approval of a consumption adjustment
19 mechanism. The Company and the Public Staff filed
20 a partial settlement agreement and stipulation with
21 the Commission on July 1st, resolving among them
22 all but 4 of 19 contested issues in this
23 proceeding.

24 Pursuant to the stipulation, the Company

1 agreed it would withdraw its request for authority
2 to apply a conservation normalization factor and
3 for deferral accounting treatment for capital
4 improvements placed in service between rate cases.

5 The Public Staff agreed it would not pursue an
6 excess capacity disallowance in this proceeding.
7 Rather than the requested 11.2 percent increase in
8 operating revenues, the Public Staff and the
9 Company agreed to a 5.2 percent revenue increase.

10 The stipulation is between the Public
11 Staff and the Company and is subject to the
12 approval of the Commission, and the Commission has
13 made no decision approving or disapproving the
14 stipulation.

15 Pursuant to North Carolina General
16 Statute 62-135, the Company elected to implement,
17 effective July 30, 2020, temporary rates under
18 bond. The temporary rates aligned with the
19 stipulated 5.2 percent revenue increase.

20 On July 2, 2020, the Commission issued
21 an order approving Aqua's revised customer notices
22 and accepting its financial undertaking as required
23 by law. If the temporary rates are ultimately
24 found to be excessive by the final order of the

1 Commission in this proceeding, the portion of the
2 temporary rates collected in excess of the
3 Commission-determined just and reasonable rates
4 will be refunded to customers with interest at the
5 rate of 10 percent.

6 And that brings us to this evening's
7 hearing. Pursuant to State Government Ethics Act,
8 I remind members of the Commission of our duty to
9 avoid conflicts of interest and inquire at this
10 time as to whether any Commissioner has any known
11 conflict of interest with respect to this docket.

12 (No response.)

13 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: The record
14 will reflect that no conflicts were identified.

15 I now call upon counsel for the parties
16 to make their appearances, and I will start with
17 the Company.

18 MS. SANFORD: Thank you,
19 Commissioner Brown-Bland. I'm Jo Anne Sanford with
20 Sanford Law Office representing Aqua North Carolina
21 this evening. With me are Shannon Becker, state
22 president for Aqua North Carolina, and Bob Bennink
23 of the Bennink Law Firm, also representing the
24 Company.

1 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

2 And the Public Staff?

3 MS. JOST: Good evening. My name is
4 Megan Jost. I'm an attorney with the Public Staff
5 of the Utilities Commission. Appearing with me
6 this evening are Public Staff attorneys
7 William Grantmyre and William Creech. We represent
8 the using and consuming public. Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: And the
10 Attorney General's Office?

11 (No response.)

12 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Well, we will
13 come back in just a second. I believe there has
14 been a broadband issue, and the storms in the area
15 may be impacting. Ms. Townsend, can you hear?
16 Ms. Townsend, are you back?

17 (No response.)

18 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Saw her move
19 there. If that -- we will come back to the
20 Attorney General's Office in a moment if that
21 clears up.

22 While I'm doing that, are there any
23 other matters that we need to consider before we
24 begin the public -- to hear from the customers?

1 MS. SANFORD: If I might make a brief
2 opening statement?

3 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
4 Ms. Jost, do you still wish to make some remarks?

5 MS. JOST: Yes, please.

6 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
7 Ms. Sanford, we will begin with you.

8 MS. SANFORD: Okay. Thank you very
9 much, Commissioner Brown-Bland. Thank you also
10 members of the Commission, the Public Staff, the
11 Attorney General, and the customers who are willing
12 to participate in this very, very important part of
13 this proceeding.

14 Aqua regrets not being able to be with
15 the customers and its regulators in an ordinary
16 kind of public hearing setting in which the Company
17 would have people available to meet with customers
18 to discuss their problems, and solutions, and
19 investment, and the other kinds of things that need
20 to be the subject of conversation, particularly at
21 this time. In that we are unable to do that, the
22 Company will request of all of its customers who
23 are appearing tonight permission to contact them
24 after the hearing to have those discussions with

1 them and to be of assistance as the Company can be,
2 either in explanation or in taking care of
3 something that needs to be done.

4 And finally, I wanted to say -- I know
5 the regulators among us are all clear about this,
6 but we wanted to be sure that our customers know --
7 that Aqua's customers know that the Company will be
8 filing a report after these public hearings that
9 responds to all of the issues that customers will
10 raise before the Commission. Thank you very much.

11 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
12 Thank you, Ms. Sanford.

13 Ms. Jost?

14 MS. JOST: Thank you. The Public Staff
15 would also typically have one or more attorneys on
16 site for public hearings. Unfortunately, that's
17 not possible this evening. But our Public Staff
18 engineer, Michael Franklin, with the water, sewer,
19 and telephone division, is available if customers
20 have questions about water quality. His contact
21 information is, telephone number (919) 733-5610.
22 He can also be emailed at
23 mi ke. frankl i n@psncuc. nc. gov.

24 And just briefly regarding the procedure

1 for this evening's hearing, my cocounsel,
2 Mr. Creech, will be calling the names of
3 individuals who registered for the hearing in the
4 order in which the registrations were received.
5 Once your name is called, the WebEx administrator
6 will unmute you so you are able to give your
7 statement. You will be affirmed, and then
8 Mr. Creech may have a few questions for you, as may
9 the other attorneys and the Commission. Thanks
10 very much.

11 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
12 Thank you, Ms. Jost. The -- as Ms. Jost covered
13 for you all, you may be asked questions after you
14 are -- after you give your statement, which you
15 will give subject to affirmation, and the questions
16 that are asked could come from any of the attorneys
17 and from any of the Commissioners. And the purpose
18 is to clarify for the record what it is that your
19 statement is and that you wish us to know. We may
20 have questions, or we may realize that something is
21 unclear in the record, and we just wish to clear
22 that up.

23 The testimony will be taken down
24 verbatim and will become a part of these

1 proceedings. There will be a transcript created,
2 and that is why we have our court reporter, and she
3 is -- she needs to hear. She needs to properly
4 spell your name. So if you have a name that you
5 know people have difficulty spelling, I'm sure the
6 Public Staff will ask you to spell that for us, and
7 she will get it down.

8 If you wish to follow what happens in
9 these proceedings as we go from here on out or to
10 catch up on anything that has already occurred, you
11 may visit our website at www.ncuc.net, and there
12 you find places to plug in the docket number for
13 this proceeding and you will be able to see every
14 filing that has been made, including consumer
15 statements of position and including the testimony
16 that you provide tonight.

17 Before we get started, I want to check
18 and see if Ms. Townsend is back with us.

19 MS. TOWNSEND: I believe I'm back. Can
20 you hear me?

21 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: We hear you
22 just fine. And would you go ahead and make your
23 appearance for the record, please?

24 MS. TOWNSEND: I sure will. This is

1 Teresa Townsend. I'm with the Attorney General's
2 Office, and I represent the using and consuming
3 public and also the State and its citizens.

4 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: I think we
5 got it. She was having difficulty with her
6 broadband, which is possible for all of us,
7 considering the weather, and depending on where we
8 are. And not the least of which is to say, as we
9 have gone to this more remote situation, which is
10 still somewhat experimental for the Commission, we
11 have these glitches, and we expect them, and we
12 have -- I will tout our own horn. We have been
13 dealing with them quite admirably, I do believe,
14 because they were unexpected, and we have had to
15 adjust in a short period of time.

16 So with that, I believe, Mr. Creech?

17 MR. CREECH: Yes. The first witness
18 tonight is Cindy Rosado.

19 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

20 MS. ROSADO: I'm here.

21 Whereupon,

22 CINDY ROSADO,

23 having first been duly affirmed, was examined

24 and gave her statement as follows:

1 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

2 Mr. Creech.

3 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

4 Q. Ms. Rosado, thank you so much for being on
5 the phone and good to talk with you earlier today.

6 Could you please spell your name for the
7 record?

8 A. Yes. Cindy Rosado. C-I-N-D-Y, R-O-S-A-D-O.

9 Q. And your physical address, please?

10 A. 2717 Crestridge Court. Crestridge is one
11 word. Crestridge Court, Fayetteville, North Carolina
12 28306.

13 Q. Thank you so much. And your -- what
14 statement would you care to provide this evening?

15 A. Should I start now?

16 Q. Please.

17 A. Okay. Good evening. Thank you for this
18 opportunity. I have been an Aqua customer since 2014.
19 I live in the Mariner's Pointe subdivision. Our
20 community currently has 101 homes receiving water
21 service only. I had several items I would like
22 clarification on. Additionally, I disagree with the
23 rate -- the proposed rate increase.

24 In the middle of March a notice was sent out

1 in reference to the rate increase. The notice was
2 detailed, however, was not clear when it referred to
3 other service areas not listed. Most specifically,
4 areas list -- not listed would receive a proposed
5 21.3 percent increase. My community falls into the
6 other category.

7 I did reach out to Aqua on March 18th for
8 clarification. The representative was unable to answer
9 my questions, and she told me I would be referred to a
10 supervisor who would return my call. I never received
11 a call. Subsequently, another notice was sent out in
12 July with the revised hearing date, and it contained a
13 shortened version of the rate increase. The numbers
14 from the first notice and the second notice do not
15 match. They went from proposed to temporary rates.

16 I did reach out to Aqua three additional
17 times, twice on 14 July and on 24 July, and again was
18 told they could not answer my questions and a
19 supervisor would have to call me back. On 30 July, a
20 supervisor did call me; however, my questions are still
21 unanswered. I searched the documents online and could
22 not find the updated Appendix B from the new
23 notification. The only rate increase document I could
24 find was the original file on 31 December 2019. I

1 would like to know which one is correct.

2 If there was a decision to change the
3 proposed versus temporary amount, how and when was this
4 decided, and how were the customers notified, and how
5 did the proposed versus temporary rate affect the final
6 determination and rate? How were the percentage rates
7 from the "others" category -- "other" category
8 calculated? How were the pilot communities selected,
9 and do these communities represent the total customer
10 demographic?

11 I feel it is not representative of the total
12 customer base. In my opinion, it appears high-use
13 areas will be used to supplement other areas. I do not
14 think it is fair for our community or other communities
15 to pay a higher percentage and carry a heavier
16 financial load.

17 The filings referred to a reconciliation and
18 water conservation. If the rates are for water
19 conservation, which in this case I am assuming might
20 refer to infrastructure needs, will this mean our
21 community will see improvements to our low water
22 pressure and flow rate? Additionally, If the funds
23 generated will be used for enhancement or improvement,
24 will the customers paying a higher rate see those

1 improvements in their community, or will the funds be
2 reallocated to other service areas? Is this pilot
3 program under water conservation, because
4 infrastructure needs to be addressed, and if so, does
5 not the recent rate increase of 3.57 percent WSIC,
6 water system improvement charge, not take these
7 infrastructure issues into account? Every year with
8 the W-218, Sub 363, Aqua can increase the WSIC on
9 1 January and 1 July.

10 Lastly, half of our community would have the
11 opportunity to tie into the Fayetteville Public Works, as
12 part of the Big Rockfish Outfall Project has been
13 delayed until next spring because of the current
14 situation. How will this affect our neighborhood and
15 the rates when completed? End of my statement.

16 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

17 Mr. Creech.

18 Q. Ms. Rosado, thank you so much for your
19 comments and statement. I did want to touch base on no
20 less than a couple of the comments you made. Among
21 them, you mentioned low water pressure and flow. Could
22 you please elaborate on that?

23 A. Yes. We do have a pump station within our
24 community. We are located by a lake called Lake

1 Upchurch, which currently does not have any water in
2 it. When we first moved into our community in 2014, we
3 noticed that there was low water pressure. We are at
4 the top of our hill. And Aqua has been out to our home
5 several times within that first year that we moved in
6 and did -- you know, they hook something up to your
7 spigot and they do like a water pressure test. And the
8 gentleman that came up said it was within reasonable
9 range and that the pump house is -- the way the pump
10 house is, it's -- you know, we're at the top of the
11 hill, so we would get a low flow rate in general, and
12 in the summer months the flow rate is a lot less in the
13 morning. Now not so much with the COVID-19, but when
14 people were going to work and they were turning on
15 their water sprinklers at the same time, the water
16 pressure was very decreased, so you either had to wake
17 up very early in the morning to take your shower or
18 cross your fingers if you woke up late to get ready in
19 time for work.

20 Q. Ms. Rosado, you are in Mariner's Pointe, is
21 that correct, subdivision?

22 A. Yes, that's correct.

23 Q. And are you in the top of that community?
24 You said you are at the top of the hill?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Can you describe that a moment for us, if you
3 don't mind?

4 A. I'm sorry, I didn't hear you.

5 Q. Could you describe that just a moment more,
6 if you would, your location?

7 A. Yes. The pump house is on Mariner's Landing
8 Drive, maybe -- maybe 800 -- 1,500 feet from the road
9 where it goes down -- it's like down on an incline. So
10 the pump house is at the base of the hill, and we're at
11 the top of the hill. So there are homes that are
12 lakeside, that are more of an incline that are right on
13 the water's edge, and then the other half of the
14 community, depending which way you go, is a steep
15 incline to the top.

16 Q. Are there other residences where your home is
17 located there on the top of the hill?

18 A. Oh, yes, many. Probably at least 40.

19 Q. And, to your knowledge, are other people
20 experiencing the same problem you are?

21 A. Yes, they are.

22 Q. And how long has that been going on?

23 A. The community was built, I believe, in 20 --
24 2007. So I think it was -- back then, that was phase

1 1, which really wasn't on any type of -- they were on
2 the other side of the subdivision. So I would say
3 starting probably around 2012 when this side of the
4 community was built.

5 Q. And you reported that to the Company; is that
6 correct?

7 A. Yes, correct. They were out here a couple of
8 times in the beginning, and we were told that's just
9 the way it is. I know, as homeowners come and go, they
10 all seem to complain about the same thing, and
11 everybody pretty much resigns themselves to the fact
12 that's an issue. That's why some neighbors are very
13 excited about Public Works coming in, because they
14 would change some of the dynamics of how they receive
15 their water and some aspects, you know they want to tie
16 into the sewer -- to the septic as well.

17 Q. And finally, when was the last time someone
18 from the Company was out to your home?

19 A. In my home, I would say 2016. We are
20 military, so we lived in our home for two years. We
21 rented it out, and then we just recently returned
22 within the last few years.

23 Q. Those were my main questions based upon what
24 you had to say, Ms. Rosado.

1 A. Okay.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

3 Are there further questions from the Company?

4 MS. SANFORD: Just a couple, please.

5 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MS. SANFORD:

6 Q. Ms. Rosado, thank you for appearing tonight.
7 And I have taken down your questions, but you have
8 many, and they are good questions, so, with your
9 permission, we would like for someone -- or perhaps
10 more than one person -- from Aqua to call you and to
11 explain the answers to those questions and just to have
12 a thorough conversation with you. Would that be okay?

13 A. I'd say yes, but Aqua does not have a good
14 track record of getting back to me, and I did speak to
15 a supervisor, and -- you know, I went online and looked
16 at all the filings. There are a lot of documents on
17 there and referred to lot of different things online,
18 but I could not find the documents that I was -- and I
19 did take great time looking for them. And I appreciate
20 if someone would reach back out to me, but I don't
21 think my questions are going to be answered, because I
22 just want specifics, and I don't think anybody is able
23 to give me those specifics.

24 Q. Well, if you will give us another shot at it,

1 somebody -- as I say, more than one person from the
2 Company, perhaps -- will get back with you, and there
3 are a number of the questions you have that can be
4 answered.

5 I did have a question, as we try to prepare,
6 you were talking about heavier usage in other
7 subdivisions at one point there. Do you know what your
8 average usage is?

9 A. For my house, in general?

10 Q. Yes.

11 A. So now that we are empty nesters, it's gone
12 down quite a bit, so I would say we are about -- some
13 months, with water usage, you know, when we are
14 watering, it might go up to 30,000, but like, in
15 general, about 4,400, 4,500. Like the most recent bill
16 is 30. I am looking at it right now. Even with
17 watering the grass, you know, we're at -- the last --
18 we're at 1,200 -- 12,300. We do have irrigation in our
19 yard, so we do use the water sprinklers.

20 Q. Did you say 12,300 gallons?

21 A. Yes, that's correct.

22 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you. That is all I
23 have for this evening, Ms. Rosado, and we will get in
24 touch with you. Thank you very much.

1 A. Okay. Appreciate that. Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Are there
3 questions from the Commissioners? Any questions?

4 (No response.)

5 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

6 Ms. Rosado, we appreciate you coming and sharing
7 your experiences and providing your testimony.

8 Also, the questions you asked, and I'm sure, as the
9 proceeding resolves, these questions will be
10 answered for you.

11 MR. CREECH: Madame Chair, could I have
12 one more comment, if I may, just to provide
13 Mike Franklin's information?

14 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Yes, please
15 do.

16 MR. CREECH: Ms. Rosado, in addition to
17 the Company, we do have one of the Public Staff's
18 engineers online tonight and -- hearing your
19 comments, and I wanted to make sure you had
20 received his information, and we could follow up
21 offline as well, but again that's
22 mike.franklin@psncuc.nc.gov. That's the email
23 address. And the telephone is (919) 733-5610. But
24 again, we can touch base after this, but I did want

1 you to know that the Public Staff is available to
2 you as well.

3 MS. ROSADO: Okay. Appreciate that.
4 Thank you, everybody. I watched you guys earlier.
5 I know you guys have a long day. And thank
6 everybody for participating. It helps the
7 customers.

8 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: And thank
9 you, and you are excused.

10 Mr. Creech.

11 MR. CREECH: Our next witness is
12 Joshua Cotto. I believe we spoke with him earlier,
13 and he may not be able to be on the call, but he
14 may be on. I don't know.

15 Dan, is he on?

16 THE HOST: No, sir, he is not.

17 MR. CREECH: Okay. And I think we are
18 going to go next to Virginia Zmijewski. If
19 Virginia's on the line? Jinny?

20 THE HOST: She's not on the line either.

21 MR. CREECH: Okay. I believe she was on
22 earlier. Let's see here.

23 THE HOST: Your next witness,
24 Mr. Thornton, is on the line.

1 MR. CREECH: Right. Eric Thornton, are
2 you on?

3 THE HOST: I just unmuted.

4 MR. THORNTON: Yes, I am. Can you hear
5 me?

6 MR. CREECH: Yes, sir.

7 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Yes, we hear
8 you.

9 Whereupon,

10 ERIC THORNTON,
11 having first been duly affirmed, was examined
12 and gave his statement as follows:

13 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
14 Mr. Creech.

15 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

16 Q. Mr. Thornton, can you please spell your name
17 for the record, as well as provide your address,
18 please?

19 A. Sure. It's Eric, E-R-I-C, Thornton,
20 T-H-O-R-N-T-O-N. Address is 8923 Sedgley Drive,
21 S-E-D-G-L-E-Y, in Wilmington, North Carolina 28412.

22 Q. All right. Thank you, Mr. Thornton. Do you
23 have a statement to provide this evening?

24 A. I do.

1 Q. Proceed.

2 A. My statement is, so I currently reside on
3 Sedgley Drive, which uses Cape water system PWS ID
4 NC0465199. We currently use our utility water for home
5 drinking and lawn irrigation. The proposed Aqua rates
6 will save me about \$4 a month in the winter but will
7 result in a \$25 per month increase in the summer. I
8 expect my annual water costs to increase by about \$125.

9 I'd also like to note that 10 of the last
10 13 quarters, for the information I could find online,
11 our water has failed EPA standards for chlorination
12 byproducts, specifically trihalomethanes. Each time
13 this occurs, we get a notice that states, and I quote,
14 "Aqua is currently adding new water sources and
15 exploring additional treatment options to improve water
16 quality," end quote. However, I have yet to be
17 formally notified of any improvement plans and can find
18 none publically available on the NCDEQ website.

19 In order to protect my family from excess
20 levels of trihalomethanes, I have installed several
21 activated carbon filters which cost me approximately
22 \$460 per year to maintain. I request that the
23 Commission take this excessive customer-borne cost and
24 lack of action in response to multiple violations by

1 Aqua NC into consideration when approving rates. Thank
2 you.

3 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Creech,
4 do you have questions?

5 MR. CREECH: I do.

6 Q. Mr. Thornton, thank you so much for that. A
7 couple of questions.

8 Again, you use the water for drinking; is
9 that correct?

10 A. That is correct.

11 Q. And what do you do when you receive
12 notifications related to these EPA standards?

13 A. Well, I have currently -- like I said, I've
14 currently installed activated carbon filtration, which,
15 per the manufacturer, and -- gosh, the standardized
16 testing processes should remove it from our drinking
17 water. But, as I mentioned, those filters have to be
18 changed about twice a year, and they cost about \$50 per
19 set of filters. And that's just for drinking water. I
20 have an additional whole-house carbon filter to take
21 care of water for bathing and cooking.

22 Q. And how many folks are in your household?

23 A. There are three of us.

24 Q. Okay. And, Mr. Townsend, what would -- what

1 is your -- Mr. Thornton, excuse me, your annual -- what
2 do you pay annually to Aqua right now?

3 A. I was looking for my last bill, and I could
4 not find it, but I believe I have my calculated
5 increase per winter and summer, because I don't -- I'm
6 sorry, I just the don't have my bill --

7 Q. Just ballpark.

8 A. -- right now.

9 Q. Ballpark.

10 A. Um.

11 Q. I guess my point is, I was trying to compare
12 that to what you are spending privately to, you know,
13 enhance the quality of your water, and you indicated
14 that it was \$460 a year; is that correct?

15 A. Correct. And I currently use -- I currently
16 use approximately 210,000 gallons annually, and I
17 believe our current rate is about \$1.50-something, so
18 that's about \$300 a year. So I'm spending a little bit
19 more than my water bill currently every year to keep it
20 per EPA standards.

21 Q. Those are the main questions that I had.
22 Thank you, Mr. Thornton.

23 A. Sure.

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Okay.

1 Questions from the Company?

2 MS. SANFORD: Just a couple. Thank you
3 very much.

4 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MS. SANFORD:

5 Q. Good evening, Mr. Thornton. I'm
6 Jo Anne Sanford and -- representing Aqua this evening.
7 Had a couple of questions.

8 You're at the Cape, right?

9 A. Yes, ma'am, that's correct.

10 Q. You're served by the Cape. I was interested
11 in your usage. And you should certainly check me on
12 this math, but I think you said you used about
13 210,000 gallons annually last year; is that close?

14 A. I think that was -- yes. Just looking at my
15 notes that I calculated in preparation for this
16 meeting, I think that was approximately correct. And I
17 have down I use about 30,000 gallons a month in the
18 summer but only about 5,000 gallons a month in the
19 winter.

20 Q. Okay. That helps me a lot. I came up with
21 an average of something over 17,000 gallons a month,
22 but I don't have a calculator, so I'm not sure I trust
23 my numbers. I'll go with your 30,000 in the summer.

24 You say you do have an irrigation system?

1 A. Yes, that's correct.

2 Q. Do you -- could you tell us what you paid --
3 or did you tell us what you paid annually for water in
4 any representative year?

5 A. Prior to this increase or --

6 Q. Well, yes, prior to the increase. I'm sorry.
7 At current rates, just what -- can you give us an
8 annual -- an annual amount that you have paid for water
9 picking any 12-month period recently that you want to,
10 but at current rates, not the requested rates?

11 A. Yes. I just told, I think it was Mr. Creech,
12 I think it was about \$300 a year, based on my quick
13 math.

14 Q. Okay. Thank you. I have no more questions.

15 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

16 Are there questions from any of the Commissioners?

17 (No response.)

18 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Not seeing
19 any. All right. Mr. Thornton, thank you for
20 testifying tonight, and we ask that you take care
21 to be safe, and you are excused.

22 MR. THORNTON: Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Creech?

24 MR. CREECH: Our next witness is

1 Kirsten Pavlich. Kirsten, are you on the line?

2 (No response.)

3 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Call her name
4 again, please.

5 MS. PAVLICH: I'm here. Can you hear
6 me?

7 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Yes, we hear
8 you.

9 Whereupon,

10 KIRSTEN PAVLICH,
11 having first been duly affirmed, was examined
12 and gave her statement as follows:

13 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
14 Mr. Creech has some questions for you.

15 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

16 Q. Ms. Pavlich, if you will please spell your
17 name for the record as well as provide your address,
18 please.

19 A. Sure. My first name is Kirsten,
20 K-I-R-S-T-E-N, like Nancy. My last name is Pavlich, P
21 like Paul, A like apple, V like Victor, L-I-C-H. My
22 address is 639 Colonial Ridge Drive, and that's in
23 Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312.

24 Q. Thank you, Ms. Pavlich. Do you have a

1 statement to provide this evening, please?

2 A. I don't have an official written-down
3 statement, as much as I do just want to -- as much as I
4 just wanted to be here to support my neighborhood. We
5 have only been in this house for about three months,
6 and from immediately when we told our friends we were
7 moving to Pittsboro, everyone was saying, "The water
8 quality is horrible. Get a reverse osmosis system."

9 We have three small children, and after
10 having someone come in and analyze the quality of our
11 water, we realized how horrible it was and that even
12 just using the filtration from our refrigerator was
13 doing its job by knocking down the parts per million of
14 the bad stuff that's in our water, but it was not doing
15 anything nearly what it should be doing.

16 For the -- I don't agree that Aqua should be
17 able to have a rate increase if their quality of water
18 is pitiful to begin with. For people -- for people to
19 spend \$1,500 to put a reverse osmosis system in their
20 home just to have drinking water is absurd, just so
21 that it's safe enough for your children to drink
22 without there being any contaminants in it, and you're
23 hoping -- well, the reverse osmosis is doing its job
24 and our kids have clean water now, but we shouldn't

1 have to pay extra money when you are already paying an
2 exorbitant amount of money for water to begin with.
3 You shouldn't have to pay more to have a company come
4 in to clean your water for you because the company that
5 you are already paying for the water isn't doing their
6 job. That's pretty much all I have to say.

7 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Creech?

8 Q. Ms. Pavlich, thank you so much for your
9 statement. So I believe I heard you indicate that you
10 have a water filter system as part of your
11 refrigerator. I suppose you are talking about where
12 you just go in with a glass, and you -- and your water
13 comes out.

14 So there is a filtrated system there to begin
15 with; is that correct?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. And you had that -- you had that water
18 tested, and that still wasn't clean enough for you and
19 your three children; is that correct?

20 A. Yes. I have an eight-year-old, a
21 six-year-old, and a five-year-old.

22 Q. And have you reached out to the Company
23 during this period of time, or had any other
24 conversations with the folks on how to best respond to

1 this, separate and apart from the Company, to get you
2 to the conclusion to buy the reverse osmosis?

3 A. Well, having someone come in and test the
4 water and realizing it was bad after hearing from our
5 neighbor, I believe who also sits on the board
6 within -- I don't know if it's within the city or the
7 county -- as far as the water quality here, you know,
8 multiple people within our community reached out to us
9 and said, "Hey, you need to get reverse osmosis." Not
10 only -- they also mentioned our cell phone service is
11 pitiful, but to get -- that we are going to need clean
12 water, especially with the young children. If it was
13 just my husband and I, like, he's spent 25 years in the
14 military. Who knows what he's ingested. But with my
15 kids, it's a totally different story.

16 So again, it's just -- you are talking about
17 a rate increase of 10 percent when our bill last -- the
18 last two months our bill has been upwards of \$400. I
19 have never paid so much money for water in my life.
20 For it to go up 10 percent, like, that's more than a
21 car payment.

22 Q. So your bill right now is \$400 a month; is
23 that correct?

24 A. Our bill -- our first bill was about \$80. It

1 was for 10 days. Our second bill, which was on -- due
2 July -- I'm sorry, which was for the first full month
3 we lived in the house, was -- we used exactly 25,100
4 gallons, and the bill was \$408.86. The next month, for
5 the same billing period of 30 days exactly, the
6 exact -- it says my usage was, again, 25,100 gallons.
7 My bill was the exact same amount of money to the
8 penny. Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever
9 used the same exact amount of water to the gallon? I
10 honestly thought I got the same bill again. I was
11 like, what is this? I paid this. And no, it's a
12 completely different billing period, but yet it's
13 telling me I used the exact same number of gallons of
14 water from one month to the next month, which I thought
15 was totally crazy because, who does that?

16 Q. Did you reach out to the Company on that?

17 A. I had not, because I just -- I mean, now I go
18 check my meter every day when I get home from work, and
19 we cut down what we are using water on as far as our
20 sprinkler. We turned our sprinklers off. And yes,
21 maybe we have a leak in our sprinkler system someplace
22 and that's making the usage so high. However, I check
23 my meter every day now, because I'm not going to reach
24 out to the Company and find out that, "Oh, yeah, that's

1 what the meter says. We do our little electronic
2 reading from the curb." I just think it's really
3 random that a water meter reading two months in a row I
4 used the exact same number of gallons. That's just
5 super awkward. I mean, what if I flushed the toilet
6 one more time or one less time? There is no way I used
7 the exact same amount of water to the exact gallon two
8 months in a row. We're not that regimented in our
9 house.

10 Q. And just to confirm, you indicated that the
11 system that you put in there, that was 1,500 additional
12 dollars; is that correct?

13 A. Yes. Through Purlogix, it was \$1,500 -- it
14 was \$1,500 -- like \$1,572 is what I believe the total
15 was.

16 Q. Thank you so much.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

19 Are there questions from the Company?

20 MS. SANFORD: Yes,
21 Commissioner Brown-Bland, just a few.

22 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MS. SANFORD:

23 Q. Good evening, Ms. Pavlich, and thank you for
24 coming out. Jo Anne Sanford --

1 A. You're welcome.

2 Q. Jo Anne Sanford representing Aqua. And
3 before I ask these few questions, I wanted to be sure
4 that you knew that there are Aqua people who would like
5 to call you after this hearing tonight and discuss some
6 of your questions and concerns. Would that be okay?

7 A. That would be wonderful. Thank you.

8 Q. Okay. Thank you. Just a couple of questions
9 to let us focus more on your concerns here.

10 Number one, are you aware that, to serve you
11 and your neighbors, Aqua purchases water from the Town
12 of Pittsboro?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And is that pretty widely known in your area?
15 You think that's understood?

16 A. I believe that people know it because it has
17 been mentioned on community threads that we do buy our
18 water from the Town of Pittsboro.

19 Q. Okay. Okay. And do you -- have you been
20 involved in any conversations in which it's discussed
21 that Aqua pays Pittsboro for the water and then just
22 passes that cost on to you?

23 A. No. I was not aware of that.

24 Q. Okay. That would be a thing that the Aqua

1 people would look forward to explaining to you. It
2 won't satisfy your concerns about the level of your
3 bill, but it will explain something about the cost
4 structure there, so they would be pleased to talk to
5 you about that.

6 You said -- you irrigate, right?

7 A. As of -- I told my husband he's not allowed
8 to anymore, but yes, we have an irrigation system.

9 Q. You formerly irrigate?

10 A. Yes. The house was new construction. We
11 purchased it. It already had an irrigation system put
12 in it. So yes. And we do have the rain-delay option
13 where, if the little thing fills up with water it won't
14 irrigate. So we do our part to conserve the water.

15 Q. Okay. Okay. And so you had two bills that
16 were -- that indicated your usage was over
17 25,000 gallons, correct?

18 A. Yes, yes. 25,100 gallons each bill. Two
19 separate bills, the exact same amount.

20 Q. Same amount, okay. All right. Thank you,
21 Mr. Pavlich, we will have somebody get in touch with
22 you.

23 A. Okay. I do want to say -- can I say one
24 other thing?

1 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Go ahead,
2 Ms. Pavlich.

3 MS. PAVLICH: I do have to give credit
4 to Aqua. We had an issue with our grinder pump on
5 a Sunday afternoon, and they were out here within
6 an hour. So I do appreciate the Company and their
7 quick response to take care of our grinder pump
8 situation. So it's not all bad. They are not all
9 bad people or anything like that. I think people
10 are just getting upset with rate increases. That's
11 all.

12 MS. SANFORD: Thank you very much.

13 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
14 Are there questions from the Commissioners for
15 Ms. Pavlich?

16 (No response.)

17 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: I'm not
18 seeing any.

19 Ms. Pavlich, we do thank you for coming
20 out -- well, you don't have to come out. I get so
21 used to saying that. It's a remote situation, and
22 it's difficult because we are in the midst of
23 storms bearing down on us. I do see a hand coming
24 up, and you have a question from

1 Commi ssi oner Duffl ey.

2 MS. PAVLICH: Okay. Thank you.

3 EXAMI NATION BY COMMI SSIONER DUFFLEY:

4 Q. Good eveni ng. Thank you for comi ng out
5 tonight.

6 My questi on i s, you sai d you had your water
7 tested that came out of your fridge; what company di d
8 you use?

9 A. They actual ly tested our sink water as well ,
10 and we used the company Purlogix out of Apex, I
11 bel i eve.

12 Q. Okay. And that's who you bought your reverse
13 osmosi s system from?

14 A. Yes. And we're famili ar -- we, again, are
15 milit ary. I know somebody else menti oned they are
16 milit ary. We've l ived a few di fferent places. We are
17 famili ar with how reverse osmosi s systems work, because
18 we had horri ble water l iving in Arizona. So thi s i s
19 nothi ng new to us. We di dn't expect i t -- because we
20 only came from Harnett County. The water in Harnett
21 County was fi ne. We never had an i ssue with i t. And
22 then now comi ng from the Haw River, i t's not so great,
23 so.

24 Q. Okay. Thank you very much.

1 A. You're welcome.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Is there any
3 follow-up question on the Commissioner's question?
4 Commissioner Hughes.

5 EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER HUGHES:

6 Q. Yeah. I just had a quick question about the
7 irrigation, and does your -- does your subdivision have
8 any requirements -- I know some of the subdivisions on
9 out that way have certain covenants about requiring
10 irrigation, and I just wanted to know if that was
11 something that was required?

12 A. Not that I'm aware of. Not that it's been
13 written in the restricted covenants. I mean, I think,
14 because it's a newer subdivision, I would say almost
15 everybody has irrigation. Whether or not they choose
16 to use it is obviously up to them. You don't have --
17 you can only landscape your yard certain ways, but you
18 don't have to water it, I guess, if you don't want to.

19 Q. Thank you.

20 A. Uh-huh.

21 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
22 Thank you, Ms. Pavlich.

23 MS. PAVLICH: You're welcome. Thank
24 you.

1 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: You are
2 excused.

3 Mr. Creech?

4 MS. PAVLI CH: Thank you.

5 MR. CREECH: Next is Alison Squires.

6 MS. SQUIRES: I'm here. I'm here.

7 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right,
8 Ms. Squires.

9 Whereupon,

10 ALISON SQUIRES,
11 having first been duly affirmed, was examined
12 and gave her statement as follows:

13 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
14 Mr. Creech.

15 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

16 Q. Yes. Ms. Squires, if you will please spell
17 your name and provide your address for the record,
18 please.

19 A. Alison Squires. A-L-I-S-O-N, S-Q-U-I-R-E-S.
20 108 Samantha Drive in Garner, North Carolina.

21 Q. And your statement, please.

22 A. Okay. I bought the house I live in now in
23 March of 2019, and when I found out Aqua was the water
24 Company, I had a pause when I was trying to decide

1 whether to buy the house or not, because I have had
2 Aqua on a prior house in South Raleigh for 12 years and
3 it was awful. More with the rate hikes every six
4 months. I honestly can't say that I have any issues
5 with Aqua with their water, itself, but it's the rate
6 hikes every six months like clockwork. It's
7 ridiculous.

8 I did testify on a prior case at my prior
9 house, but getting back into it, ended up, long story
10 short, I bought the house. And then, in August 2019,
11 just a couple of months after I bought the house, here
12 comes the WSIC and SSIC rate hikes, so we have been
13 paying those. And then they increased again in
14 January 2020. And, basically, I really try to look at
15 all these issues objectively.

16 There are two main reasons why I oppose this
17 rate hike. The first one is you really have to look at
18 apples to apples to -- this is a monopoly. There is a
19 utility. There is only one provider. We understand
20 that. But we don't have the free market of capitalism
21 to keep the prices low. So that's your guys' job to
22 protect the public and keep these prices fair.

23 But the only, I guess, competitor in our area
24 is -- in our area is Johnston County Department of

1 Public Utilities. Well, I owned a house across the
2 street. I kept it as a rental before I bought this
3 house, so I know what the rates are over there. And
4 that is all Johnston County Public Utilities, and my
5 house is Aqua. So I took the bills from both houses,
6 and basically, with Aqua, with the rates as they are
7 before Aqua increases them, I paid \$36 more per year
8 for the same exact water, the same exact service that I
9 got in my old house, but now with the new rate hike it
10 will be \$81 a year more. And I'm a very low-usage,
11 apparently. I only use, like, 1,300 gallons a month.
12 So that's a significant rate hike.

13 And the other main issue that I have had is
14 that Aqua's payout rate is 84 percent. So you have to
15 understand, this money that we are paying is going to
16 the shareholders. There's -- it's not going for the
17 infrastructure like it needs to. It's going to the
18 shareholders, and that is not a way -- that is not fair
19 to the customers, and we need to look at putting that
20 money back into paying for what it's supposed to pay
21 for, for a rainy day, no pun intended, instead of just
22 treating their customers like an ATM for free money
23 every six months.

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

1 Mr. Creech.

2 MS. SQUIRES: That's my statement.

3 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Thank you.

4 Mr. Creech, do you have questions?

5 Q. Ms. Squires, thank you so much. Can you
6 elaborate on any service-related issues that you may
7 have with the Company? I know you talked extensively,
8 and you indicated that maybe, not so much on the
9 service area, but are there any service or quality --
10 water quality issues that you are having?

11 A. No. I have not had any issues with them with
12 quality. Like I said, it's the exact same water I had
13 across the street. I'm just paying almost twice as
14 much.

15 Q. I really do appreciate your comments,
16 Ms. Squires, and I don't know that I have any other
17 questions at this time.

18 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Questions
19 from the Company?

20 MS. SANFORD: We have no questions.

21 Thank you, Ms. Squires.

22 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Do any of the
23 Commissioners have questions for Ms. Squires?

24 (No response.)

1 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right,
2 Ms. Squires. We thank you for sharing your
3 opinions and your thoughts about the Company with
4 us, and we will, as with everyone, take these into
5 account. And do be aware that the Company and the
6 Public Staff will be filing some comments later in
7 response to what they hear from the witnesses at
8 these public hearings, so you can follow those on
9 our websites. With that, you are excused.

10 MS. SQUIRES: All right. Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: You're
12 welcome. You are excused.

13 Mr. Creech?

14 MR. CREECH: Next is James McReynolds.
15 (Background noise on one of the lines.)

16 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND:
17 Mr. McReynolds? Is it McReynolds, Mr. Creech?

18 MR. CREECH: Correct.

19 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND:
20 Mr. McReynolds, do you hear us?

21 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, ma'am, I do.

22 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

23 Whereupon,

24 JAMES MCREYNOLDS,

1 having first been duly affirmed, was examined

2 and gave his statement as follows:

3 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Creech,
4 your witness.

5 MR. CREECH: Thank you.

6 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

7 Q. Mr. McReynolds, will you please spell your
8 name and provide your address for the record, please?

9 A. Sure. James, J-A-M-E-S, M for Michael,
10 M-I-C-H-A-E-L, McReynolds, M-C-R-E-Y-N-O-L-D-S, and the
11 address is 1816 West Cotton Gin Drive, Clayton,
12 North Carolina 27527.

13 Q. Thank you, Mr. McReynolds, and do you have a
14 statement this evening, please?

15 A. I do.

16 Q. Go ahead. Thank you.

17 A. Okay. My experiences -- and where I live is
18 part of Percy Flowers in Clayton and off of 42 Highway,
19 and I found out sometime ago -- this is quite a while
20 after I bought the place -- that all of our water and
21 sewage is all -- it doesn't matter what size family you
22 have or your consumption, we all get the same bill. A
23 minimum of, like, \$80-some-odd. It's just me in the
24 home, and it's a townhouse. It's just me. I wash a

1 load -- wash a load maybe once a week, and so -- and
2 since I have been there, really the quality of the
3 water, as far as taste, is probably the worst I have
4 ever had in my life. And I've lived around the area
5 there quite a while, and the -- never had any kind of
6 water or sewage bill anything like this, but I'm
7 thinking probably that Aqua North Carolina probably
8 purchases the water or somehow through Clayton, the
9 Town of Clayton, but I'm not sure. But the price is
10 very high, and the quality, as far as taste, is really,
11 really poor.

12 So if anything, I think possibly that we
13 should get a -- especially the area we live in, we
14 should get a decrease and not have to pay more, because
15 the quality is not there and it's already very high, as
16 far as the cost. So that's pretty much my statement.

17 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

18 Mr. Creech.

19 Q. Mr. McReynolds, can you please -- thank you
20 for your statement.

21 Can you please elaborate on your comment
22 relating to the taste in the water, please?

23 A. Yeah. I had a -- for a very short time I had
24 a roommate, and he was buying water, because it's just

1 a very chemical -tasting water. It's very bad. And
2 it's just the poorest I have ever had. I mean,
3 there's -- I have family members that have well water.
4 I have family -- my daughter actually where I am right
5 now in Garner, North Carolina, their water tastes
6 great, and their price is really, really way less than
7 I am, and there is like five people living in the
8 residence. And -- but just -- it's just the taste is
9 very chemically and very unpleasant. So that's what
10 I'm referring to there.

11 Q. All right. And when you say chemical taste,
12 can you -- I don't know how to -- anything else you
13 could equate that to?

14 A. Sure. It's just not a natural flavor. It
15 just tastes -- I don't know. It just -- I don't know
16 how to say it. I have had water -- I mean, I drink
17 water at work, and it's not that bad there, and it's
18 just -- it's just very -- if you are a person that
19 really likes good coffee, you have to, you know,
20 purchase distilled water or something, because it's
21 just pretty bad tasting. So that's -- if you compare
22 it, like where I am this evening at my daughter's, it
23 tastes 100 percent better, and that's actually in
24 Garner.

1 Q. Right. Thank you for that. I did want to
2 follow up on your prior comment.

3 You say you're the only individual in your
4 home; is that correct?

5 A. Yes, I am.

6 Q. And you indicated that, with respect to your
7 bill, I guess water and sewer, that it's kind of a
8 one-size-fits-all approach; is that --

9 A. Yes, sir. That's what I understand with all
10 my neighbors, and then any -- is that there is some
11 kind of agreement, I was told, from Ms. Flowers that
12 everybody in the area, they would be locked into a
13 minimum regardless of how your -- what your usage was
14 or whatever, that you're going to be charged a minimum.
15 I think it comes out to about \$80 a month. Whether you
16 probably run water or not, you are still charged that.

17 Q. But if you had your choice, would you rather
18 have a metered service where you were charged on usage
19 as opposed to a flat -- a flat fee?

20 A. That would be much more fair.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yes, it would.

23 Q. All right. Thank you, Mr. McReynolds.

24 MR. CREECH: No more questions.

1 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, sir.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Are there
3 questions from the Company?

4 MS. SANFORD: Just a couple.

5 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MS. SANFORD:

6 Q. Mr. McReynolds, I'm Jo Anne Sanford, and I
7 thank you for being here tonight. Aqua appreciates
8 your participation in this. You were talking about the
9 quality, the taste of the water, and you found it
10 objectionable.

11 Have you talked to Aqua about that?

12 A. No, I have not.

13 Q. Okay. Would it be okay if we -- someone from
14 Aqua called you to discuss that with you and see if at
15 least we could better understand it if not do something
16 about it?

17 A. Yes, ma'am, that would be fine, of course.

18 Q. Okay. Great.

19 A. Thanks.

20 Q. Certainly. I have no other questions. Thank
21 you.

22 A. You're welcome. Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Are there
24 questions from the Commissioners?

1 MR. MCREYNOLDS: For myself, I would
2 just -- I think the price is very high. So I think
3 it's inappropriate that they are asking for a rate
4 increase, but I mean, that's pretty much what I
5 have. I'd rather pay, you know, per usage and more
6 fair, but, I mean, anyway, that's pretty much what
7 I had to say.

8 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND:
9 Commissioner Hughes has a question for you,
10 Mr. McReynolds.

11 Commissioner Hughes.

12 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, sir.

13 EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER HUGHES:

14 Q. Yes. You referred a couple of times to
15 living in Clayton.

16 Do you know, is that a post office box, or do
17 you happen to know if you are in the city town limits
18 of Clayton or whether you might be just outside on the
19 border?

20 A. It's -- it's down and it's considered part of
21 Percy Flowers Plantation, and it's off of Neuse River
22 Parkway, and my area code is 27527, but I think it's
23 considered Clayton, but I'm not really sure. It's kind
24 of hard to tell where they zone things.

1 Q. Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND:

3 Commissioner Duffley?

4 EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY:

5 Q. I just wanted to confirm, is your bill for
6 water and wastewater or just water?

7 A. It's all combined, and it comes out to -- my
8 recent ones have been right at \$90 a month just for me.

9 Q. Okay. Thank you.

10 A. Thank you.

11 EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND:

12 Q. Mr. McReynolds, you may have stated and I may
13 have missed it, but how long have you been an Aqua
14 customer?

15 A. It's been probably, let's see, about a year.
16 About -- let's see, about maybe 16 months.

17 Q. All right. So relatively -- okay.

18 A. Yes, ma'am.

19 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

20 Are there any questions on Commissioners'
21 questions?

22 MS. SANFORD: None from here.

23 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

24 Thank you, Mr. McReynolds. We appreciate your

1 having first been duly affirmed, was examined

2 and gave his statement as follows:

3 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

4 Mr. Creech has a few questions for you before you
5 get started.

6 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

7 Q. Mr. Avery, this is William Creech, an
8 attorney with the Public Staff. I appreciate you being
9 on the call tonight.

10 Can you please spell your name and then state
11 your address for the record, please?

12 A. Okay. My name is Charles Avery,
13 C-H-A-R-L-E-S, A-V-E-R-Y, Avery. My address is 102
14 Randolph Street, R-A-N-D-O-L-P-H, Street, in Yorktown,
15 Virginia. Y-O-R-K-T-O-W-N, VA, Virginia 23692.

16 Q. Mr. Avery, we also had an address for you in
17 Fayetteville, North Carolina; is that correct?

18 A. That's right. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. That --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. Go ahead.

23 Q. What is that address, Mr. Avery?

24 A. 240 Wrightsboro Road.

1 Q. In what town, please?

2 A. It's in Fayetteville, but the house is in
3 Hoke County. The mailing address is Fayetteville.

4 Q. Very good. All right. And, Mr. Avery, do
5 have you a statement for the record this evening,
6 please?

7 A. Do I have what?

8 Q. Do you have -- what would you like to share
9 with the Commission this evening?

10 A. I just --

11 Q. Go ahead.

12 A. No. I just go back and forth and everything,
13 like then, and I use the water occasionally. But I
14 haven't been there in about two years and everything,
15 but the water bill is not that much, but I just only
16 have water. You are talking about going up on the
17 water, and I don't even have sewer and everything and
18 everything.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So I -- I just worried about the price going
21 up. Why would the price be going up? I haven't used
22 the water in no way, so.

23 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Avery,
24 aside from questioning why the increase may be

1 happening, or how much the increase may be, or how
2 much it may affect you, did you have any --
3 anything that you wanted to tell us about the
4 increase, whether the Company -- what you know
5 about why the Company is seeking the increase, or
6 did you have any service issues? Anything that you
7 wanted to share with this Commission as we consider
8 the application made by the Company?

9 MR. AVERY: Well, I guess why they be
10 wanting to increase because like they just put new
11 meters on I guess about three -- two or three years
12 ago, I guess. I think it was that time like that.
13 So they could test the meter from the road. They
14 don't have to come and read the meter. I could
15 understand that could be a price -- reason for
16 going up on the price and everything.

17 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
18 So that concludes your statement? You don't have
19 anything else you wish to tell us?

20 MR. AVERY: No, no. Not that much. I
21 just received the letter. I just wanted, you know,
22 to listen in on it and see what was really going on
23 and everything, you know.

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

1 We appreciate your participation.

2 Are there any questions for this
3 witness?

4 MR. AVERY: No, no, no questions.

5 MS. SANFORD: And we don't have any
6 questions. Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

8 MR. AVERY: Okay. Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Do the
10 Commissioners have any questions?

11 (No response.)

12 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

13 Mr. Avery, thank you for participating, and you are
14 excused.

15 MR. AVERY: Okay. Thank you very much.
16 Bye-bye.

17 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Uh-huh.

18 Mr. Creech?

19 MR. CREECH: Next we have Albert Meyer.

20 I believe Mr. Meyer may have called in, although
21 may also be by WebEx.

22 MR. MEYER: I'm here.

23 THE HOST: Mr. Meyer is available.

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Thank you,

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Dan.

Whereupon,

ALBERT MEYER,

having first been duly affirmed, was examined
and gave his statement as follows:

COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

Mr. Creech, do you have questions?

DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

Q. Mr. Meyer, if you will please spell your name
for the record and provide your address, please.

A. My name is Albert Meyer, A-L-B-E-R-T,
M-E-Y-E-R. My address -- we have a home at 389 Flat
Rock Road, Henrico, North Carolina 27842. It's in
Timberline Shores.

Q. Mr. Meyer, before you provide your statement,
you may be on two different lines there. Is it
possible that you could mute --

A. No, I'm not. What it is, I got my speaker
on. I am going to turn it off.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

A. Now I can't hear you.

COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: No. It was
better before you did what you just did. Undo what
you just did.

1 MR. MEYER: How about now?

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: That's good.

3 MR. MEYER: Okay. Maybe -- maybe I can
4 read your lips and you can't read mine. I'm
5 joking, of course, but I don't have a TV camera on
6 me.

7 Q. Mr. Meyer, if you will please provide your
8 statement this evening. Go ahead.

9 A. Yes, sir, very much so. We have owned the
10 home in North Carolina since 1984, '85. I'm 79 years
11 old. It's a house that we use intermittently, and
12 basically what happened was, somewhere around the time
13 that Andy Nash sold the water system to Aqua, we had a
14 disaster. Ray Kennedy from South Hill that built the
15 house, was a panelized house, 1,200 square feet, and it
16 was on a -- it is on a 1,200-square-foot basement. And
17 basically, at the time, plastic pipe was allowed, and
18 basically -- I'm not exactly sure how it happened, but
19 I get a call from our son and his wife. He says, "Dad,
20 water's coming out of the door, what do I do?" I said,
21 "For God's sake, call the power company and pull the
22 meter. You are liable to get electrocuted." So there
23 were 52,000 gallons of water that went through the
24 house in less than two weeks. So we are very aware of

1 the damage that water can cause and the fact that it
2 took us over two years to rebuild the home. And so
3 that's what we did. They now have copper pipes in
4 there.

5 And also, when the house was first built --
6 we have friends from down that way, because it's used
7 intermittently by the whole entire family now, they
8 suggested that we put a filter on the line, and --
9 because it was sandy. And we have done that, and
10 basically -- well, you know, it's really kind of funny.
11 If we never changed the filter, the water pressure goes
12 down. So I'm laughing about it, because the fact of
13 the matter was, it's part of the maintenance that we
14 do. So we do change the filter regularly, and there is
15 sand in the water, and people further down the line
16 from us say that their water is low pressure, and it
17 could be that. I don't know. I'm not a plumber. But
18 I do say that, when we bought the house, we were
19 delighted to have Andy Nash and his water company put
20 the water in, because I know nothing about pumps and
21 about water quality, all that. I'm delighted that I
22 didn't have to fool with it. So that's the first
23 piece.

24 Okay, so let's go to about three to

1 four weeks ago. I forget exactly when it was now, but
2 I could refresh my memory looking at a calendar. But
3 we were down there, and, oh, yeah, by the way --

4 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Meyer,
5 you have just about a minute left.

6 MR. MEYER: Oh, I didn't realize it.
7 I'm sorry. All I'm going to say is we have had an
8 issue, and the issue was resolved properly and
9 professionally by Aqua, because what happened, they
10 discovered with this latest event that the water
11 was coming out of the ground at the meter, and we
12 called to express concern, and it took a bit to get
13 somebody to even come by, but we resolved that by
14 calling the North Carolina State Commission --
15 State Corporation Commission, and they called
16 pretty quickly. But the question was, they sent
17 somebody, and basically the leak was on the next
18 lot towards the pump station, and they found it,
19 and a root had gone through the pipe and caused
20 that to happen. It was a professional group of
21 people who came and fixed it. We were tickled to
22 death of what they did. The water actually
23 distressed us because it was coming out of the
24 driveway 30 feet down, and so knowing what happened

1 before, we were a little bit apprehensive, and
2 especially when it came to the water quality,
3 because we didn't know that water coming from the
4 ground was or was not going to pollute our water
5 system in our house. It didn't, and we really
6 appreciate what they did, and we think that, if you
7 are going to keep something up that has that age to
8 it, that they are entitled to any kind of increase
9 they want to ask for. You can't do something for
10 nothing. And, basically, the houses and homes and
11 the properties have all gone up considerably in
12 value, and there is no reason why a certain
13 percentage of that couldn't be applied to keeping
14 our -- and maintaining our water supply at current
15 requirements.

16 So happy, happy we are. And we really
17 thank you for doing what you do at the State
18 Corporation Commission, and also the Aqua water
19 company supply most necessary needed water for our
20 home. Thank you, ma'am, and I'm going to sign off.

21 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Thank you,
22 Mr. Meyer. Just a second.

23 Does anyone have questions for
24 Mr. Meyer?

1 MR. CREECH: I have one quick question
2 for Mr. Meyer.

3 Q. So, Mr. Meyer, this is a vacation home for
4 you --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- near Lake Gaston; is that right?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Do you have, I guess, a monthly bill that you
9 pay there?

10 A. Yes, we do.

11 Q. And you pay based on usage; is that correct?

12 A. Comes through the meter; yes, sir.

13 Q. And how often or -- number of weeks out of
14 the year, how often are folks there?

15 A. (Sound failure.)

16 Q. Let me not ask that question.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. But it's a vacation home for y'all; is that
19 correct?

20 A. A getaway home, and it's a nice community
21 down there, and very good people.

22 Q. And you mentioned sand in the water; has that
23 been resolved?

24 A. The sand in the water resolved by us changing

1 the filter on the line every couple of years.

2 Q. All right. Thank you so much, Mr. Meyer.

3 A. Thank you for your service.

4 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

5 Any questions from the Company?

6 MR. BENNINK: No questions. We thank
7 Mr. Meyers [sic] for his testimony.

8 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: And the
9 Commissioner, any questions?

10 (No response.)

11 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right,
12 Mr. Meyers [sic], thank you for participating in
13 the process tonight and giving us the value of your
14 opinion. It's very much appreciated and helpful to
15 us. You are excused.

16 MR. MEYER: Thank you, ma'am.

17 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

18 Mr. Creech.

19 MR. CREECH: Next is Eric Galamb.

20 THE HOST: The witness is available.

21 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right,

22 Mr. Galamb. Welcome back to the Commission.

23 Whereupon,

24 ERIC GALAMB,

1 having first been duly affirmed, was examined
2 and gave his statement as follows:

3 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Creech,
4 do have you some introductory questions for
5 Mr. Galamb?

6 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

7 Q. Mr. Galamb, if you'll please spell your name
8 for the record as well as provide your address, please.

9 A. My name is Eric Galamb, E-R-I-C, G-A-L-A-M as
10 in Mary, B as in boy. I reside at 12208 Glenlivet Way,
11 Raleigh 27613.

12 Q. Thank you, Mr. Galamb, and would you care to
13 provide a statement this evening?

14 A. Good evening, Commissioners, Aqua, the AG's
15 office, and Public Staff. We are experiencing a unique
16 time, and I appreciate unique way to participate in
17 this public hearing.

18 Aqua asked voluntarily for water conservation
19 through their texts, emails, direct mailings, and
20 sometimes they will contact a spokesman in the
21 neighborhood. I believe that Aqua is sincere in their
22 request for conservation measures. The disconnect
23 occurs with their rate increase request that is in
24 front of you now. I have four issues that I would like

1 to bring up.

2 First, I respectfully request that metered
3 service -- metered sewer rates be considered. I am a
4 low-usage customer. My household consumes 40, 4-0
5 gallons per day on average. In fact, my latest bill,
6 the one from July, showed that, on average, our daily
7 usage was 12 gallons per day. My bill shows that each
8 gallon of water and sewage costs me 21.9 cents. Some
9 of these individuals that are using 20,000 gallons a
10 day or a month, you know, multiply that by \$0.22 a
11 gallon and figure out how much your bill should be in
12 comparison to mine. So this is approaching bottled
13 water prices.

14 Second, to facilitate conservation, the base
15 charge should be dropped to 30 percent from the current
16 40 percent. Again, Aqua's rate request does not match
17 their water conservation message. The drop in base
18 rate will provide the needed conservation push.

19 The third issue I request you to consider is
20 the way spills and other similar events are billed.
21 Prior to the last rate increase, Aqua had a treatment
22 plant spill at our Hawthorne Plant. The cleanup costs
23 were billed to the paying customer. This is not
24 acceptable. Each Aqua customer should be compensated

1 for their -- for this and other clean-up expenses.

2 These fees should be borne by shareholders.

3 My fourth and last issue deals with water
4 quality. My wife pointed out that the sealer on our
5 granite sink countertops are dissolving. The water
6 chemistry is wrong, and it's causing this problem.
7 Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Creech.

9 Q. Mr. Galamb, thank you so much. I wanted to
10 touch base first on your first comment related to
11 metered sewer.

12 So that's -- that's a -- that's something you
13 are clearly in favor of; is that correct?

14 A. That is consistent with my request from the
15 last public hearing.

16 Q. Anything else you care to share on that at
17 this time?

18 A. Well, I feel that, as a low-usage customer,
19 that a metered sewer rate being a portion of your
20 consumption would actually result in people that are
21 using a lot of water, and I have heard a lot of water
22 being used by some of the people that are talking
23 tonight. That their bills -- it would cause more water
24 conservation, in my opinion.

1 Q. Thank you so much. And your final comment
2 relating to the water quality eating into your granite
3 countertops; can you discuss that a moment more,
4 please?

5 A. So this is just something that we noticed
6 over the last month. And, you know, we wipe down our
7 countertops in the kitchen, but it's only occurring at
8 our sinks in the bathrooms. And I think, perhaps, what
9 is happening is the water may stand there after
10 somebody's trying to push the faucet off, and it has
11 taken the sheen off of the -- off of the granite
12 counter and has taken the sealer off.

13 Q. And I understand that you believe that it's
14 the -- that you believe it's the water.

15 Is there something about the nature of the
16 quality that, I mean --

17 A. I don't know enough about the water chemistry
18 to talk to you about that, other than the fact that
19 this is something that has just recently occurred.

20 Q. Okay. That's the same water you are
21 drinking; is that correct?

22 A. That is correct.

23 Q. All right. All right. Those are the main
24 questions that I have, Mr. Galamb. Thank you so much.

1 A. Thank you, Mr. Creech.

2 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Any questions
3 from the Company? Mr. Bennink?

4 MR. BENNINK: Yes. Just a few.

5 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. BENNINK:

6 Q. Good evening, Mr. Galamb. I believe you were
7 an intervenor in the last rates case; were you not?

8 A. I was.

9 Q. Couple of questions for you. You're
10 suggesting and requesting the Commission to approve
11 metered water rates for your sewer service.

12 Now, based on your testimony, you are an
13 extremely low user of water; is that correct?

14 A. I would not have the data to suggest that,
15 other than what I have heard, some of the usage results
16 provided tonight. Aqua, of course, would be the best
17 determinant of that fact.

18 Q. But I believe you said you use about
19 40 gallons a day; is that your testimony?

20 A. The bill in front of me for July was for 400,
21 400. 400 gallons for the entire month.

22 Q. All right. And you suggested that the base
23 facilities charge should be reduced from 40 to
24 30 percent.

1 How did you come up with the number
2 30 percent?

3 A. Knowing what I do about the Commission, I
4 felt that, by reducing that to what I believe is an
5 acceptable rate, which would be about 10 percent, I
6 didn't think the Commission would go with that, and I
7 felt that 30 percent charge would be more in line with
8 what they would be willing to accept.

9 Q. And I want to go back to your usage. Tell me
10 again the amount of usage on your last bill.

11 A. 400 gallons -- 400 gallons for 33 days.

12 Q. All right. So --

13 A. 12 gallons a day.

14 Q. That's 12 --

15 A. 12 gallons a day.

16 Q. All right. So let me ask you this
17 hypothetical question. There has been evidence put on
18 in this case that 80 to 85 percent of Aqua's sewer
19 expenses and costs are fixed.

20 And so if that is the case, that 80 to
21 85 percent of the cost of service are fixed and not
22 variable, what would you think would be an appropriate
23 ratio for that base facilities charge for the
24 service -- for sewer service, if it is metered?

1 A. Sir, I have no control over the exorbitant
2 payments to Mr. Becker and some of the other staff, so
3 those of fixed rates are excessive.

4 Q. But you don't have an opinion as to what an
5 appropriate percentage would be for fixed charge for
6 the sewer service?

7 A. Not at this moment.

8 Q. All right. But you do have one for water?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. All right. That's all I have. Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

12 Are there any questions from the Commissioners?

13 (No response.)

14 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

15 Mr. Galamb, we appreciate you joining us again.

16 And there are no questions for you at this time, so
17 you are excused.

18 MR. GALAMB: Thank you, ma'am. And I
19 appreciate the willingness to hold the public
20 hearing in this matter.

21 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

22 Mr. Creech.

23 MR. CREECH: Carol Horrocks is next, I
24 believe, or Horrocks. Carol, are you on the line?

1 THE HOST: The witness is now available.

2 (The oath is given but there is no
3 response from Ms. Horrocks.)

4 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Can the
5 witness hear?

6 MR. CREECH: Carol, are you there?
7 Carol, are you there?

8 THE HOST: I am showing she is there and
9 unmuted.

10 MR. CREECH: She may need to unmute
11 herself, separate and apart. Carol, are you muted?
12 Is your phone muted?

13 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Creech,
14 we will give her a minute while I ask you this.
15 You initially called two witnesses who were not
16 available at the time. Have they come online; do
17 we know? I think it was Cotto and --

18 MR. CREECH: Zmijewski, I believe.
19 Starting with Z. Let's see here.

20 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Host, can
21 you tell if the witnesses Cotto and Zmijewski are
22 online?

23 THE HOST: I just looked, and they both
24 are not online.

1 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
2 One last chance for -- I didn't get her last name,
3 but Carol, the witness Carol. Is she still showing
4 as online?

5 MR. CREECH: She's showing as being on.

6 THE HOST: Yes, ma'am. She's on and
7 she's unmuted.

8 MR. CREECH: I can attempt to send her a
9 text, but I don't want to hold up the proceeding,
10 obviously, so I think we could perhaps skip over
11 and come back.

12 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: If you do
13 have another, call the next witness and check up.

14 MR. CREECH: Okay, great. Our next
15 witness is Lachia Moreland. Ms. Moreland, are you
16 on?

17 MS. MORELAND: Yes, I am. Yes, I'm
18 here.

19 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Okay.

20 Whereupon,

21 LACHIA MORELAND,
22 having first been duly affirmed, was examined
23 and gave her statement as follows:

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

1 Mr. Creech, are you able to pick up with this
2 witness?

3 MR. CREECH: I am.

4 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

5 Q. Thank you so much for being with us this
6 evening, Ms. Moreland. Could you please spell your
7 name for the record as well as provide your address,
8 please?

9 A. Okay. It's L-A-C-H-I-A, M-O-R-E-L-A-N-D, and
10 I'm sorry if I talk really fast. My phone battery was
11 dying while I was sitting waiting. So hopefully I
12 won't lose connection.

13 Q. Great. And are you at 2505 Topton Court,
14 Willow Springs, NC 27592?

15 A. Yes. 2405.

16 Q. 2405, my apologies.

17 Ms. Moreland, your statement, please, for the
18 record. Go ahead.

19 A. I don't have a formal prepared statement. I
20 just -- just as everyone else is concerned about the
21 temporary rate increase. Just a little background.
22 About 10 years ago we also had our water quality
23 tested, and we were starting our family. We are a
24 family of six. Four children, my husband, and myself.

1 And at that time we were starting our family, had our
2 water tested. The results scared us so bad we
3 purchased a \$2,000 water filtration -- home filtration
4 system. In between the 10 years, fast forward to 2020,
5 we had financial changes, and we couldn't afford to
6 keep up with the maintenance of that filtration system,
7 salt, maintenance, XYZ. So we since switched to
8 bottled water, and we spend about \$40 to \$50 -- because
9 we are water drinkers. We drink a lot of water. We
10 spend about \$40 to \$50 a month just on purchasing
11 bottled water.

12 And also, we sometimes have water stains like
13 in the shower. Like, we have to replace our shower
14 heads every four to six months just from the buildup in
15 the shower head that you can see. And so my concern
16 is, with this rate -- temporary rate increase, whatever
17 that means -- I'm not sure what it goes to really
18 improving, because we are still having to purchase the
19 bottled water, purchase shower heads, and things like
20 that. I would love for my family just to turn on the
21 sink and drink the water, but it's just concerning,
22 some of the results that come back from when they do
23 those maintenance checks, and just, you know, the
24 history. We have been in our home 13 years this year.

1 And so it's just a rate increase, I'm not
2 really seeing or understanding what that is gonna do
3 and how is that going to help decrease our purchases --
4 our outside-of-our-home water purchases? And, you
5 know, that's just really my concern.

6 Q. Right. Ms. Moreland, I have several
7 questions for you. I really appreciate that.

8 So you have four children; is that correct?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. You spent \$2,000 on a system to clean the
11 water, but you are not able to afford that at this
12 time, correct? To maintain it at this time, right?

13 A. Yes. We had that turned off about five years
14 ago, five, six years ago, so we don't even use it. We
15 turned it off, just because, when we could not keep the
16 salt in it, then the water would flush out black and
17 brown, and it just got to be too much financially. So
18 we just stopped using it altogether, and we just went
19 to purchasing bottled water.

20 Q. And nonetheless, though, you are having to
21 replace shower heads every how many months?

22 A. Four to six months.

23 Q. Is that something you have ever had to do in
24 your prior residences or anything like that?

1 A. Well, we went from -- we lived in the City of
2 Raleigh apartment, and when we started our family we
3 bought our home out here.

4 Q. And what kind of -- what's causing -- what
5 specifically -- what kind of buildup are you talking
6 about that causes you to have to replace it every four
7 to six months?

8 A. It's like an orange -- it's like an
9 orangey/yellow. I don't know if that's -- I don't know
10 if that's calcium, iron. I don't know what it is. I
11 don't know. All I know is when I see it on the shower
12 head, I'm like, we got to -- we just buy another one
13 just to -- you know, there are so many other things in
14 the world and in our family that we just like, okay, we
15 just buy a new shower head. But when we see the rate
16 increase, it's another concern, because from now --
17 when we first bought our home, we were only paying \$30
18 to \$40 in our water bill, and it's jumped to, you know,
19 \$60 to \$80. To have a rate increase, that means it's
20 going to jump another so many dollars. And I'm feeding
21 four children here. A lot of my money goes to grocery.
22 I can't -- and purchasing the water. So the rate
23 increase is just concerning for me.

24 Q. Have you brought the -- the quality -- the

1 water quality issue that's causing you to replace your
2 shower heads, have you brought that to the Company's
3 attention before?

4 A. No, I have not.

5 Q. Are there any other -- are you seeing that in
6 any of your other fixtures, or what have you, in your
7 sink, in your toilet, in your washing machine?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. You are, okay. Can you tell me about that?

10 A. Well, not so much the washing machine. I
11 haven't paid that much attention to that part in the
12 washing machine, but I have seen it in the spigots of
13 the kitchen sink as well.

14 Q. What does that look like?

15 A. It's like a -- it's the same -- kind of like
16 a whitish -- I don't know if that's just minerals. You
17 know, I don't know if that's mineral buildup. I'm not
18 quite sure.

19 Q. Is that an ongoing thing, periodic?

20 A. No. It's been more ongoing since we turned
21 off the home filtration. When we had the -- when the
22 home filtration was going good, that expensive unit
23 that we purchased, then we didn't have it so much. But
24 since we have -- you know, it's not functioning, we

1 have noticed it more.

2 Q. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you for
3 your comments.

4 MR. CREECH: No more questions at this
5 time.

6 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Are there
7 questions from the Company? Mr. Bennink?

8 (No response.)

9 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Bennink,
10 the mute stayed on. There you go.

11 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. BENNINK:

12 Q. I wanted to ask Ms. Moreland, sounds like
13 you've got four children.

14 What -- do you know what your average monthly
15 water usage is, Ms. Moreland?

16 A. Yes, sir. I have one bill here, and between
17 200 to 50 gallons a day -- 250 to 300 gallons a day,
18 I'm sorry.

19 Q. And were you aware that, in -- in 2016, Aqua
20 installed an iron manganese filter to serve your
21 subdivision and your system?

22 A. I think we got documentation about that
23 during -- I think was it when you guys were doing the
24 maintenance and improvement, if that was what it was.

1 If not, then I'm not aware of it.

2 Q. All right. So you are not aware of that, and
3 the question was, did you -- have you noticed any
4 improvement in the water quality since that time?

5 A. No.

6 Q. You have noticed no improvement, or you
7 weren't aware of it, or both?

8 A. Both.

9 Q. All right. That's all. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
11 Are there any questions for this witness from the
12 Commissioners?

13 (No response.)

14 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Not seeing
15 any, Ms. Moreland, we appreciate you coming out
16 tonight.

17 MS. MORELAND: Thank you so much for
18 your time and allowing, you know, the public to
19 speak.

20 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
21 You, and the public, and the ratepayers, you're
22 what makes the process work. So we thank you for
23 your participation. And with that, you are
24 excused.

1 Mr. Creech?

2 MR. CREECH: I'm going to see if we
3 could go back to Carol -- Carol Horrocks, if she's
4 on the line still.

5 Carol, are you -- are you there?

6 THE HOST: Carol is still there. I'm
7 gonna try to unmute her again and see if we can
8 connect.

9 The witness is yours.

10 MR. CREECH: Carol, are you there?
11 Ms. Horrocks? All right. Ms. Horrocks?

12 (No response.)

13 MR. CREECH: I think we may try to come
14 back one final time here, but I believe
15 Wendy Stevens is on the line, if that's okay with
16 you, Commissioner Brown-Bland.

17 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Yes.

18 THE HOST: All right. I am unmuting her
19 now, so the witness is available.

20 Whereupon,

21 WENDY STEVENS,
22 having first been duly affirmed, was examined
23 and gave her statement as follows:

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right,

1 Mr. Creech.

2 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

3 Q. Ms. Stevens, if you can, please spell your
4 name for the record as well as provide your address,
5 please.

6 A. Okay. My name is Wendy Stevens. W-E-N-D-Y,
7 Stevens, S-T-E-V-E-N-S, and I live at 2704 Stageline,
8 that's all one word, S-T-A-G-E-L-I-N-E, Drive, Raleigh
9 27603. That is part of the Stagecoach subdivision in
10 Wake County.

11 Q. Thank you, Ms. Stevens. Can you please
12 provide the statement that you came to share, please?

13 A. Okay. Yes. I have had Aqua for my water
14 service for the last 12 years and had City of Raleigh
15 water previously. I receive water service only.

16 First, I would like to object to the rate
17 increase for Aqua. I currently pay more for my basic
18 charge with Aqua than I do for my water. My usage for
19 the last year averages just under 2,500 gallons a
20 month, regularly resulting in the water portion of my
21 bills that are less than the basic charge. Looking
22 back over the latest year's bills, only once did I have
23 a water charge higher than the basic charge, and that
24 was recently with an increase in water usage where I

1 had jumped up to 3,700 gallons a month in July, and I
2 expect next month will be just as high if not higher.

3 The Company claims that it is their
4 responsibility to check and provide this essential
5 resource, yet the horrible quality of my water means
6 that I'm forced to purchase water filter systems and
7 bottled water to use for cooking and drinking. While
8 the red water has gotten better over the years, the
9 bleach smell and taste has not. It is uncommon for
10 my -- it is not common for my water to smell like
11 bleach coming out of the tap.

12 With nearly 15 years of City of Raleigh's
13 water previous to being here, I have to say that this
14 is the most disgusting water I have ever had to drink.
15 I think it's important that what Aqua intends to use
16 this increase for be more clear; specifically, will my
17 quality be improved? Will I receive a new meter that
18 allows me to monitor my own usage? And when are these
19 changes going to come?

20 Another question I have is I'd like to know
21 why recently I received a refund of my deposit in my
22 bill. While it was a pleasant surprise, I have not
23 been able to find out why this was done and why I
24 wasn't notified prior to it showing up on my bill.

1 Lastly, I found the process for this meeting
2 a little hard to understand. I did not receive notice
3 about this hearing and only found out about it very
4 recently. Many of my neighbors did not even realize
5 that we had this opportunity and just accepted that
6 another utility was going to blindly get the rate
7 increase that they were asking for. Thank you for your
8 time and the opportunity to speak.

9 Q. Thank you so much, Ms. Stevens, for being
10 here tonight. And -- so how did you find out about the
11 hearing? I gather you found out about it through your
12 work, which is through the Attorney General's Office;
13 is that correct, or something to that effect?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And had you --

16 A. So yes, I --

17 Q. And had you not --

18 A. I'm sorry?

19 Q. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

20 A. Oh. For a different part of my work, I was
21 speaking to somebody, and they were talking about the
22 Commission hearing tonight, and that it was dealing
23 with Aqua. And I was like, "Aqua? I have them. I
24 hate them. My water is horrible."

1 Q. And --

2 A. So I had not known that this was -- that this
3 hearing was coming up.

4 Q. And you indicated that you shared that
5 information with some of your neighbors, and they were
6 not as well; is that correct?

7 A. Yeah. We have a -- we have an online forum
8 where, you know, people post things. And I put on
9 there, you know, was anybody else participating in
10 this, and I didn't hear back from anybody. The only
11 thing that I heard was that they didn't know that it
12 was happening.

13 Q. Which subdivision is that again? That's --

14 A. It's Stagecoach.

15 Q. Stagecoach. All right.

16 A. So we're a small subdivision, and we are
17 water service only. The actual pump for our -- the
18 part that services us is in our neighborhood at the end
19 of the cul-de-sac near me. It's my understanding it
20 services many neighborhoods around here.

21 Q. Thank you. And you spoke about water
22 quality, and initially all the expenditures that you've
23 had to go to, but can you talk a little bit more about
24 the smell and taste that you mentioned?

1 A. It very often smells like I am pouring bleach
2 out of the faucet. You will turn on the water, and it
3 smells -- especially if you turn on the shower and it's
4 hot water, it smells like you are doing bleach laundry.
5 It's disgusting. You don't want to cook with it. You
6 don't want to drink it. I have to -- I rent here, so I
7 can't put in a whole full-house system, so I have to
8 make do with, you know, like Brita filters, and faucet
9 filters, and just using a lot of bottled water.

10 Q. Have you -- have you reached out to the
11 Company about that particular -- about that particular
12 issue or any of these issues?

13 A. In a way. My daughter used to work at the
14 convenience store around the corner, and the Aqua
15 workers would come up there for lunch when they were
16 working on the -- in the neighborhood. And she has
17 mentioned to them before, you know, is there anything
18 that can be done, and they are just like, no. That
19 they put the bleach in there to make the water safe to
20 drink, and that there is nothing else that can be done.

21 Q. And --

22 A. Which, you know, it makes you wonder, if it's
23 that nasty, do we really want to be drinking it anyway?

24 Q. And this is -- and your daughter lives with

1 you as well; is that correct?

2 A. Yes. My -- yes. My two adult daughters. A
3 24-year-old and a 19-year-old.

4 Q. And just practically speaking, what do you --
5 how do you go about taking a shower in that kind of
6 scenario?

7 A. It's -- I mean you do, but sometimes you turn
8 on the shower and you're like, "Hmm, do I really need
9 to wash my hair today? Can I get by with not having a
10 shower today?" And that's -- you know, that's just --
11 that's just wrong.

12 Q. I'm not sure what else to add as to
13 questioning you on there, Ms. Stevens. I appreciate
14 your comments. Thank you so much.

15 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Are there
16 questions from the Company?

17 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. BENNING:

18 Q. Ms. Stevens, I believe you said you had not
19 talked with anybody from the Company, itself,
20 previously about the complaints; is that correct?

21 A. Well, to an extent. We've talked to the
22 local -- the actual Aqua worker that comes and works
23 and, you know, deals with the pump in the neighborhood,
24 and he has said that there is nothing that can be done

1 about the bleach.

2 Q. Would you be willing to talk with Aqua
3 represent- -- a representative or representatives after
4 this hearing sometime in the relatively near future?

5 A. Sure.

6 Q. They would be glad to contact you and try to
7 discuss your issues.

8 A. Okay. Thank you.

9 Q. And again, your -- so your testimony is, you
10 did not receive the notice of this hearing in the mail?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Do you remember, did you receive --

13 A. I think it's -- I think it's interesting,
14 because I actually -- I don't get anything from Aqua in
15 the mail, yet my son who doesn't live here does.

16 Q. When you say you don't get anything from
17 them, how about your monthly bill?

18 A. I get that electronically.

19 Q. And why would your son get mail from Aqua?

20 A. I'm not sure why. He gets advertisements
21 about some sort of, like, I believe it's like an
22 insurance. You know, somebody else talked about, like,
23 roots going through the line and causing a leak issue,
24 and it was an insurance for that purpose, like to

1 protect you from those expenses, but he is not on the
2 bill and he doesn't live here.

3 Q. But you're saying he gets mail from Aqua in
4 his name at your address?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. The Company -- the Company can look into
7 that. Thank you very much.

8 A. Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Any questions
10 from the Commissioners for Ms. Stevens?

11 Commissioner Hughes?

12 EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER HUGHES:

13 Q. Yes. So you said you pay electronically.

14 Do you specifically email, or are you
15 paperless? Do you get email that announces your bill,
16 or is it a direct draft?

17 A. I have -- and I believe I get an email, but I
18 have had it set up for automatic payment before. It
19 can be glitchy, so.

20 Q. Okay. So you probably get an email, and it
21 automatically gets paid as well?

22 A. Yeah. Yeah.

23 EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND:

24 Q. Ms. Stevens, did you receive -- are you aware

1 that the Company has placed temporary rates in place
2 beginning July 30th?

3 A. No, I did not know that.

4 Q. Okay. All right.

5 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Any questions
6 on Commission's questions?

7 (No response.)

8 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Seeing none,
9 Ms. Stevens, we thank you. Glad you found out
10 about it in time to participate, and your testimony
11 is helpful to us, and you are excused.

12 MS. STEVENS: All right. Thank you.

13 MR. CREECH: Thank you, Ms. Stevens.

14 Commissioner Brown-Bland, we are going
15 to attempt to do something here. Ms. Horrocks has
16 been on the line, and we have just had some
17 connectivity issues. But I think she's ready --
18 well, she's willing and available, but we are
19 trying to determine if she's -- we can make a good
20 connection. We may have her on now. Dan?

21 THE HOST: Yes, sir.

22 MR. CREECH: Is Ms. Horrocks available?

23 THE HOST: Let me try. All right. I'm
24 going to try the number provided to unmute. So she

1 is unmuted now and available.

2 MR. CREECH: Carol, are you there?

3 Carol?

4 (No response.)

5 MR. CREECH: No. I don't see a way to
6 message her, a chat function to send her a message
7 for this particular one, so I don't -- is that
8 possible?

9 THE HOST: No, sir it's not. I can
10 expel her from the meeting, which would kick her
11 out, and she could try to call back in. That
12 sounds like a local phone issue.

13 MR. CREECH: All right, let's -- with
14 your permission.

15 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Yes. Try
16 that very quickly and see if she comes back on.
17 Very quickly.

18 MR. CREECH: Thank you so much.

19 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Is there
20 another witness?

21 MR. CREECH: There is a
22 Virginia Zmijewski, but I don't think she's joined
23 us.

24 THE HOST: Virginia has not joined us,

1 and Mr. Cotto has not either.

2 MR. CREECH: I don't believe Mr. Cotto
3 will be joining.

4 THE HOST: Okay.

5 (Pause.)

6 MR. CREECH: Well, we have attempted to
7 include everyone that we could thus far.

8 Dan, is there anybody else on the line
9 that we have -- that may not have been recognized?
10 I don't see any.

11 THE HOST: Let me just double-check
12 here.

13 MR. CREECH: I think we got to everyone,
14 except for Joshua, Virginia, and Carol. And I will
15 indicate that the Public Staff originally emailed
16 everyone as well as followed up via reminder calls
17 today, and, in most instances, where we thought
18 necessary, additional reminder email.

19 THE HOST: You are correct, Mr. Creech.
20 We -- I did confirm. I see no one else that has
21 joined that we have not talked to yet.

22 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Mr. Creech, I
23 believe you were trying -- you were attempting to
24 call the witness.

1 MR. CREECH: I was, but it has gone to
2 voicemail. Ms. Jost is -- may be on the line with
3 her right now. My sincere apologies, but just one
4 final moment trying to confirm that. Just one
5 final moment, she may come on.

6 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Ms. Jost, do
7 you have the witness online?

8 MS. JOST: Hold on for just a moment.

9 I do have her on the phone. I'm not
10 sure -- I can try unmuting. I mean try putting her
11 on speaker and see what happens.

12 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Let's see if
13 your speaker will work. That was going to be my
14 suggestion.

15 MS. JOST: Ms. Horrocks, I am going to
16 try putting you on my speaker phone and see if that
17 works; is that all right? Okay. Hold on just a
18 moment, please.

19 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right,
20 Ms. --

21 MS. JOST: All right. Ms. Horrocks, can
22 you hear us?

23 MS. HORROCKS: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Ms. Horrocks,

1 C-A-R-O-L, Horrocks, H-O-R-R-O-C-K-S, at 12212
2 Glenlivet Way in Raleigh 27613; is that correct?

3 A. 27613, correct.

4 Q. Okay. And go ahead with your statement,
5 please. I'm sorry, go ahead.

6 A. I'm just calling in support of not increasing
7 the rate of the service. The base price on just the
8 sewer, you know, there is just two of us in our
9 household now, our kids have all moved out, and it's
10 kind of high as it is. To increase it is just not
11 great. We had to pay for a whole-house system to kind
12 of clean up the water that's coming in anyway. That's
13 all I wanted to say.

14 Q. Thank you, Ms. Horrocks.

15 MR. CREECH: No additional questions at
16 this time.

17 EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND:

18 Q. Ms. Horrocks, do you live in a subdivision?

19 A. Yes. I live in Sussex Acres.

20 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right,
21 thank you. Are there any other questions for this
22 witness from the Company?

23 MR. BENNIK: No questions.

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.

1 Thank you, Ms. Horrocks, for hanging in there with
2 us and giving us a try.

3 MS. HORROCKS: All right. Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Ms. Horrocks?
5 Ms. Horrocks? Is she still there?

6 MS. HORROCKS: Yes, I am.

7 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: For the
8 Commission's benefit, and so we learn, are you
9 aware or do you have any idea why you were having
10 difficulty being heard or calling in?

11 MS. HORROCKS: No. I just -- I called
12 the number. No, I don't know.

13 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: We could see
14 you connected, but we both were unable to hear each
15 other, apparently. All right. We appreciate your
16 willingness to participate, and the great lengths
17 that you went to to be able to do that. And there
18 are no questions -- there appear to be no questions
19 for you, and so you are excused.

20 MS. HORROCKS: All right. Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right.
22 Mr. Creech?

23 MR. CREECH: Commissioner Brown-Bland,
24 those are all the witnesses that the -- all the

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registrants for the hearing this evening that we are aware of.

COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right. Is there anything else for the good of the cause before we adjourn?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: All right. That brings to a conclusion the public hearings in this Aqua Docket W-218, Sub 526, and we will stand adjourned.

(Public Hearing adjourned at 8:26 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)
COUNTY OF WAKE)

I, Joann Bunze, RPR, the officer before whom the foregoing hearing was taken, do hereby certify that the witnesses whose testimony appear in the foregoing hearing were duly sworn; that the testimony of said witnesses were taken by me to the best of my ability and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this hearing was taken, and further that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

This the 6th day of August, 2020.

Joann Bunze



JOANN BUNZE, RPR

Notary Public #200707300112