

1 PLACE: Mecklenburg County Courthouse
2 Charlotte, North Carolina
3 DATE: Monday, March 25, 2024
4 TIME: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
5 DOCKET: W-1034, Sub 13
6 BEFORE: Hearing Examiner Jenny Li
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12 IN THE MATTER OF:
13 Application of Water Resources, Inc.,
14 for Authority to Adjust and Increase Rates for Water
15 Utility Service in Rocky River Plantation Subdivision
16 in Cabarrus County and River Walk Subdivision in
17 Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
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A P P E A R A N C E S:
FOR WATER RESOURCES, INC.:
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FOR THE USING AND CONSUMING PUBLIC:
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21
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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

PAGE

LENNY DEVITTO

Direct Examination by Ms. Holt12

Cross Examination by Mr. Finley19

Direct Examination by Hearing Examiner Li21

JIM HERRINGTON

Direct Examination by Ms. Holt22

Cross Examination by Mr. Finley26

REBECCA DAVIS

Direct Examination by Ms. Holt28

Examination by Hearing Examiner Li32

WALTER DAVIS

Direct Examination by Ms. Holt33

SHARON BUCK

Direct Examination by Ms. Holt36

Direct Examination by Mr. Finley40

ROBERT FERRIS

Direct Examination by Ms. Holt41

Examination by Hearing Examiner Li48

DON STREMOVIHTG

Direct Examination by Ms. Holt50

1 E X A M I N A T I O N S Cont'd.:

2 PAGE

3 Cross Examination by Mr. Finley63

4 MICHAEL AMMONS

5 Direct Examination by Ms. Holt65

6 Examination by Hearing Examiner Li72

7 AMANDA SEWARD-CHAVIS

8 Direct Examination by Ms. Holt74

9 JON COTTRILL

10 Direct Examination by Ms. Holt77

11 MICHELLE JUAREZ

12 Direct Examination by Ms. Holt81

13 Examination by Hearing Examiner Li85

14 IVAN SCOTT

15 Direct Examination by Ms. Holt86

16 DONNA GRAY

17 Direct Examination by Ms. Holt89

18 Cross Examination by Mr. Finley91

19

20

21

22

23

24

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24

E X H I B I T S:

IDENTIFIED/ADMITTED

DeVitto Exhibits 1 and 2	21	21
Herrington Exhibit 1	27	
Davis Exhibit 1	32	
Walter Davis Exhibit 1	33	
Buck Exhibit 1	39	
Ferris Exhibit 1	41	
Stremovihtg Exhibits 1 and 2	63	
Ammons Exhibit 1	71	71
Cottrill Exhibit 1	80	80
Juarez Exhibit 1	82	82
Gray Exhibit 1	90	
Gray Exhibit 2	92	

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Good evening. Let's
3 come to order, please, and go on the record. I'm
4 Jenny Li, a Hearing Examiner with the North Carolina
5 Utilities Commission, and I have been assigned to
6 preside over this public hearing tonight.

7 I now call for hearing Docket Number W-1034,
8 Sub 13, which is the Application by Water Resources,
9 Inc., hereafter WRI, the Company or Applicant, for
10 Authority to Adjust and Increase Its Rates for Water
11 Utility Service.

12 On December 29, 2023, WRI filed an
13 Application with the Commission seeking authority to
14 increase its rates for providing water utility service
15 in Rocky River Plantation Subdivision, hereafter Rocky
16 River, in Cabarrus County, and River Walk Subdivision,
17 hereafter River Walk, in Mecklenburg County, North
18 Carolina. The Applicant provides water utility
19 service to approximately 115 residential customers in
20 the Rocky River service area and approximately 39
21 residential customers in the River Walk service area.

22 On January 3rd, 2024, WRI filed an amended
23 Application to rectify an omission to Question 8 on
24 the first page of the Application.

1 On January 22, 2024, the Applicant filed a
2 letter with the Commission updating the proposed
3 effective date of the rates requested in its amended
4 Application.

5 On January 30, 2024, the Commission issued
6 an Order Establishing General Rate Case and Suspending
7 Rates, which declared this proceeding to be a general
8 rate case and suspended the proposed new rates for up
9 to 270 days pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 62-134
10 and 137, respectfully.

11 On March 1st, 2024, the Commission issued an
12 Order Scheduling Hearings, Establishing Procedural and
13 Filing Requirements, and Requiring Customer Notice.
14 That Order scheduled a public hearing for 7:00 p.m. on
15 Monday, March 25, 2024, at Mecklenburg County
16 Courthouse in Charlotte, North Carolina, which is
17 where we are tonight, for the sole purpose of
18 receiving testimony from WRI's customers in Rocky
19 River and River Walk service areas. This Order also
20 scheduled an expert witness hearing beginning at 1:00
21 p.m. on Monday, May 13, 2024, in the Dobbs Building,
22 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina,
23 for the sole purpose of receiving expert witness
24 testimony from WRI, the Public Staff and any

1 intervenors in this proceeding. The Order also
2 required WRI to distribute a customer notice to all be
3 affected customers in the two service areas.

4 According to the Application and the
5 customer notice, WRI proposed rates will increase the
6 average monthly bill for residential water service in
7 Rocky River service area by \$106.80 per month based on
8 an average monthly consumption of 5,359 gallons or
9 384 percent, and the River Walk service area by \$44.44
10 per month based on an average monthly consumption of
11 4,302 gallons or 62 percent.

12 On March 6th, 2024, the Commission issued an
13 Errata Order requiring the Applicant to prefile all
14 testimony on or before March 14th, 2024.

15 On March 7th, 2024 WRI filed its Certificate
16 of Service indicating that customer notice had been
17 provided as required by the Commission March 1st, 2024
18 order.

19 On March 14th, 2024, WRI filed direct
20 testimony of Dennis Abbott, President of Water
21 Resources, Inc.

22 That brings us up to date. Thank you for
23 bearing with me.

24 Will the parties please announce their

1 appearances, beginning with the Company, Water
2 Resources, Inc.?

3 MR. FINLEY: May it please the Commission,
4 my name is Edward Finley, Raleigh, North Carolina,
5 appearing on behalf of the Applicant, Water Resources,
6 Inc.

7 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you, Mr. Finley.

8 MS. HOLT: Good evening. I'm Gina Holt with
9 the Public Staff here on behalf of the Using and
10 Consuming Public, and with me at counsel table is
11 Public Staff Engineer Evan Houser.

12 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Good evening.

13 Now, I would like to ask both parties,
14 counsel, do we have any preliminary matters that we
15 need addressed before we begin?

16 MR. FINLEY: None from the Company.

17 MS. HOLT: None from the Public Staff.

18 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you. Ms. Holt,
19 would you please let us know how many public witnesses
20 have signed up and would like to make a statement
21 tonight?

22 MS. HOLT: We have nine so far.

23 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you. Before
24 beginning, I will first explain our process of how the

1 hearing will be conducted so that everyone is aware of
2 our procedures.

3 This is our witness stand here over to my
4 left, and you will come forward and give sworn
5 testimony on the stand. After being sworn in, each
6 witness will be asked certain identifying questions by
7 the Public Staff counsel so that it will be clear in
8 the record who the speaker is. For example, the
9 Public Staff attorney, Ms. Holt, will ask you to
10 identify your name and your address for the record and
11 any other identifying questions she may ask. After
12 the witness has completed his or her statement, each
13 of the parties, that is, Public Staff and the Company
14 counsel will be able to ask you any requests they may
15 have pertaining to your statement or testimony. Then
16 I will have the similar opportunity to ask any
17 relevant questions. These questions are not to
18 embarrass you or challenge you but are primarily to
19 clarify your testimony for the record, and to be sure
20 we understand what it is you want us to know. And it
21 is important that the Commission's records be clear on
22 this matter because these questions in evidence will
23 be used to base the Commission's decision.

24 This is the judicial hearing and it will be

1 conducted in an orderly manner. Each person who
2 wishes to speak will be given an opportunity to do so,
3 but please, only one person may speak at the time.
4 When your name is called, please come forward to the
5 table designated for the witness here to my left. I
6 will swear you in first. You may then provide your
7 statement.

8 You will not be allowed to questions -- you
9 will not be allowed to ask questions from the stand;
10 however, you may ask the Public Staff questions after
11 the hearing concludes. And the Company will also be
12 available after the hearing concludes to answer any
13 questions. This is a public hearing tonight, and the
14 Company is not allowed to offer testimony or answer
15 questions but, as I mentioned, they will be available
16 after the end of the hearing to answer any questions
17 you may have.

18 In order for all customers to be provided an
19 opportunity to give their statements tonight, each
20 witness will be given approximately three minutes to
21 speak, although my colleague will work the clock
22 during the hearing -- we have a clock right there --
23 so please don't feel like we are trying to rush you.
24 We are holding the public hearing because we want to

1 be hear from you, but we also want to be sure every
2 speaker has enough time to be heard tonight.

3 And the last thing I would like to say
4 before hearing from you is about the Public Staff.
5 The Public Staff is the advocate for the consumers,
6 both nonresidential and residential, and Public Staff
7 means -- is an independent organization, and they have
8 their own experts like engineers, accountants, and
9 attorneys to help them in their representation of the
10 public.

11 So now, I will ask the Public Staff to
12 please call your first witness. Thank you.

13 MS. HOLT: The Public Staff calls Mr. Lenny
14 DeVitto.

15 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Mr. DeVitto, would you
16 prefer to be sworn or affirm?

17 MR. DEVITTO: Sworn.

18 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Please place your left
19 hand on the Bible and raise your right hand.

20 LENNY DEVITTO;
21 having been duly sworn,
22 testified as follows:

23 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

24 Q Good evening, Mr. DeVitto. Please state your

1 name.

2 A Lenny DeVitto.

3 Q Could you spell your last name, please.

4 A D-E-V-I-T-T-O.

5 (Court Reporter requested

6 the witness to speak into

7 the microphone.)

8 THE WITNESS: Is that better? How's that?

9 BY MS. HOLT:

10 Q And what is your address?

11 A 8529 Indian Summer Trail.

12 Q And are you a customer of Water Resources, Inc.?

13 A Yes.

14 Q Did you file a statement with the Public Staff?

15 A Yes.

16 Q Well, with the Commission?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Would you like those admitted into evidence?

19 A Sure.

20 Q Now, you've handed me two pieces of paper. Are

21 these statements that you filed with the

22 Commission or are these new?

23 A One of them is a petition that was signed by 133

24 residents regarding this issue.

1 Q Okay. I'll let you go ahead and make your
2 statement.

3 A Okay.

4 Q We'll deal with this later.

5 A All right. I've been a resident in Rocky River
6 Plantation for 33 years. Due to Water Resources'
7 lack of maintenance and inability to maintain the
8 second well that was shut down, he wants the
9 consumers to pay for his failure to maintain this
10 well up to State requirements. Lack of response
11 from Water Resources when calling them to report
12 issues, they would never call back or address the
13 issue with any urgency. The poor water quality
14 that destroys our water heaters, toilets and
15 sinks and water fixtures. There have been
16 numerous leaking water meters that Water
17 Resources failed to address when contacted. And
18 we had to keep calling them back and calling them
19 back, and the leaks lasted for a long time. Some
20 leaked for over a year. Over a year. There's
21 three different individuals I mentioned, Troy
22 Bunch, Eric Olsen, and Doreen Hill, that had
23 leaking for over a year. And I've got their
24 contact information also.

1 There have been numerous water outages that
2 went on for days and Water Resources never, never
3 offered to bring bottled water out to any of the
4 consumers in both subdivisions.

5 During these outages we also didn't have any
6 water in the fire hydrants in the subdivisions.
7 Total disregard to protect the consumers. If
8 somebody's house would have caught on fire, they
9 would have been in bad shape.

10 Let's see; there's been numerous Utilities
11 Commission and Public Staff deadlines missed by
12 Water Resources and constantly delaying and
13 delaying maintenance, repairs and upgrades. One
14 is the last rate increase in 2018. It was
15 W-1034, Sub 8. All water meters were supposed to
16 be replaced as part of this 2018 rate increase.
17 That never happened. Only when I filed W-1034,
18 Sub 10 in 2021, the Utilities Commission finally
19 forced Water Resources to replace all those
20 meters which wasn't done until February 2022;
21 four years after it was ordered by the Utilities
22 Commission to be replaced.

23 The numerous deadlines missed can be
24 verified in documents W-1034, Sub 8 and Sub 10,

1 and also by District Supervisor Clinton Cooke and
2 Public Staff Engineer Mike Franklin.

3 I mentioned a Petition signed by 133 Rocky
4 River and Highland Ridge residents that are fed
5 up with Water Resources. And also, the numerous
6 WBTV news reports on the lack of urgency and
7 total disregard for the residents. How many
8 customers can Water Resources produce to the
9 Utilities Commission and Public Staff that are
10 actually satisfied with this utility and okay
11 with the huge increase? I ask that. We need to
12 know how many he can come up with.

13 And finally, this is the perfect time to
14 remove Water Resources as the utility and appoint
15 an emergency operator and give them the \$235 K
16 bond money to keep up the maintenance and daily
17 operations. Something that Water Resources has
18 totally failed at. We've had nothing but bad
19 water quality since Water Resources took over the
20 system. No urgency to address issues, inability
21 to meet deadlines, total disregard for their
22 consumer. That's all I've got. Questions?

23 Q (MS. HOLT) Mr. DeVitto, you said you would like
24 to admit -- have your statement admitted into

1 evidence.

2 A Sure.

3 MS. HOLT: Madam Hearing Examiner, I would
4 like Mr. DeVitto's statement to be marked as DeVitto
5 Exhibit 1 and the Petition that he submitted to be
6 marked as DeVitto Exhibit 2.

7 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Any objection from the
8 Company?

9 MR. FINLEY: Not to have it marked but I
10 would like to look at it before it's admitted.

11 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Do you have a copy?

12 THE WITNESS: Yeah. I've got a copy for
13 him.

14 MR. FINLEY: If I can ask him some questions
15 and then I can comment on this.

16 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Yes.

17 MR. FINLEY: Let's see if the Public Staff
18 has any questions.

19 BY MS. HOLT:

20 Q Mr. DeVitto, I just have a couple of follow-up
21 questions.

22 In your statement you mentioned that -- you
23 made reference to several outages.

24 A Uh-huh (yes).

1 Q During what time period did the outages occur?

2 A All of those were over the past five years.

3 Q Okay. Have any of these occurrences happened in
4 the past six months?

5 A No.

6 Q When did -- did things get better at a certain
7 time period?

8 A I wouldn't say they got better, there just hasn't
9 been any leaks since then.

10 Q No leaks.

11 A It helped a lot when they finally, after four
12 years, forced him to replace all the water
13 meters. I think in 2018 when they ordered them
14 to be replaced they were like 25 years old
15 already, so 29 years. Lifespan is probably 20 to
16 25.

17 Q Have you experienced water pressure issues?

18 A Constantly.

19 Q Have you experienced any water pressure issues in
20 the past six months?

21 A Yeah, in the past six months. Whenever there is
22 an outage there is always water pressure issues
23 and then there's settlement in the lines. A lot
24 of these people speak about that. Mud in your

1 lines. Mud in your water heaters. We have one
2 guy in Rocky River Plantation that had to replace
3 his water heater six times. Six times.

4 Q And when was the last outage if you recall?

5 A I don't have it in front of me. Six to eight
6 months ago. I don't know.

7 Q Did you had any outages in 2024; this year?

8 A No.

9 MS. HOLT: Thank you. I have no further
10 questions.

11 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. FINLEY:

12 Q Mr. DeVitto, have you talked to the Division of
13 Water Quality about the reason the second well
14 was taken, was offline?

15 A Yeah. It was shut down for high radium.

16 Q Radium rating, right?

17 A Yep.

18 Q And you think that the Company because they
19 failed to maintain the well was the reason for
20 that?

21 A Had a lot to do with it. The regular
22 maintenance, changing filters, flushing on a
23 regular basis; didn't happen.

24 Q So you think if those things had happened there

1 would have been no increase in the radium from
2 the water?

3 A Well, we probably don't know that unless he would
4 have done it correctly but, yeah, I would say so.

5 Q And when was the last time that you have made a
6 complaint to the Company?

7 A Me personally, probably six months.

8 Q So if the Company checked its records it would
9 see that you made a complaint within the last six
10 months?

11 A Yep. They didn't -- speaking of records, they
12 didn't keep records up until they were forced by
13 the Utilities Commission. Whenever I opened up
14 my complaint, that was one of the things they
15 forced them to keep records. Previous to that,
16 never kept any records for 20 years.

17 Q The meters that have been replaced, are they
18 working to your satisfaction?

19 A Mine is so far.

20 Q Do you know of other customers who are having
21 problems with their meters now?

22 A Not currently, no.

23 MR. FINLEY: Thank you, Mr. DeVitto. I
24 appreciate it.

1 No further questions.

2 HEARING EXAMINER LI: So, without objection,
3 Mr. DeVitto's Exhibit 1 and 2 will be entered into the
4 record.

5 MR. FINLEY: No objection.

6 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you.

7 (WHEREUPON, DeVitto
8 Exhibits 1 and 2 are
9 identified and received
10 into evidence.)

11 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I do have,
12 Mr. DeVitto, one question to ask.

13 THE WITNESS: Sure.

14 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY HEARING EXAMINER LI:

15 Q Have you experienced any billing issue during the
16 years with the Company?

17 A Over the years, yes, many. A lot of times not
18 getting a bill. They send out hard copies. A
19 lot of times we won't get them. A lot of times
20 they are over-billed and they make it up on the
21 next one. But, yes, we've had a lot of issues.
22 A lot of people in that neighborhood have had the
23 same issues. There's people that in the last six
24 to eight months have been over billed by \$500.

1 Q And I -- if I understand correctly, the water
2 quality issue was getting better in the past six
3 months. Have you noticed any service -- I mean,
4 the billing issue getting improved as well?

5 A No, I can't say that I have.

6 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Okay, thank you.
7 That's all the questions I have.

8 THE WITNESS: Okay.

9 HEARING EXAMINER LI: And thank you for
10 coming out tonight. You may be excused.

11 MS. HOLT: Mr. Jim Herrington.

12 JIM HERRINGTON;
13 having been duly sworn,
14 testified as follows:

15 THE WITNESS: My name is James E.
16 Herrington. I live at 3508 Rocky Ridge Lane in
17 Harrisburg.

18 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

19 Q How do you spell your last name?

20 A H-E-R-R-I-N-G-T-O-N.

21 Q Thank you. Please proceed with your statement.

22 A I have lived in Rocky Ridge off Rocky Ridge Lane
23 since 1999. I am at the highest point of water
24 service from Water Resources and I've been on the

1 service the entire time.

2 Initially, I went to -- I worked for Duke
3 Power for 40 years so I would leave home at 3:30
4 to 4:30 in the morning and not return til after
5 7:00 at night. Therefore, when I left in the
6 morning, I would have water. Come home at night
7 and not have it.

8 Also, being at the highest point on the
9 water system, I was one of the first ones that
10 would notice water pressure going down. I would
11 call the phone service and leave a message and a
12 lot of times I would get, well, we'll try to get
13 out in the morning to check it, to do that.

14 The other services that we've had problems
15 with, that I did, was that if there was a trip of
16 either pump, at the time, there was no
17 notification to Water Resources to respond.

18 At one time I was understanding that there
19 was a relay system with an automatic calling
20 feature that if the pumps lost power they would
21 be notified. Of course, we're on Union Electric
22 service system, power, and sometimes it goes out
23 but Union Electric -- and I can say this because
24 I worked for Duke Power for 40 years -- it's more

1 reliable than Duke Power in this area to do that.

2 I will say that as far as issues with the
3 Company, when I talk to their representative in
4 the office, if I have a billing issue or
5 something like that, they responded very well.
6 Wonderful office response. So, that's really
7 what Lenny has said is basically the way we found
8 things. The only problem that I would add is I
9 have some photographs because when they go to
10 flush a system after an outage, I would always
11 see nothing but muddy water, and do that. Still
12 today, you can go into a commode, flush a
13 commode, and when they have added chemicals, you
14 can smell the chlorine being added to that.

15 That's it. I'm open for any questions?

16 Q I have a couple of follow up questions. Now, you
17 stated that when the Company flushed the system
18 you have muddy water and stains in the commode?

19 A Commodes; yes, ma'am.

20 Q And how long did that last, the stains?

21 A Sometimes four or five days. And at the time,
22 until recently, there was no boil water order
23 given so that's only been a recent thing.

24 Q What do you mean by recent in terms of the

1 Company issuing the boil water --

2 A The last several outages they have issued
3 notices. Prior to that, there was never a notice
4 issued. They do put it on the phone, on the
5 doors. Of course, you don't know it's there
6 unless you use your front door every day. So,
7 other than that, like I said, they've been
8 responsible since the Utilities Commission and
9 the other Orders have been ordering them to
10 improve the system.

11 Q So you would say since the last rate case --

12 A Yes, ma'am.

13 Q -- in 2018, things have improved.

14 A They've been a whole lot better.

15 Q Okay.

16 A The last several outages we've had was not the
17 fault of Water Resources but the fault of cable,
18 fiber cable being installed in the area, and that
19 happened several times. That was not their
20 fault.

21 Q Okay. When was the last outage, if you recall?

22 A About seven months ago and, like I said, that was
23 not due to their fault.

24 MS. HOLT: Thank you. No further questions.

1 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. FINLEY:

2 Q Mr. Herrington, in your letter there, an electric
3 cooperative; is that right?

4 A Yes, we are.

5 Q Just curious. Thank you, sir.

6 A Okay. Union Electric.

7 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Just one more minute.

8 THE WITNESS: Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry.

9 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I think you filed a
10 consumer statement.

11 THE WITNESS: Yes, ma'am.

12 MS. HOLT: Yes.

13 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Would Public Staff
14 make a motion --

15 Would you like to enter that in evidences?

16 THE WITNESS: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. HOLT: Yes. Thank you for reminding me.

18 I'd like to -- I don't have Mr. Herrington's statement
19 in front of me, but he did file it with the Commission
20 and I'll locate it, and I would like that to be marked
21 as Herrington Exhibit 1.

22 THE WITNESS: Okay, thank you.

23 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Any objection from the
24 Company?

1 MR. FINLEY: Not to have it marked. I will
2 be happy to take a look at it. When I see it I don't
3 assume there will be an objection but I'd just like to
4 take a look at it, please.

5 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Okay.

6 MS. HOLT: I'll get that to you when we get
7 back in Raleigh.

8 MR. FINLEY: That's fine.

9 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Without objection, we
10 can mark Mr. Herrington's consumer statement that's
11 already filed in the docket as Herrington Exhibit 1.
12 And we will be sure to get a copy of the consumer
13 statement for the Court Reporter. Thank you.

14 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

15 MS. HOLT: Thank you.

16 (WHEREUPON, Herrington
17 Exhibit 1 is identified.)

18 MS. HOLT: Ms. Rebecca Davis.

19 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Ms. Davis, how are you
20 doing tonight?

21 MS. DAVIS: I'm nervous.

22 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Me too.

23 REBECCA DAVIS;
24 having been duly sworn,

1 testified as follows:

2 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

3 Q Hello, Ms. Davis. Would you please state your
4 name and address for the record and your address?

5 A Rebecca Davis, 3498 Rocky Ridge Lane, Harrisburg,
6 North Carolina.

7 Q And did you file with the Commission a statement?

8 A I did.

9 MS. HOLT: At the appropriate time, I'm
10 going to ask that Ms. Davis' statement be marked as R.
11 Davis Exhibit 1.

12 A Thank you.

13 Q Please proceed with your statement.

14 A I want to thank some of the people that have
15 spoken before me with all the great facts and,
16 trust me, they are facts. We've had a miserable
17 time with water in our neighborhood. I've lived
18 there for 34 years and it is -- it's smelly, it's
19 difficult, and it goes out all the time.
20 Recently it's gotten better. And for the first
21 time ever, the last two outages we did have a
22 boil advisory which we've never had before -- so
23 I do wonder what we've been drinking -- and
24 complaints of all the sludge that's in our

1 toilets and sinks, and ruined all of our things
2 is 100 percent accurate.

3 I did want to point out to people that this
4 increase seems like price gouging. It seems
5 outrageous, especially with the miserable service
6 that we've put up with all these years.

7 I understand that over the same period,
8 we've had around 15 percent increase of
9 inflation. So why would this increase be
10 hundreds of percent. I don't understand that.
11 I'm a senior citizen. I live on a limited income
12 that's not going to move a whole lot. So if all
13 of the utilities decide to go up hundreds of
14 percents, I'd be in pretty rough shape. And this
15 is not acceptable. So I certainly hope someone
16 takes care of this for us. Thank you.

17 MS. HOLT: Thank you.

18 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Any questions?

19 MS. HOLT: I have a couple of follow up
20 questions.

21 BY MS. HOLT:

22 Q Ms. Davis, you said that you have been a resident
23 of the subdivision for 34 years and there are
24 several problems that you have experienced;

1 smelly, outages, those type of things.

2 A Yes.

3 Q Have the outages and the issues improved since
4 2018?

5 A More recently than that but, yes, we've had some
6 improvement. They are not quite so long or quite
7 so -- when we were first there, five to 10 times
8 a year for multiple days it would be out. It was
9 really -- I kept clothes in my car that I would
10 take along to work and find a shower someplace in
11 the -- I mean, I would find other bathrooms to
12 try to -- it was always out. I mean I kept
13 something with me because it was that often. And
14 that slowed down. Of course, I'm retired now so
15 I'm just, oh well, I'm not offending so many
16 people now. It's okay.

17 Q Well, have you had any outages in the past, since
18 the New Year of 2024?

19 A Yes. Not in 2024 but, like they say, about six
20 or seven months ago when the cable got put it and
21 we had the boil advisory then.

22 Q And when you do have service problems, do you
23 contact the Company?

24 A Yes. We usually contact each other, the

1 neighbors, to find out who has called it in and
2 if they have and quite often we'll let that
3 stand. I mean, there's no reason for all of us
4 to call every time when there's very little
5 information.

6 Q Does the Company respond?

7 A I would say that's gotten a little better. For
8 years, there would be no response whatsoever and
9 it would be days of no service and we would just
10 be kind of waiting, wondering, and now they've
11 gotten a bit better more recently, like I say,
12 where they'll give some information.

13 Q Okay. And how do they provide that information?

14 A Well, my husband calls. I think he's coming up
15 next so you might ask him.

16 Q Okay. I'll ask him.

17 A But he'll usually say I have no idea or usually
18 Cheryl next door has better information on what's
19 going on with it than what we find out.

20 MS. HOLT: Okay. I have no more questions.

21 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

22 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

23 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I do have one
24 question, Ms. Davis.

1 EXAMINATION BY HEARING EXAMINER LI:

2 Q You said customer service is getting better. Do
3 you remember if this is since 2013? Or not only
4 customer service, I think you said the quality --
5 the service -- overall service is getting better.

6 A Within the last year or two at the most.

7 Q Since 2023.

8 A Or 2022 even.

9 Q Gotcha. Thank you.

10 HEARING EXAMINER LI: At this time, the
11 Hearing Examiner doesn't have any questions.

12 So, I think Public Staff already made a
13 motion. Without objection, I would enter Ms. Davis'
14 consumer statement, already filed in the docket, as
15 Ms Davis Exhibit 1. And we're sure to get a copy for
16 the Court Reporter as well.

17 (WHEREUPON, Davis Exhibit 1
18 is identified.)

19 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you. You may be
20 excused. Thank you for coming out tonight.

21 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

22 MS. HOLT: I would like to call Mr. Walter
23 Davis.

24 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Good evening,

1 Mr. Davis.

2 MR. DAVIS: Good evening.

3 WALTER DAVIS;

4 having been duly sworn,

5 testified as follows:

6 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

7 Q Please state your name and address for the
8 record.

9 A Walter Davis, 3498 Rocky Ridge Lane, Harrisburg.

10 Q Thank you. And Mr. Davis, did you file a
11 statement with the Commission?

12 A Yes, online.

13 Q Would you like to have that statement admitted
14 into evidence?

15 A Sure.

16 HEARING EXAMINER LI: That will be allowed
17 without objection.

18 MS. HOLT: And I'd like to ask that
19 Mr. Walter Davis' statement marked as Walter Davis
20 Exhibit 1. Thank you.

21 (WHEREUPON, Walter Davis
22 Exhibit 1 is identified.)

23 Q Mr. Davis, please proceed with your statement.

24 A I don't have much to add compared to what

1 everybody said before so I want to make my voice
2 heard that I agree with everything that has been
3 said up here so far.

4 Lots of frustration being a customer of this
5 company. And when I saw the percentage of
6 increase that was requested, I agree with my wife
7 about it being price-gouging type. So I really
8 appreciate the public advocate people, and
9 please, please push. We don't mind for
10 15 percent or an increase of 20, but this just
11 seems to be over-the-top outrageous considering
12 also the frustration we've had with the Company
13 for 30 years. So, that's basically all I want to
14 say.

15 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Any questions?

16 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

17 BY MS. HOLT:

18 Q I would just like to follow up on a question I
19 asked the prior witness regarding how the
20 Company -- when you have service issues and how
21 the Company communicates with you.

22 A Well, in the beginning, it was very frustrating.
23 You couldn't get a call back and it would be days
24 like previous people have said. Recently, their

1 answering system is better, and they do call you
2 back and the outages are less. But given the
3 long history of frustration, that clouds that.
4 You don't have any confidence. So they've been a
5 little better but it's still very frustrating.

6 Q How are the boil-water notices?

7 A We've just gotten a couple recently like people
8 have said.

9 Q And how are they communicated?

10 A I think I remember notices being hung on the
11 front door.

12 Q On the front door.

13 A Yes.

14 Q Is there any other news of communication; email,
15 message boards?

16 A Just through the mail; hung on the door and mail.

17 Q Does the Company communicate with the homeowners
18 association?

19 A Our neighborhood I guess legally has a homeowners
20 association; it's not active. We have deed --
21 things attached to the deeds are there but we
22 don't -- our homeowners association doesn't meet
23 on a regular basis. It hasn't for 30 years.

24 Q Thank you.

1 MS. HOLT: I have no further questions.

2 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

3 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I don't have any
4 questions, Mr. Davis.

5 THE WITNESS: Okay.

6 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you so much for
7 coming out tonight and for your comments as well.

8 MS. HOLT: Ms. Sharon Buck.

9 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Good evening,
10 Ms. Buck.

11

12

SHARON BUCK;

13

having been duly sworn,

14

testified as follows:

15

DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

16

Q Please state your name and address for the
17 record.

18

A Sharon Buck, 8529 Indian Summer Trail.

19

Can you hear me okay? Basically, I agree
20 with everyone else but it's the fact that we're
21 having to pay for an increase because of
22 someone's irresponsibility to have done upkeep to
23 begin with. They should have been doing this 15
24 to 20 years ago. Instead, they neglected it,

1 neglected it, neglected it, and now they are
2 asking for a 384 percent increase. I mean -- and
3 I can tell our water pressure goes up and down
4 still now because I do laundry, and I can tell in
5 the shower, and places like that.

6 Also, I've had to replace a couple of my
7 appliances. My refrigerator, I replaced it brand
8 new three years ago. And the water line for my
9 icemaker, it just recently went out again. I'm
10 not going to replace it again because the second
11 time he was out there he had to replace the motor
12 because it was all mucked up with mud. My
13 dishwasher, I had to replace that as well because
14 it got all mucked up with mud in the lines and
15 then around the motor. And it would have costed
16 me more to -- it would have costed me just as
17 much to pay him to fix it than it would to put a
18 new one in. But to be honest with you, I'm
19 afraid to even run it because I'm afraid it will
20 get ruined again.

21 And, heaven forbid, when you're without
22 water, we actually, we went to friends and family
23 to take showers. But can't flush your toilets
24 so, therefore -- and, I'm sorry, I don't mean to

1 be too TMI -- but you're having to throw your
2 toilet paper in the trash. And, heaven forbid,
3 you have to take a bowel movement, you've got to
4 go down to a gas station or restaurant or out
5 behind the tree. So, you know, you're up the
6 creek there. It's very unsanitary having to live
7 with those kind of conditions.

8 I mean, like I said, it would have been one
9 thing if he had done stuff over the years, you
10 know, 15 to 20 years gradually, that would be
11 different, but all of a sudden to do this and
12 sock it to you and say, "oh, here you go, here's
13 the bill for my irresponsibility". No, it don't
14 work that way. Life don't work that way.

15 And also, I've been in insurance for 25
16 years. For us to have no water in our fire
17 hydrants, that's ridiculous. I mean, I just hope
18 insurance services, if they had known that they
19 probably would have raised everyone's rates
20 through the roof or everybody would have canceled
21 our insurance. Okay. I'm done ranting. Thank
22 you.

23 Q First, I'd like to ask you, Ms. Buck, did you
24 file a statement with the Commission prior to the

1 hearing tonight?

2 A Yes, ma'am.

3 Q You did? And would you like that entered into
4 the record?

5 A Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. HOLT: Madam Hearing Examiner, I would
7 like Ms. Buck's statement, which has already been
8 filed, to be marked as Buck Exhibit 1.

9 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Any objection?

10 MR. FINLEY: No objection.

11 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Without objection, we
12 can mark Ms. Buck's consumer statement that's already
13 filed in the docket as Buck Exhibit 1. And we will be
14 sure to get a copy of that consumer statement for the
15 Court Reporter.

16 (WHEREUPON, Buck Exhibit 1
17 is identified.)

18 THE WITNESS: Am I free to go?

19 MS. HOLT: I have one more question.

20 THE WITNESS: Oh, sorry.

21 BY MS. HOLT:

22 Q When was the last time you were without water?

23 A Oh gosh, probably at least -- it's been more than
24 six months.

1 Q Okay.

2 A So it's been more. It's just -- it's the fact
3 that no one even offers to bring us water. We're
4 buying bottled water and, like I said, to be
5 sanitary, you're having to go to friends or
6 family to take a showers and it's just -- like I
7 said, your toilet, you can't. So it's -- you
8 know, and eventually, odors build up and
9 everything. And I'm sorry, I was just brought
10 up, cleanliness is next to Godliness. So there
11 we go, I'll leave it at that.

12 Q Thank you.

13 A You're welcome.

14 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. FINLEY:

15 Q Ms. Buck, the last time you went to a neighbor's
16 house to take a shower, when was that?

17 A It wasn't neighbors, it was friends or family.
18 We went to my step daughter's house. She lives
19 about five miles from us.

20 Q When was the last time?

21 A Oh gosh. It was late last summer or fall is when
22 we went, because we were without water for almost
23 a week. So we had to go over to her house just
24 about every day or every other day to take

1 showers.

2 Q Thank you, ma'am.

3 A Anything else, sir?

4 Q No, ma'am.

5 THE WITNESS: Am I free to go?

6 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Yeah. I don't have
7 any questions for you, Ms. Buck. Thank you so much
8 for your comments tonight and you may be excused.
9 Thank you.

10 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

11 MS. HOLT: Mr. Rob Ferris.

12 ROBERT FERRIS;

13 having been duly sworn,

14 testified as follows:

15 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

16 Q Please state your name and address for the
17 record.

18 A It's Robert Ferris, 8995 Cherrys Ford Court.

19 Q And which subdivision do you live?

20 A Highland Ridge.

21 Q Highland Ridge. Okay. And what county is that?

22 A Cabarrus.

23 Q Cabarrus. Okay.

24 A Pretty much where everybody else comes from

1 except for the first gentleman.

2 Q Thank you for that clarification. Mr. Ferris,
3 did you file a statement with the Commission?

4 A I did.

5 Q You did. And would you like to have that entered
6 into the record?

7 A Yes.

8 MS. HOLT: I would like to request that
9 Mr. Ferris' statement, prefiled statement be
10 identified as Ferris Exhibit 1.

11 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Without objection, we
12 will identify Mr. Ferris' consumer statement as
13 Exhibit 1. And we'll be sure to get a copy for the
14 Court Reporter. Thank you.

15 (WHEREUPON, Ferris Exhibit
16 1 is identified.)

17 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Go ahead.

18 MS. HOLT: Thank you.

19 BY MS. HOLT:

20 Q Please proceed with your statement.

21 A Thanks you for the time. I just want to just
22 reiterate everything that I've heard tonight I've
23 experienced. I've lived in the neighborhood 33
24 years. I've actually built three homes in the

1 neighborhood and lived in all three. I've
2 experienced the same issues from the first year
3 I've lived in the neighborhood, from the pump
4 going out to not having water. The first home I
5 lived in, I was actually at the bottom of the
6 hill so I had water more often than the folks at
7 the top of the hill, at least for a day or half a
8 day, so I experienced a little better situation
9 there. But again, it's still the same thing;
10 very little response. No information from the
11 Company ever, basically an advance warning. You
12 would think that once they were notified that
13 there was a water outage, it's pretty simple to
14 make phone calls to your clients, or a computer
15 good, or whatever, we're working on it. This is
16 what you should be doing. You know, you may come
17 home to a note on your door saying boil water.
18 It's off again. If you got that. Most of the
19 time you didn't get that. You just didn't have
20 any water.

21 And again, I -- you know, it goes back to --
22 the sad part is my third home that I built, I
23 made sure there was a swimming pool in the
24 backyard so I would have water to flush the

1 toilets and for a quick bath if needed. That's
2 literally one of the main concerns I had when I
3 built the third home in that neighborhood. I
4 didn't want to be in the neighborhood. I built
5 three houses there because I like my neighbors.
6 So, that's just one example.

7 What you've heard today is just ongoing.
8 And, of course, the rate increase and all that is
9 just exorbitant. It's just ridiculous. And I've
10 heard the question several times, 'what's your
11 experience been in the past six months?' You
12 know, are we trying to judge why we should get a
13 rate increase on the most recent six months after
14 they got the pumps fixed or their whole history
15 of the way they treated the neighborhood?

16 It's really sad and I know this. I've met
17 with them and been with them for over 30 years.
18 Dennis has ignored my phone calls more than once.
19 Personally -- I have his personal cell phone
20 number. I feel -- I've actually gone down to the
21 office on Fairview Road numerous times for
22 different reasons. I feel extremely sorrowful
23 for the people that work and have to receive the
24 complaints that we have to give over the years.

1 It's truly sad. A Company like that that would
2 hide behind their poor folks that have to answer
3 the phone. Some of them young kids, young ladies
4 in the office. The poor folks have to come out
5 and service it or try to repair it or whatever.
6 You know, I think when this thing goes to
7 Raleigh, those folks need to be asked some
8 questions about how they feel about complaints
9 and questions. It truly is -- that's me.

10 That's just a perfect example of how the
11 whole Company has run this business since day
12 one. And the lack of concern for maintenance for
13 their customers, for just about generally how you
14 would run a company. Number one, make a profit,
15 which obviously they didn't or they wouldn't be
16 trying to recover all of the money at one time or
17 at least very quickly, timeframe.

18 Instead of the rate increase, I think we
19 actually all should be reimbursed for the
20 countless water boiling or water bottles that
21 I've purchased every single week for 33 years
22 because you can't drink the water. We've not
23 drank the water in over 30 years, my family. In
24 fact, I use bottled water for my dogs. It's that

1 bad.

2 I have two house filters in line. They are
3 constantly full of mud. It doesn't matter which
4 house of the three that I've lived in. I've
5 replaced numerous toilets. I've built three
6 homes, therefore, I've sold two of them, and
7 every time I sell a house I have to completely
8 replace the sinks, the faucets, and the toilets
9 so somebody will buy the house, because they are
10 so stained and so marked up with residue from the
11 water. So I would like to be reimbursed for
12 those. I would like to be reimbursed for the
13 repairs to the refrigerators, the actual
14 refrigerators; the repairs to the washing
15 machines; the repairs for the replacements of
16 water heaters in the past 33 years. I think
17 those are more of the things that we probably
18 should be discussing rather than an increase. I
19 would like to see a reimbursement.

20 AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: Yeah.

21 AUDIENCE MEMBER 2: We second that.

22 MS. HOLT: Thank you. I don't think I have
23 any questions.

24 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

1 THE WITNESS: I do have one more thing to
2 say about the billing. To this -- at this moment, and
3 this is constant, you write your check and you mail it
4 in. Sometimes 30 days will go by and they'll
5 actually say you didn't pay it and the next month they
6 show the credit. Right now, I have an invoice that we
7 paid on the 15th of March; it still isn't showing
8 paid. It's sitting on a desk somewhere on Fairview
9 Road. We paid it by the bank, direct through the
10 bank. I've done it both ways. Mail it in from our
11 mailbox. I've had the bank system where they write
12 the check and mail it in. It doesn't matter. Of
13 course, they don't offer online banking, because that
14 would be too easy and sensible.

15 Their billing and their accounting is
16 atrocious. It just goes to -- it speaks to the rest
17 of their Company's management style and the way they
18 care nothing about their customers, probably their
19 employees. I would love to see and the turnover rate
20 there is. But yeah, so, I think when you do go to
21 Raleigh it would be interesting to get some expert
22 witnesses from the people that work for them.

23 MS. HOLT: I have a follow-up question
24 regarding the billing.

1 BY MS. HOLT:

2 Q So, you're still having issues with billing?

3 A They don't cash the check until whenever they
4 feel like it.

5 Q Are you charged late fees or --

6 A No, we have gotten a statement saying we're late,
7 but we weren't. I've got bank records showing we
8 mailed it in 20 days ago. So, they've never
9 charged me -- you know, they've tried to and I've
10 called and no answer, no response. Then, the
11 next bill would come with the credit.

12 MS. HOLT: Thank you.

13 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Mr. Ferris, I do have
14 a few questions for you.

15 EXAMINATION BY HEARING EXAMINER LI:

16 Q You said the Company doesn't offer web payment,
17 the electronic?

18 A Not to my knowledge.

19 Q Do you know if the Company has a website?

20 A I do not know the answer.

21 Q And also I have a question about the water meter
22 reading. Can the water meter reading be accessed
23 easily, like from the street or do you know if
24 your neighborhood has the fence?

1 A No, all the meters are at the street and they can
2 be accessed by the person collecting the
3 information on the road.

4 Q And have you met the meter reading person at all?

5 A Several -- many years ago.

6 Q How often do they --

7 A It's not monthly.

8 Q Okay.

9 A Definitely not monthly.

10 Q The meter reading is a --

11 A It's a guess most of the time.

12 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you. I do not
13 have any other questions. Any questions from the
14 Hearing Examiner's questions?

15 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

16 MS. HOLT: No questions. Thank you.

17 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you.

18 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

19 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you for coming
20 out tonight and you may be excused.

21 MS. HOLT: Mr. Don Stremovihtg.

22 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Mr. Stremovihtg, am I
23 saying that correctly?

24 MR. STREMOVIHTG: Stremovihtg. It's fine,

1 yeah.

2 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you. I
3 apologize if I butchered your name.

4 MR. STREMOVIHTG: That's okay.

5 DON STREMOVIHTG;
6 having been duly sworn,
7 testified as follows:

8 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

9 Q Please state and spell your last name for the
10 record.

11 A Sure. My name is Don Stremovihtg,
12 S-T-R-E-M-O-V-I-H-T-G.

13 Q What is your address?

14 DEPUTY: No talking in the courtroom.

15 A 8980 Cherrys Ford Court, Harrisburg.

16 Q Thank you. Please proceed with your statement.

17 A Okay. Well, certainly it's hard to say
18 everything in a three-minute timeframe but I
19 think I could echo Rob's testimony just then and
20 I think the highlights that are certainly
21 detailed in my statement that I submitted is that
22 the inconsistency. The big thing is the
23 inconsistent water pressure, inconsistent
24 service, inconsistent maintenance, inconsistent

1 billing, inconsistent just replies, customer
2 service standpoint of getting are answers to
3 things.

4 One of the things that I want to highlight
5 first is that it was hit in one of the
6 testimonies mentioned about hitting lines. So I
7 know that someone had mentioned and it wasn't the
8 fault of -- they thought that it wasn't the fault
9 of the Windstream who came through and put the
10 fiber optics in there. Actually, having -- being
11 in the field of construction and so forth, we
12 have to deal with NCDIG, NC811, which is No Dig
13 that you call on, and the one of the main breaks
14 that happened was due to -- after talking,
15 speaking with the representative of Windstream,
16 their field supervisor, they had actually hit
17 that line so when they marked the lines out there
18 you have to stay within certain parameters of the
19 left and right about 3-foot. And they had
20 actually -- that main break that was hit was
21 4-foot off of the -- it was on the other side of
22 the utility box so -- and others can testify to
23 that. So it was the fault because it's not --
24 they call them tracer wires. So they come out

1 with their wands and they trace wires for cable
2 or whatever they use that to find out where your
3 lines are. The lines are so antiquated that they
4 just don't have the -- it's just not up to par so
5 they can't -- they don't know where the lines
6 are. And then you had one hit and I think three
7 different hits at that same time. That was back
8 in February of 2023, the early part of it, and
9 that went on for sometime.

10 I would say that, you know, the system, to
11 Rob's point, too, is an antiquated system just
12 going -- being able to pay payments and so forth.
13 You know, a lot of times when you're dealing with
14 mail, you know, it takes a long time. But if you
15 have somewhere like most utility companies you
16 just pay them right online through an app or
17 whatever, through your service. That will help
18 tremendously.

19 I think that the -- the main thing is like
20 we deal with the dirty water. You've heard the
21 dirty water, the inconsistent pressure, the items
22 that come through your pipes. We're at the blunt
23 of that. So I know one, specifically, one time
24 the answer comes back to well it's probably your

1 septic, probably your water heater. Well, I just
2 happened to replace my water heater less than six
3 months, just like not even two years ago, so it
4 was sediment and the constant that we get.

5 We're currently right at the well site. So
6 if you were to look at where the well is located,
7 we are adjacent to it because we sit further
8 back. So any time there's a break or low water
9 pressure, we get the brunt of that constantly.
10 And it takes days whereas others may get clear
11 water sooner. I mean, we get a lot of it. So it
12 takes days for you to clean that out.

13 I think that when you do call and try to get
14 some form of response and -- you know, I can go
15 back and look in the notes but even back in 2020
16 there were three occasions I said, "hey, we're
17 going to do some -- we need something out here
18 marked". And of course, there was never any
19 reply. I sent them three emails. There were
20 constant replies back in October and September of
21 2020, and there was no replies. Like, we need to
22 know where these lines are.

23 That's part of that inconsistency that you
24 get when you're trying to pay for a utility.

1 You're paying for something that is a paid
2 service. If it were my own well then I'd be
3 responsible to make sure I provided the quality
4 of water for me and my family. But we are paying
5 for a service. If I go to Union Power and I ask
6 them something and they do something by chance
7 they mess up, they are a utility company that
8 backs up and have the wherewithal to actually
9 backup what they are doing. So they don't just
10 push you off to something else. They actually
11 say, "hey, this is what we're going to do. We're
12 going to take care of -- we're good neighbors
13 with you and we want to make sure that you are
14 taken care of".

15 Now, I know -- I know one of the things that
16 has been a huge ordeal is the fact that when you
17 do call as you mentioned or you call to try to
18 get some type of response, it can take a while.
19 I realize the people are doing all they can do.
20 The person that's in there administratively
21 trying to help, she wears a ton of different hats
22 and she knows, and I've talked with Beth many
23 times, she wears a ton of hats. She's reading
24 the meters. She's doing the billing. She's

1 answering the calls. She's taking all the --
2 literally, she's coming out and God help her. I
3 mean, she's trying to do all these different
4 things. No wonder you have so many things that
5 are falling through the cracks.

6 So all the things we've heard about like the
7 fixtures, about the things that we're replacing,
8 financially putting into it, it costs us money.
9 It's real money that we work for and it's been
10 going on for a long time.

11 All we ask is be a viable company, as
12 somebody would want me to be, to stand up and say
13 look this is what's wrong. Let me look you in
14 the eyes and say this is what's wrong, we're
15 going to fix it. Okay. So, on the other end,
16 and my statement mentions as well, is this is
17 probably more directed to my site is that I am
18 being -- I am right beside the well, adjacent to
19 it, sit far back, I have spent thousands of
20 dollars to try to take with care of watershed.
21 So, and I've spoke with Dennis before about this
22 back in 2020 and said, hey, we've got to fix this
23 problem. I get tons of water. I've invested in
24 putting concrete pads and rock and drainage and

1 it comes closer to my garage. So I'm trying to
2 keep it out of my house. That's a watershed
3 issue but it is also their site, and something
4 needs to be done about that to make sure that
5 your site is properly cared for and that you're
6 not dumping and shedding water through other
7 maintenance. That's happened.

8 So when maintenance happens on-site, you
9 basically get these large -- you know, a large
10 drilling machine that will come around and
11 they're turning around and doing all -- you know,
12 doing their thing. And they get stuck. They
13 get -- I mean, they're mudding it up. So they've
14 changed. Over the years they've changed the
15 trajectory of the slope of that, and so, you
16 know, water gets worse. So it's just gotten
17 worse. That last four inches we got a couple of
18 months ago, it was -- I had waves of water coming
19 in my backyard from that site. So, that's not a
20 water issue but it is a company issue, you know,
21 a water quality issue.

22 So, I think that the main points have been
23 hit. But I believe that the last thing that I
24 would like to leave, too, is that we had just

1 enough time to get some signatures. So I'd like
2 to offer, if I could like to submit that,
3 signatures, from people of Highland Ridge. And
4 some of them could not be here but there is a
5 statement that was adjoined to it. So, if I
6 could do that as well.

7 Q Would you read what the statement says?

8 A The statement itself?

9 Q Yes.

10 A *We, the Highland Ridge Homeowner's/part of the*
11 *Rocky River Subdivision, unanimously oppose the*
12 *Water Resources, Inc.'s Application and request*
13 *of the NC Utilities Commission to adjust and*
14 *increase water usage and rate increase in any*
15 *amount. The proposed surge in rate increase by*
16 *Water Resources (WRI) is nothing short of absurd*
17 *and should not even be considered, be considered in*
18 *that proposed rates would increase the average*
19 *monthly bill for residential water service in the*
20 *Rocky River service area by a minimum of \$106.80*
21 *per month, that's an average of 384 percent,*
22 *proposed water usage rates would only serve to*
23 *directly hurt residents, particularly those*
24 *elderly and families with children. Record*

1 inflation and historic interest rates have
2 already skyrocketed the cost of living for
3 residents. Approving and increasing any
4 absorbent rate increase request would only serve
5 harm to our communities and residents. This
6 excessive rate increase or any rate increase
7 would place undue hardship on the residents of
8 the Rocky River Plantation Subdivisions/Highland
9 Ridge Community and make it even more difficult
10 to provide for their families in this current
11 economy. Then it lists the issues.

12 *The Residents of Rocky River*
13 *Plantation/Highland Ridge Community, have put up*
14 *with regular and ongoing issues with excessively*
15 *hard and dirty water, low to no water pressure,*
16 *water main breaks, water outages, mismanaged and*
17 *overcharged billing. Residents have mailed,*
18 *emailed and called, and filed ongoing complaints*
19 *regularly of Dennis Abbott and Water Resources*
20 *for over 12 years, to the point of contacting*
21 *legal counsel and working with TV stations to*
22 *expose the divisive practices and the ongoing*
23 *issues. Therefore, we expect a consistent level*
24 *of excellent quality water, water pressure,*

1 *quality water service, consistent system*
2 *maintenance and billing services in which we pay*
3 *for each month to Water Resources, Inc.*

4 *Residents have endured ongoing and ongoing*
5 *inconsistent quality of water service; continual*
6 *inconsistency in water quality; inconsistency of*
7 *water pressure and regular water service; regular*
8 *lack of maintenance to pipes, systems and wells;*
9 *regular issues of water outages due to lack of*
10 *upkeep of wells and systems; issues of*
11 *inconsistent and overbilling; paying these*
12 *providers for potable, habitable, safe drinking*
13 *water only to receive ongoing and regularly*
14 *issues of unsafe, undrinkable water documented by*
15 *notices left on doors and in mailboxes to not*
16 *drink the water and water must be boiled for safe*
17 *usage until further notice.*

18 *The last thing residents currently need is*
19 *to bear right now is the brunt of any unearned*
20 *increase, excessive and or not, in water usage*
21 *rates that would only exacerbate the financial*
22 *strain in the current economy.*

23 *Over the years, Dennis Abbott/Water*
24 *Resources has requested and received numerous*

1 approved water rate increases, and 018 was the
2 last, rate increases were approved even with all
3 of the complaints while filed throughout the
4 weeks, months and years leading up to the
5 unwarranted approval and increase by consumers,
6 and never once did we, the consumers, see Dennis
7 Abbott or Water Resources apply those approved
8 rate increases to improve consumer services or
9 water quality, until recently in Dennis
10 Abbott/Water Resources decided to make
11 preparations to make his service sellable, to be
12 able to cash in, and leaving the consumer to foot
13 the bill.

14 Requested rate adjustment and increase
15 recommendations for requirement either before
16 approval or as a requirement of any approval,
17 required to be fully implemented within 30 days
18 of approval of any water rate increase.

19 Improving customer service by providing
20 online billing and payment processing instead of
21 requiring antiquated mail-in or call-in payment
22 processing; required update to WRI service line
23 maps every 10 years and making WRI service line
24 maps to easily accessible and available to North

1 Carolina 811 Dig -- No Dig and Water Resources
2 employees and contractors; reducing service line
3 hits to the Company's underground facilities,
4 including damage by WRI employees and
5 contractors; and reducing unaccounted-for water,
6 UFW.

7 The fact that the hearing protests/consumer
8 statements close on Monday, the 11th, only one to
9 two business days after receipt of delivery of
10 notice via the USPS mail, shows intent to use a
11 tactic as usual by Dennis Abbott or Water
12 Resources to deny the public/WRI consumers
13 opportunity to hold him or them accountable and
14 protest and protect -- protest the excessive rate
15 increase or any unearned rate increase.

16 At this time, there is absolutely no
17 evidence to justify such a drastic rate increase
18 or any rate increase at this time and we the
19 Rocky River Plantation residents strongly oppose
20 and request that the North Carolina Utilities
21 Commission to exercise its authority, intervene
22 and deny this proposed and requested excessive
23 water usage adjustment and rate increase for
24 Water Resources, Inc.; that the North Carolina

1 *Utilities Commission to exercise its authority,*
2 *intervene and deny any water usage rate*
3 *adjustment and increase for Water Resources,*
4 *Inc.; that the North Carolina Utilities*
5 *Commission to exercise its authority, intervene*
6 *and put into place a minimum of a three-year rate*
7 *increase moratorium for Dennis Abbott/Water*
8 *Resources; and that the North Carolina Utilities*
9 *Commission actively hold Dennis Abbott/Water*
10 *Resources accountable regarding known and ongoing*
11 *issues with water quality, interrupted water*
12 *services, along with the improper billing,*
13 *improper monthly consumer reporting statements.*

14 Q Are you finished?

15 A The statement.

16 Q Okay. Thank you. Mr. Stremovihtg, you stated
17 that you filed a statement with the Commission
18 prior to this hearing.

19 A I did.

20 Q Would you like to have that admitted into
21 evidence?

22 A I would.

23 MS. HOLT: At this time, I would like to ask
24 that Mr. Stremovihtg's statement be marked as

1 Stremovihtg Exhibit 1, and that the Petition be marked
2 as Stremovihtg Exhibit 2.

3 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Any objection?

4 MR. FINLEY: No objection but, if he is
5 going to read it, there's no point in repeating all of
6 that in on the record, but no objection.

7 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you. Without
8 objection, we will identify Mr. Stremovihtg's --

9 THE WITNESS: That's fine.

10 HEARING EXAMINER LI: -- consumer statement
11 as Mr. Stremovihtg Exhibit 1 and also we will identify
12 the Petition/HOA statement as Exhibit 2. We will be
13 sure to get a copy of that for the Court Reporter.

14 (WHEREUPON, Stremovihtg
15 Exhibits 1 and 2 are
16 identified.)

17 HEARING EXAMINER LI: At this time, the --
18 I'm sorry, the Company? Mr. Finley?

19 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. FINLEY:

20 Q Mr. Stremovihtg, you said that the notice that
21 you got in the short time for responses was
22 Mr. Abbott's doings; is that right?

23 A Well, as I understand it, when I received it, it
24 came from Water Resources. The consumer notice

1 came, which was Friday, one business day prior to
2 having the statements on Monday.

3 Q Would you be surprised to learn that that was the
4 decision of the Utilities Commission --

5 A No, not surprised at all. I'm familiar with
6 timeframes and when things are approved but
7 nonetheless.

8 Q Nonetheless.

9 A Nonetheless it still doesn't give enough ample
10 time regardless of who or where the
11 responsibility lies. I think that anybody that's
12 working, doing what they do, one business day --
13 maybe some got them Thursday night -- is not
14 enough time.

15 Q I appreciate that. Thank you.

16 A Yes.

17 MR. FINLEY: Thank you for coming.

18 HEARING EXAMINER LI: At this time, the
19 Hearing Examiner doesn't have any questions so you may
20 be excused, sir.

21 THE WITNESS: Okay.

22 HEARING EXAMINER LI: And thank you so much
23 for coming out tonight and also providing a very
24 detailed, four-page written statement to the

1 Commission.

2 THE WITNESS: Absolutely.

3 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you so much.

4 MS. HOLT: The Public Staff calls

5 Mr. Michael Ammons.

6 MICHAEL AMMONS;
7 having been duly sworn,
8 testified as follows:

9 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

10 Q Mr. Ammons, please state and spell your name for
11 the record.

12 A Yeah, my Michael Ammons. And you want me to
13 spell it?

14 Q Spell your last name.

15 A Ammons is A-M-M-O-N-S.

16 Q And what is your address?

17 A I live at 3487 Rocky Ridge Lane in Highland
18 Ridge. Pretty much where everyone else is.

19 And so, pretty much everyone has covered
20 pretty much everything that they saw, and we've
21 all have similar experiences. But one thing that
22 I wanted -- and I was I looking at that just
23 bothers me is when I look at her bottle of water
24 (indicating) and I look at these bottles of water

1 that I get out of -- out of the lines. It's --
2 you wouldn't want to drink this. This is, right
3 here, is kind of scary. And you really don't
4 know the impacts it could have. I have -- I'm
5 one of the newer people in our neighborhood so
6 I've only been here since twenty -- 2021. And
7 this is probably the worst water experience that
8 I've ever seen.

9 It's -- you know, something -- my wife is a
10 nurse. She goes to work for long hours and comes
11 home, she needs running good water to clean
12 herself after putting in service -- putting in
13 her services in the hospitals, and sometimes we
14 don't have that water for her to clean herself.
15 We've had to go to her parent's home to bathe.

16 Little ones. I have a now two-year-old
17 daughter and a five-year-old. And we've -- that
18 two-year-old has grown up pretty much in this
19 entire experience that's been not consistent
20 water, potentially not being able to bathe a baby
21 during these times of water, not having it for
22 multiple days. And even, not even being able to
23 give her water or clean her bottles with this
24 type of water is appalling.

1 It's embarrassing that you -- when you see
2 it on your glasses and you see the impacts of
3 calcium buildup and so much more that's coming
4 through, and the impacts it's having on your
5 appliances; so much more.

6 So I have been a big person that has exerted
7 money and funds to put an in-home filtration unit
8 into my home to bring up water softeners to try
9 to soften up the water. Doing the best of my
10 ability to add multistage filtration just so that
11 we can actually clean our babies bottles because
12 it's terrible. Like, we like to -- imagine
13 always having to boil your water and boil the
14 baby's water -- I mean, bottles and rubber pieces
15 that can be stained by this murky, nasty water,
16 and always having to boil it. So that is the
17 piece that I wanted to spread and really give you
18 guys, when you look at that bottle of water in
19 comparison to this. Anybody would love -- would
20 you love a drink of this? I bet everybody
21 passes. And that is the piece that I want us to
22 just see and acknowledge.

23 And then I want pivot to communication.
24 Communication hasn't been great. Their letters,

1 they don't have a strategic communication plan
2 that's going that -- you know, for when this
3 stuff happens. It's more reactive and proactive.
4 And it's kind of just like we're going to -- we
5 have no formal branding. We don't know if we
6 should trust this person or not. It's in
7 terrible, you know, formatted and just bold
8 letters saying that you're without pressure or
9 you're not going to have service, and we don't
10 know when that service is going to come back.

11 Those are things that doesn't justify rate
12 increases to this level. I'm an open and
13 forward-minded person. That's why I say where is
14 the strategic plan and what's going to happen if
15 we are to invest in Water Resources based on me
16 being opened mind. But this is my experience.

17 Q Thank you, Mr. Ammons. I just have some
18 follow-up questions.

19 Now, the bottles of water that you brought
20 with you, when did you collect those?

21 A Today before coming here. Before my filtration
22 units come through. So this is before any
23 filtration going into my home. This is what you
24 get.

1 Q Before any filtration?

2 A Yes.

3 Q Okay.

4 A And even after those units you can still
5 sometimes smell, you know, kind of like a smell
6 from some of the water coming through. We're
7 doing our best to try to give us some type of
8 usable water but there is still -- it's that bad,
9 as bad as this and you get it better but how good
10 are you really getting it. Show me. Show me
11 some effort into improving what we need, and I'm
12 sure people will buy it but there is no plan.
13 Where's the plan?

14 Q You stated that the Company does not have a
15 communications plan at all.

16 A Not at all. No tactics.

17 Q When have -- on what occasions have you received
18 communications regarding service?

19 A Pretty much our -- nothing proactively, but when
20 things have occurred, it's been later in the
21 evening after -- you'll get a letter on your door
22 in the form as in I'll tell you which is probably
23 I would assume if I remember, unbranded,
24 unstated, just kind of informal-type of letters

1 that you kind of just get on your door. If you
2 looked at it then you would be like, okay, this
3 is definitely representation of what we're
4 experiencing, and that's just a visual
5 representation of how I can describe what you'd
6 witness. That, thinking about it, that's kind of
7 what you --

8 Q Have you called the office?

9 A Yes.

10 Q For service?

11 A We've called. Delays, voicemails. Eventually,
12 you do get, you know, a response eventually from
13 that person but it's not a proper system. It's
14 not like your Union Power, your Dominion Energy
15 where in all exerted and proactive efforts that I
16 told you a strategic plan would include and a
17 communication plan would include an email that in
18 having a system. Show me that you're doing these
19 things. Where is this money going to go? Like,
20 help us to understand what your plan would be.
21 And we can consider absorbing even though we're
22 into tight financial times.

23 Q No emails, is that what you said?

24 A No.

1 Q And so you -- do you ever get a live person on
2 the line when you call?

3 A I mean you might. I don't remember or recall
4 getting one immediately the first time but you do
5 get responses back. I'm just saying that's kind
6 of my experiences.

7 Q And, Mr. Ammons, did you file with the Commission
8 a statement prior to the hearing tonight?

9 A Unfortunately, I did not, because I've been busy
10 with some other obligations. But just
11 acknowledge and see what I want you to see.

12 MS. HOLT: And we would like to admit a
13 picture of the water that Mr. Ammons brought in and
14 have it identified as Ammons Exhibit 1.

15 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Yes. Without
16 objection, the sample of two bottles of water shall be
17 so identified. And the Public Staff will take a
18 picture of them, of those, and it will be admitted
19 into evidence.

20 MS. HOLT: Thank you.

21 (WHEREUPON, Ammons Exhibit
22 1 is identified and
23 received into evidence.)

24 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Any other questions

1 from Public Staff and the Company?

2 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

3 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Public Staff, go
4 ahead.

5 MS. HOLT: (Shakes head no).

6 HEARING EXAMINER LI: No. Okay.

7 Mr. Ammons, I do have a question for you.

8 EXAMINATION BY HEARING EXAMINER LI:

9 Q And I heard tonight many witnesses testified they
10 installed the water filtration system on their
11 own house. Do you have any idea of how many
12 residential customers installed their own?

13 I know you said you were living at Rocky
14 River Plantation subdivision, right. Based on
15 your knowledge, do you have an idea of how many
16 customers houses that's been installed?

17 A I would have to believe that most of us do to
18 even have reasonable water, and we wouldn't trust
19 it anyway, so probably the majority of our
20 neighborhood have paid and potentially have paid
21 to have these in their homes, so in-home
22 filtration unit and not to mention more.

23 I know it personally for myself, like I
24 said, let's just say the unit, I bought a couple

1 of different types of units and I've probably
2 spent over \$2,000 in different filtration units
3 in itself just to have reasonable water with a
4 baby. My wife wouldn't allow it any other way.

5 Q I understand. Thank you. And another question,
6 for the filter, how often do you change your
7 filter? In one month, approximately, how much
8 the cost will be?

9 A Yeah, so pretty much for me, every other month
10 is, and to really filter the amount of muck that
11 people have described that we do see, and see in
12 our toilets and so much more, there are about
13 sixty bucks retail price. So that's what your
14 ongoing maintenance cost would be.

15 Q Per month?

16 A Per every other month I'm saying.

17 Q Every other month.

18 A That's the recommended timeframes.

19 Q Right. Thank you so much.

20 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I think that's all the
21 questions I have. Are there any questions on the
22 Hearing Examiner's questions?

23 MS. HOLT: No.

24 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

1 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you. At this
2 time, you may be excused, sir, and thank you so much
3 for coming out tonight.

4 MS. HOLT: Thank you. We have two more
5 customers who have signed up.

6 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Yes. Please go ahead.

7 MS. HOLT: Ms. Amanda Seward-Chavis.

8 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Would you mind,
9 restate your name?

10 MS. SEWARD-CHAVIS: Yes. My name is Amanda
11 Seward-Chavis, and that's spelled S-E-W-A-R-D hypen
12 C-H-A-V-I-S.

13 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you, ma'am.
14 Left hand on the Bible.

15 AMANDA SEWARD-CHAVIS;
16 having been duly sworn,
17 testified as follows:

18 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

19 Q Ms. Seward-Chavis, would you please state your
20 address for the record?

21 A Yes. It's 8973 Cherrys Ford Court.

22 Q Thank you. And did you file a statement with the
23 Commission prior to appearing here?

24 A Unfortunately, I did not. I did not receive a

1 notification until the evening of the 10th.

2 Q Okay. Please read your statement or provide your
3 statement.

4 A I have some of the same concerns as everyone
5 else. I have a water filtration system and a
6 softener system and still I replaced my water
7 heater, washing machine, dishwasher, refrigerator
8 multiple times over the last 17 years, and I have
9 some of the same concerns about water quality and
10 the responsiveness of Water Resources. But I go
11 over the financials that he submitted as part of
12 his docket and I can't for the life of me figure
13 out why he's spending \$470,000 to connect to
14 Harrisburg Water. A 4-inch tap line is only
15 \$102,000. And I work for a developer that
16 develops subdivisions, we pay about \$130-\$140 a
17 linear foot for a 6-inch pipe to be set
18 underground. So, I don't know how many linear
19 feet he had to connect to and what sort of money
20 he gave for easements but it just seems
21 excessively high, and if he's using that as a
22 justification for this price increase, I think
23 that needs to be looked at further.

24 And lastly, I live catty-corner to the main

1 well and the defunct backup well is just past my
2 backyard and I'm seeing where he does, I don't
3 know, \$1,200 to \$1,500 a month in water
4 purification chemicals or something. He does six
5 to eight gallons of Clorox bleach lugged from the
6 main road by some 20-year-old kid and dumped in
7 the well, and that happens roughly once a month.
8 I've never seen any other chemicals. That's all
9 I've got.

10 Q How long have you been a customer?

11 A I've been at Cherrys Ford Court for 17 years.

12 Q And you just stated that you have seen --

13 A Oh, Yeah.

14 Q -- the person --

15 A Yes. Usually once a month and once every other
16 month when they're doing the meter reading.
17 They'll stop by the access road, and they'll lug
18 four to six, maybe sometimes eight gallons of
19 Clorox bleach gallon bottles to the well site and
20 drag them back empty and that seems to the extent
21 of the chemical treatment.

22 Q Thank you.

23 MS. HOLT: I have no further questions.

24 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

1 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you, Ms. Chavis.
2 Thank you for coming out tonight.

3 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

4 MS. HOLT: We've got one more. Mr. Jon
5 Cottrill.

6 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Sir, would you please
7 state your last name?

8 MR. COTTRILL: Last name, Cottrill.

9 JON COTTRILL;
10 having been duly sworn,
11 testified as follows:

12 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you. Please sit
13 down.

14 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

15 Q Could you please state and spell your name for
16 the record?

17 A Hi, my name is Jon Cottrill, C-O-T-T-R-I-L-L, and
18 Jon, J-O-N.

19 Q Thank you. And what is your address,
20 Mr. Cottrill?

21 A 3492 Rocky Ridge Lane, and that's in the Highland
22 Ridge development.

23 Q Thank you. Please proceed with your statement.

24 A Okay. We've lived in that neighborhood for

1 15 years now. And in the interest of time, I
2 know that everybody has done a great job relaying
3 the issues and the overwhelming complaints that
4 we've had with the water service. In that time,
5 in our house, we've replaced one bathtub,
6 multiple faucets both in the kitchen and the
7 bathrooms, one water heater, three sinks. We
8 have filters and a water softener. I've replaced
9 three toilets. And when we moved into the
10 neighborhood, the running joke was if you -- if
11 the water pressure seems low fill your bathtub
12 because you'll need it to flush toilets with, and
13 that hasn't really changed. I mean, this is the
14 reaction now. If the water pressure seems low or
15 seems muddy it's like better fill the bathtub,
16 we'll need it.

17 So, it's -- for what we pay -- you know, I
18 understand a regular rate increase but for what
19 we pay and the service we get there's no
20 comparison. I mean, it's -- like, all the
21 billing issues that yes they have improved
22 over -- we haven't had billing issues like in the
23 last six months but we have had -- there's no
24 online billing. There's not -- we do the bank

1 pay thing and it happens but it's not timely.

2 So I'm just echoing a lot of what to some
3 of -- I'm just echoing a lot of what other people
4 have said. But we have had to do a lot of
5 improvements that we wouldn't have to normally
6 because of the quality of water.

7 Q Does that complete your statement?

8 A Yes, ma'am.

9 Q What kind of service issues have you experienced
10 in the past six months?

11 A In the past six months is like when the
12 Windstream service was coming through. And I'll
13 also echo the previous statement that, it was the
14 water company didn't know where the line was and
15 they went -- when the Windstream service came in
16 they were hitting the line because it wasn't
17 where the line was supposed to be. I'm not a
18 technician but it's just what I -- it was in my
19 front yard, I was watching them do it. And so
20 over the last six months, the water quality
21 itself, you can see the examples, it's not
22 improved but the -- we haven't had an outage in
23 that time. I'll put it that way.

24 MS. HOLT: Thank you. No further questions.

1 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

2 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Mr. Cottrill, I
3 believe you filed a written consumer statement.

4 THE WITNESS: I did.

5 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Public Staff, would
6 you like to make a motion?

7 MS. HOLT: Yes, thank you.

8 BY MS. HOLT:

9 Q Mr. Cottrill, would you like to have your
10 statement admitted into evidence?

11 A Yes, please.

12 MS. HOLT: At this time, I would ask that
13 Mr. Cottrill's statement, previously filed with the
14 Commission, be identified as Cottrill Exhibit 1.

15 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Hearing no objection,
16 Mr. Cottrill's Exhibit 1 will be so identified and
17 entered into the record. We get a copy for the Court
18 Reporter.

19 (WHEREUPON, Cottrill
20 Exhibit 1 is identified and
21 received into evidence.)

22 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I think I do have a
23 question. I'm sorry, I don't have any questions
24 Mr. Cottrill, and thank you so much for coming out

1 tonight.

2 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

3 MS. HOLT: We have one more. Ms. Michelle
4 Juarez.

5 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Ms. Juarez, good
6 evening.

7 MICHELLE JUAREZ;
8 having been duly sworn,
9 testified as follows:

10 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

11 Q Please state and spell your name for the record.

12 A Michelle Juarez, J-U-A-R-E-Z.

13 Q And what is your address?

14 A 8971 Cherrys Ford Court.

15 Q And, Ms. Juarez, did you file a statement with
16 the Commission prior to this hearing?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Would you like to have that admitted into
19 evidence?

20 A Yes, I would.

21 MS. HOLT: At this time, I ask that
22 Ms. Juarez's statement be identified as Juarez Exhibit
23 1.

24 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Yes. Without

1 objection, it will be so identified and entered into
2 the record. And we will also be providing a copy for
3 the Court Reporter. Thank you.

4 MS. HOLT: Thank you.

5 (WHEREUPON, Juarez Exhibit
6 1 is identified and
7 received into evidence.)

8 BY MS. HOLT:

9 Q Please proceed with your statement.

10 A I agree with what everybody else said so I don't
11 want to repeat all of that. I just have a few
12 things I wanted to add from my personal
13 experience. In January, I spent over \$10,000
14 replacing my water heater for the third time, my
15 water softener and whole house filter for the
16 second time.

17 I've lived in my house 17 years. Like
18 everybody has pretty much said, I've had to
19 replace my refrigerator three times, my
20 dishwasher, my washing machine three times, and
21 faucets we've had to replace countless times
22 there.

23 We don't drink the water. We've never been
24 able to. My water -- if it's not filtered when

1 my water filter stopped working the water is not
2 clear. You can't see through it. I don't drink
3 it. I don't give it to my dogs. We buy bottled
4 water every week. We buy way too much bottled
5 water.

6 The filters for my water purifier for the
7 household house filter, they are supposed to be
8 one-year filters that are about \$100. I have to
9 replace them every four months, three or four
10 months because they are just caked in mud. I
11 mean, you can't see through them. They are just
12 horrible.

13 Oh, and also, as to what Mandy had said
14 about the bleach, I do watch them. They
15 literally go to their truck, back of their car,
16 they pick up the gallons of bleach. I've talked
17 to Kelly who takes -- maintains it and, you know,
18 discussed it about -- with her about it, and she
19 said that's what they do, that's all they do to
20 maintain the well is pour the bleach in there.

21 In February, the beginning of February, end
22 of January, I received a letter from Water
23 Resources telling me they were turning off my
24 water because I had not paid the bill in six

1 months. I know many people were asking how the
2 billing has been. I paid my bill. I have never
3 missed a payment. I have all of the canceled
4 checks. I talked to Beth. She said, "well, I'm
5 not sure about that. Let my look. We have a
6 stack of mail on the desk and I haven't been able
7 to go through it." And I told her, I said, "I
8 have the canceled checks. I can send you copies.
9 They have already been cashed on your end and
10 you're threatening to turn my water off." So,
11 you know, they didn't turn it off but that
12 shouldn't have been the first step, sending me a
13 letter when they had already cashed the checks.

14 So other than that, I think everybody has
15 hit on most of our issues of the quality of the
16 water and the outages.

17 Q Ms. Juarez, you stated that you in February --
18 was that February 2024 that --

19 A Yes.

20 Q -- you got the disconnect notice?

21 A Yes, about six weeks ago. A month ago. Yes.

22 Q Thank you.

23 MS. HOLT: That's all I have.

24 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

1 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I do have one
2 clarifying question.

3 EXAMINATION BY HEARING EXAMINER LI:

4 Q You said you received mail for the -- how early
5 the Company gave the notice to --

6 A To disconnect my water?

7 Q Yes.

8 A They sent it to me in the -- it was about the
9 end -- beginning of February, just a letter
10 telling me they were turning it off because they
11 hadn't received my payments, but I had all the
12 cashed checks.

13 Q I see.

14 A They said I hadn't paid a bill in six months.

15 Q Thank you. And also, I think -- have you ever
16 received a notification from the Company
17 regarding the firing water they have to like --

18 A To boil the water, you mean?

19 Q Yes.

20 A Yes. On the front door. Kelly who services the
21 well, she's been servicing it for the last couple
22 of years. And things have gotten a little bit
23 better since she's taken over that. She will
24 walk through the neighborhood and put notices on

1 the door, but prior to that we didn't get any
2 notices.

3 Q Thank you so much for the clarification.

4 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I don't have any other
5 questions. You may be excused. Thank you so much for
6 coming out tonight.

7 Are there any other members in the public
8 pool who would like to testify? We may have
9 additional time.

10 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Just one.

11 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you, sir. And
12 also, as per procedure, Public Staff will ask you some
13 similar questions to identify yourself.

14 IVAN SCOTT;
15 having been duly sworn,
16 testified as follows:

17 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Thank you, sir. Have
18 a seat.

19 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

20 Q Please state and spell your name for the record.

21 A Ivan Scott, I-V-A-N S-C-O-T-T.

22 Q What's your address, Mr. Scott?

23 A 3495 Rocky Ridge Lane, Harrisburg.

24 Q Thank you. Please proceed with your statement.

1 A I've been in the neighborhood for roughly 22
2 years now and I want to say my wife and I endured
3 a great deal of suffering. Everybody has said
4 what I was going to say. But the big thing is
5 I've called the office and I've asked them for
6 reimbursement for the water and the hotel rooms.
7 I think one year we spent two nights in the hotel
8 because the water was out for three days. I
9 think the nice lady, I think her name is Beth, at
10 the office, I asked her, I said, "what do we do
11 in these situations? Do we get any water? Are
12 you going to send anything out to us"? Well, we
13 kind of got -- you know, it's up to you guys to
14 take care of it. And I'm not saying that she was
15 rude, she's a great cordial person, but the
16 answers that you receive just aren't practical.
17 It is very frustrating when you're trying to get
18 up in the morning and the water is out. They
19 have gotten better in the last year with the
20 notices on the door, and we see a young lady
21 doing it, and she's very cordial. But the
22 problem that we have is this situation that
23 there's no planning and there's no advance notice
24 as far as what's going on.

1 Like I said, in my 2022 years, I've actually
2 spoke to Mr. Abbott. He was cordial on the
3 phone. I spoke to him about six years ago, seven
4 years ago. But in the last two years, it has
5 gotten a little bit better but the quality of the
6 water, and the servicing, and the outages is
7 what's caused the major issues. And, as I said
8 before, just the lack of customer service about
9 even bringing water out to you if you're out for
10 two days, or two and a half days, three. That's
11 the big thing. That's the frustrating part to
12 me.

13 Q Mr. Scott, did you file a letter prior to
14 tonight?

15 A I don't know if I did. I think I did. I don't
16 remember if I did or did not. Maybe not.

17 Q Did you email?

18 A I can't remember so I would say no.

19 Q Okay.

20 MS. HOLT: I don't have any additional
21 questions.

22 MR. FINLEY: No questions.

23 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Mr. Scott, I don't
24 have any questions for you. Thank you so much for

1 coming out tonight.

2 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

3 HEARING EXAMINER LI: I'm assuming there are
4 no more.

5 MS. HOLT: We don't have any additional
6 witnesses.

7 HEARING EXAMINER LI: If are any others who
8 wish to make a statement --

9 MS. HOLT: Excuse me, one more minute.

10 Yes. I'd like to call Ms. Donna Gray.

11 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Good evening, ma'am.

12 DONNA GRAY;

13 having been duly sworn,

14 testified as follows:

15 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. HOLT:

16 Q Please state your name and address for the
17 record.

18 A Donna Gray, 8966 Cherrys Ford Court.

19 Q And Ms. Gray, prior to the hearing tonight, did
20 you file a statement with the Commission?

21 A Yes, I did.

22 Q Would you like to have that statement entered
23 into evidence?

24 A Yes, I would.

1 MS. HOLT: At this time, I would like to ask
2 that Ms. Gray's statement with the Commission be
3 identified as Gray Exhibit 1.

4 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Without objection --

5 MR. FINLEY: No objection to mark it.

6 HEARING EXAMINER LI: We will identify
7 Ms. Gray's consumer statement as Ms. Gray Exhibit 1.
8 We'll be sure to get a copy of that for the Court
9 Reporter. Thank you.

10 (WHEREUPON, Gray Exhibit 1
11 is identified.)

12 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Please go ahead.

13 THE WITNESS: On 12/29, I had my water
14 tested. I think I spent about \$130. Excuse me. And
15 I sent it in to have it tested because I'm looking to
16 buy a new filtration system, and the Company that I'm
17 dealing with recommended that we do that to make sure
18 I get the correct water filtration system installed.
19 That water filtration system -- I've not been able to
20 do that yet due to a death in the family but I was
21 told that it was going to cost about \$4000.

22 I do have the report that I did bring this
23 evening and you can see that it's hard water. There's
24 sulfates in the water. Radon in the water. So, since

1 their changes have been made, there's still problems
2 with the water.

3 Q Thank you. Would you like to admit that into
4 evidence?

5 A Yes, I would.

6 MS. HOLT: I would like to have Ms. Gray's
7 report marked as Gray Exhibit 2.

8 MR. FINLEY: I have a few questions about
9 that, please, ma'am.

10 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Go ahead, please.

11 MS. HOLT: I'll hand it to Mr. Finley.

12 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Okay.

13 CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. FINLEY:

14 Q So, Ms. Gray, who made that report for you?

15 A I sent it into the -- the name of it -- you'll
16 have to look at it for the name of the company.
17 I can't remember the name of the company. They
18 have -- it's a pretty big water filtration
19 system. I was going to order it online and have
20 a plumber install it.

21 Q Did they come to your house?

22 A No. I took the water myself. I followed their
23 instructions and I mailed it in.

24 Q And they are in Florida?

1 A Yes.

2 Q They sell these filtration systems?

3 A Yes, they do. And I can't remember the name of
4 the company. If you turn the page, I think it's
5 Spring, Spring something. It's handwritten on
6 it.

7 Q Springwell?

8 A Springwell. Uh-huh (yes).

9 Q All right. Of course, you do know that the State
10 tests the water that comes out of the system?

11 A Yes, every year or so. We don't get it like
12 regularly. I mean, from -- well, from the Dennis
13 Abbott company we don't get it regularly.

14 MR. FINLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I
15 appreciate it.

16 MS. HOLT: Thank you.

17 HEARING EXAMINER LI: Without objection, we
18 will identify Ms. Gray's testing report as Gray
19 Exhibit 2. And we will be sure to get a copy of that
20 to the -- for the Court Reporter.

21 (WHEREUPON, Gray Exhibit 2
22 is identified.)

23 MS. HOLT: I think that's it. I think
24 that's it.

1 HEARING EXAMINER LI: If there aren't any
2 others who wish to make a statement, then, I would
3 like to go ahead and make a closing statement tonight.
4

5 We will adjourn the hearing for now until it
6 is reconvened at 1:00 p.m., on Monday, May 13, 2024 in
7 Raleigh, North Carolina, and that hearing will be for
8 the sole purpose of receiving expert witness
9 hearing -- expert testimony for WRI, the Public Staff,
10 and any intervenors. And please note, the customers,
11 you can follow progress of this proceeding on the
12 Commission's website which is www.ncuc.gov, and you
13 can use the Docket Number, W-1034, Sub 13, which was
14 also noted on your customer notice. The transcript of
15 today's hearing will be on the website for viewing
16 once it is completed. So you will be able to check
17 our docket system and be able to find the transcript
18 and see everything that was discussed tonight.

19 With that, we will reconvene on May 13th for
20 the remainder of the hearing.

21 Again, I appreciate everyone for coming out
22 and sharing your thoughts concerning this proceeding
23 with the Commission. And remember that the Public
24 Staff and the Company are here to answer any questions

1 if you would like to talk to them.

2 Thank you all. The hearing is adjourned.

3 (The proceedings were adjourned)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, KIM T. MITCHELL, do hereby certify that the Proceedings in the above-captioned matter were taken before me, that I did report in stenographic shorthand the Proceedings set forth herein, and the foregoing pages are a true and correct transcription to the best of my ability.

Kim T. Mitchell _____

Kim T. Mitchell