

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
UTILITIES COMMISSION  
RALEIGH**

DOCKET NO. W-1314, SUB 4

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of  
Application by Pluris Webb Creek, LLC, )  
5950 Berkshire Lane, Suite 800, Dallas, Texas, ) ORDER SCHEDULING  
75225 for Authority to Adjust and Increase Rates ) HEARINGS AND REQUIRING  
for Sewer Utility Service in All Service Areas in ) CUSTOMER NOTICE  
Onslow County, North Carolina )

BY THE COMMISSION: On April 27, 2020, Pluris Webb Creek, LLC (Pluris Webb Creek or the Company) filed an application with the Commission seeking authority to increase its rates for providing sewer utility service in all of its service areas in Onslow County, North Carolina. Pluris Webb Creek serves approximately 1,354 residential flat-rate sewer customers and eight metered commercial sewer customers in Onslow County, North Carolina. On August 6, 2020, Pluris Webb Creek filed an amendment to its Application to reflect the current meter sizes utilized for providing sewer utility service.

On May 26, 2020, the Commission issued an Order Establishing General Rate Case and Suspending Rates.

Pluris Webb Creek is proposing to increase the monthly flat rate for residential customers from \$37.69 to \$73.38 and to change the monthly base rate for commercial customers from \$28.34 for all meter sizes to a monthly base rate based on the size of the meter.

In addition, Pluris Webb Creek is proposing to increase the commercial customers' commodity charge per 1,000 gallons from \$9.04 to \$16.50.

Pluris Webb Creek's present and proposed rates are as follows:

	<u>Present Rates</u>	<u>Proposed Rates</u>
<u>Monthly Residential Flat Rate:</u>	\$ 37.69	\$ 73.38 (1)

(1) All residential flat-rate customers

	<u>Present Rates</u>	<u>Proposed Rates</u>
<u>Monthly Commercial Metered Rates:</u>		
Base charge, zero usage (minimum charge)		
Meter Size: < 1"	\$ 28.34	\$ 10.00
1"	\$ 28.34	\$ 25.00
1.5"	\$ 28.34	\$ 50.00
2"	\$ 28.34	\$ 80.00
3"	\$ 28.34	\$ 250.00
Usage charge, per 1,000 gallons.	\$ 9.04	\$ 16.50
<u>Other Charges:</u>		
Returned Check Fee	\$ 20.00	\$ 25.00
Connection Charges - per sewer tap	\$1,800.00	\$3,200.00

The Commission concludes that the matter should be scheduled for a customer hearing for the sole purpose of receiving testimony from customers; that the matter should also be scheduled for an expert witness hearing for the sole purpose of receiving expert witness testimony from Pluris Webb Creek, the Public Staff – North Carolina Utilities Commission (Public Staff), and intervenors, if any; and that Pluris Webb Creek should be required to provide notice to its customers of the Application, including the applied for rates and the scheduled hearings.

In March 2020, Governor Roy Cooper issued a progression of Executive Orders that declared a State of Emergency in North Carolina to coordinate response and protective actions to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). On May 5, 2020, Governor Cooper issued Executive Order No. 138 easing some restrictions on business operations and mass gatherings, but still limiting face-to-face meetings to no more than ten people and requiring social distancing between individuals of at least six feet.

Based on the current state of uncertainty regarding future requirements to assist in preventing the spread of COVID-19, the Commission will decide at a later date whether the expert witness hearing will be held in person or remotely.

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED as follows:

1. That the Application is scheduled for expert witness hearing beginning at 2:00 p.m., on Monday, November 2, 2020, and continuing as necessary until conclusion. The hearing will be either held remotely via WebEx, or in Commission Hearing Room 2115, Dobbs Building, 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina;

2. That the Commission will issue an order by Monday, October 12, 2020, setting forth the procedures for a remote expert witness hearing, or confirming that the expert witness hearing will be held in Commission Hearing Room 2115;

3. That a public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, September 23, 2020, to be held remotely via WebEx, for customer testimony and will begin at 6:30 p.m. and end at the conclusion of the last witness' testimony or at 10:30 p.m., whichever is earlier. A link to view the hearing will be available at [www.ncuc.net](http://www.ncuc.net). Members of the public that would like to testify must register in advance of the hearing, no later than 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 17, 2020, by contacting the Public Staff via email at [PlurisWebbCreekPublicHearing@psncuc.nc.gov](mailto:PlurisWebbCreekPublicHearing@psncuc.nc.gov) or by calling 866-380-9816. When registering, provide your name, docket number (W-1314, Sub 4), the subdivision in which you are receiving sewer utility service, telephone number, and the topic of your testimony. Only individuals registered with the Public Staff by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 17, 2020, will be allowed to testify at the hearings;

4. That the hearing scheduled for Wednesday, September 23, 2020, shall be for the sole purpose of receiving the testimony of public witnesses. The hearing scheduled for November 2, 2020, shall be for the sole purpose of receiving expert witness testimony from Pluris Webb Creek, the Public Staff, and any other parties of record;

5. That Pluris Webb Creek's updates to its actual revenues, expenses, rate base, and cost of capital for the period ending July 31, 2020, shall be filed on or before Monday, August 24, 2020. This requirement shall not apply to events that are neither foreseeable nor within the Company's control. This requirement shall not prevent the Company from providing evidence showing changes in costs, including plant in service additions, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 62-133(c);

6. That Pluris Webb Creek is required to file reports addressing all customer service or service quality complaints expressed at the customer hearing on or before Tuesday, September 29, 2020;

7. That on or before Friday, September 25, 2020, any persons having an interest in this matter may file petitions to intervene to this proceeding pursuant to Commission Rules R1-5, R1-7, and R1-19;

8. That the Public Staff and intervenors, if any, shall file their testimony on or before Friday, September 25, 2020;

9. That Pluris Webb Creek shall file its rebuttal testimony, if any, on or before Friday, October 9, 2020;

10. That Pluris Webb Creek shall consult with all other parties and file, no later than Tuesday, October 27, 2020, a list of witnesses to be called at the hearing, the order of witnesses, and the estimated time for cross-examination. If the parties cannot agree,

the remaining parties shall, no later than Thursday, October 29, 2020, make a filing indicating their points of disagreement with the Company's filing;

11. That an officer or representative of Pluris Webb Creek is required to appear before the Commission at the time and place of the expert witness hearing to testify concerning any of the information contained in the Application; and

12. That the Notice to Customers, attached hereto as Appendix A, shall be mailed with sufficient postage or hand delivered by Pluris Webb Creek to all customers affected by the proposed new rates; that the Notice to Customers shall be mailed or hand-delivered no later than 20 days after the date of this Order; and that Pluris Webb Creek shall submit to the Commission the attached Certificate of Service, properly signed and notarized, not later than 30 days after the date of this Order.

ISSUED BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION.

This the 10th day of August, 2020.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Janice H. Fulmore".

Janice H. Fulmore, Deputy Clerk

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
UTILITIES COMMISSION  
RALEIGH**

NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS

DOCKET NO. W-1314, SUB 4  
BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

Notice is hereby given that Pluris Webb Creek, LLC (Pluris Webb Creek or the Company), 5950 Berkshire Lane, Suite 800, Dallas, Texas, has filed an Application with the North Carolina Utilities Commission (Commission) for authority to increase its rates for providing sewer utility service in all of its service areas in Onslow County, North Carolina.

Pluris Webb Creek is proposing to increase the monthly flat rate for residential sewer customers from \$37.69 to \$73.38 and to change the monthly base rate for commercial customers from \$28.34 for all meter sizes to a monthly base rate based on the size of the meter.

In addition, Pluris Webb Creek is proposing to increase the commercial customers' commodity charge per 1,000 gallons from \$9.04 to \$16.50.

Pluris Webb Creek's present and proposed rates are as follows:

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< 1"	\$ 28.34	\$ 10.00
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2"	\$ 28.34	\$ 80.00
3"	\$ 28.34	\$ 250.00
Usage charge, per 1,000 gallons.	\$ 9.04	\$ 16.50

	<u>Present Rates</u>	<u>Proposed Rates</u>
<u>Other Charges:</u>		
Returned check fee	\$ 20.00	\$ 25.00
Connection Charges - per sewer tap	\$1,800.00	\$3,200.00

The Commission may consider additional or alternative rate design proposals that were not included or proposed in the original Application and may order increases or decreases in the utility rate schedules, which differ from those proposed by Pluris Webb Creek. However, any rate structure considered will not generate more overall revenues than requested.

EFFECT OF RATES:

The present sewer rates have been in effect since August 8, 2016. In Commission Order dated March 26, 2019, in Docket Nos. W-864, Sub 11, W-864, Sub 14, and W-1314, Sub 1, the Commission approved, for Pluris Webb Creek (as franchise owner) the continuation of the provisional interim rates previously approved by Order dated August 8, 2016, in Docket No. W-864, Sub 11, for Pluris Webb Creek when it was the Commission-appointed emergency operator.

The proposed rates would increase the average residential monthly bill for sewer services by 95% from \$37.69 to \$73.38. Depending on meter size and based on the usage amounts provided in the application, the average monthly bill for commercial metered sewer services would increase as follows:

Meter Size	Average Monthly Usage (Gallons)	Present Average Monthly Cost	Proposed Average Monthly Cost	Percent Increase
<1"	9,504	\$114.29	\$166.88	46%
1"	8,238	\$102.81	\$160.93	57%
1.5"	38,642	\$377.76	\$687.59	82%
2"	3,533	\$ 60.28	\$138.29	129%
3"	22,746	\$233.96	\$625.31	167%

PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS:

The Commission has scheduled the following hearings on the Application:

*Expert Witness Hearing:* Beginning at 2:00 p.m., on Monday, November 2, 2020, and continuing as necessary until conclusion either remotely via WebEx, or in Commission Hearing Room 2115, Dobbs Building, 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina. The Commission will issue an order by October 12, 2020, setting forth the procedure for a remote hearing or confirming that the hearing will be held in Commission Hearing Room 2115.

*Customer Witness Hearing* to begin at 6:30 p.m. and end at the conclusion of the last witness' testimony or at 10:30 p.m., whichever is earlier, on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, to be held remotely via WebEx. A link to view the hearing will be available at [www.ncuc.net](http://www.ncuc.net). Members of the public that would like to testify must register in advance of the hearing, no later than 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 17, 2020, by contacting the Public Staff – North Carolina Utilities Commission (Public Staff) via email at [PlurisWebbCreekPublicHearing@psncuc.nc.gov](mailto:PlurisWebbCreekPublicHearing@psncuc.nc.gov) or by calling 866-380-9816. When registering, provide your name, docket number (W-1314, Sub 4), the subdivision in which you are receiving service, telephone number, and the topic of your testimony.

**Only individuals registered with the Public Staff by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 17, 2020, will be allowed to testify at the hearings.**

The Public Staff is authorized by statute to represent consumers in proceedings before the Commission. Written statements to the Public Staff should include the customer's name, subdivision, contact information, and any information that the writer wishes to be considered by the Public Staff in its investigation of the matter; and these statements should be addressed to Ms. Dianna Downey, Chief Counsel, Public Staff-North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4326 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300. Written statements can also be faxed to 919-715-6704 or e-mailed to [mike.franklin@psncuc.nc.gov](mailto:mike.franklin@psncuc.nc.gov).

Written statements will be considered by the Commission in reaching its decision but do not receive the same consideration as testimony provided by public witnesses at a hearing.

Commission hearings are subject to change because of COVID-19. Any changes to scheduled hearings will be posted on the NCUC website (<https://www.ncuc.net/>).

The Attorney General is also authorized by statute to represent consumers in proceedings before the Commission. Statements to the Attorney General should be addressed to The Honorable Josh Stein, Attorney General, 9001 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-9001. Written statements may also be e-mailed to [utilityAGO@ncdoj.gov](mailto:utilityAGO@ncdoj.gov).

Persons desiring to intervene in the matter as formal parties of record should file a motion under North Carolina Utilities Commission Rules R1-5, R1-7, and R1-19 no later than September 25, 2020. These motions should be filed with the Chief Clerk of the North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4325 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300.

Information regarding this proceeding can also be accessed from the Commission's website at [www.ncuc.net](http://www.ncuc.net) under Docket Number "W-1314 Sub 4".

This the 10th day of August, 2020.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Janice H. Fulmore".

Janice H. Fulmore, Deputy Clerk

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, mailed with sufficient postage or hand delivered to all affected customers the attached Notice to Customers issued by the North Carolina Utilities Commission in Docket No. W-1314, Sub 4, and the Notice was mailed or hand delivered by the date specified in the Order.

This the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Utility Company

The above-named Applicant, \_\_\_\_\_, personally appeared before me this day and, being first duly sworn, says that the required Notice to Customers was mailed or hand delivered to all affected customers, as required by the Commission Order dated \_\_\_\_\_ in Docket No. W-1314, Sub 4.

Witness my hand and notarial seal, this the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed or Typed Name

(SEAL) My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date