REDACTED

PLACE: Dobbs Building, Raleigh, North Carolina

DATE: Friday, March 10, 2023

TIME: 1:36 p.m. - 3:51 p.m.

DOCKET NO.: A-41, Sub 22

BEFORE: Commissioner Kimberly W. Duffley, Presiding

Chair Charlotte A. Mitchell

Commissioner Daniel G. Clodfelter

Commissioner Jeffrey A. Hughes

Commissioner Floyd B. McKissick, Jr.

Commissioner Karen M. Kemerait

IN THE MATTER OF:

Joint Application of

Bald Head Island Transportation, Inc., and

Bald Head Island Ferry Transportation, LLC, for

Approval of Transfer of Common Carrier Certificate to

Bald Head Island Ferry Transportation, LLC, and

Permission to Pledge Assets

VOLUME: 9



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Page 8 1 PROCEEDINGS 2 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Good afternoon. 3 I remind you both you're still under oath. 4 MR. FERRELL: Are you ready? 5 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Yes. You may 6 proceed. 7 MR. FERRELL: Thank you. I'd like to call a rebuttal witness Lee Roberts and 8 Charles A. Paul to the stand. 9 10 Whereupon, LEE ROBERTS AND CHARLES A. PAUL, 11 12 having previously been duly sworn, were examined 13 and testified as follows: 14 DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. FERRELL: 15 Gentlemen, could you please state your name O. and position of employment for the record? 16 17 (Lee Roberts) I'm Lee Roberts. I'm managing Α. partner of SharpVue Capital in Raleigh. 18 19 (Charles A. Paul) I'm Charles Paul, CEO of Α. 20 Bald Head Island Limited and president of Bald Head 21 Island Transportation. 22 Have you caused to be prefiled in this docket Ο. 23 rebuttal testimony consisting of 37 pages and two 24 addendums?

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Α. (Lee Roberts) Yes.

- 2 (Charles A. Paul) Yes. Α.
- 3 Was this testimony prepared by you or under Ο. your direction? 4
- 5 Α. (Lee Roberts) Yes.
- (Charles A. Paul) Yes. 6 Α.
- 7 You were asked these same questions today, 0. 8 now that you are under oath, would you provide the same answers as in your prefiled testimony? 9
- 10 (Lee Roberts) Yes. Α.
- (Charles A. Paul) Yes. 11 Α.
- 12 Do you have any corrections or additions to Q. 13 make to this rebuttal testimony?
- 14 (Lee Roberts) No. Α.
- 15 (Charles A. Paul) No. Α.
- Were there eight exhibits identified and 16 Q. 17 filed concurrently with this rebuttal testimony?
- 18 Α. (Lee Roberts) Yes.
- 19 (Charles A. Paul) Yes. Α.
- 20 Q. Are those exhibits true and accurate in 21 representing what they purport to represent to the best
- of your knowledge? 22
- 2.3 Α. (Lee Roberts) Yes.
- 24 Α. (Charles A. Paul) Yes, they do.

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Session Date: 3/10/2023

- Have you also prepared a summary of your Ο. prefiled testimony that has been filed in this docket?
 - (Lee Roberts) Yes. Α.
 - (Charles A. Paul) Yes. Α.

MR. FERRELL: At this time, I'd like to move the Rebuttal Testimony of Lee Roberts and Charles Paul plus the two addendums and the eight exhibits into -- into evidence as well as the summary.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. The Confidential Prefiled Joint Rebuttal Testimony of Charles A. Paul and Lee H. Roberts will be received into evidence and treated as if given orally from the witness stand as well as the two addendum and the eight exhibits will be identified as marked prefiled at this time and then the summary will be received into the evidence at this time.

> (LHR/CAP Rebuttal Exhibits 1 through 5 and 8; and Confidential LHR/CAP Rebuttal Exhibits 6 and 7 were identified as they were marked when prefiled.)

(Whereupon, the Confidential Prefiled Joint Rebuttal Testimony of

	Page 11
1	Charles A. Paul and Lee Roberts; and the
2	Summary of the Prefiled Joint Rebuttal
3	Testimony of Charles A. Paul and
4	Lee Roberts were copied into the record
5	as if given orally from the stand.)
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Public Rebuttal Testimony of Lee H. Roberts and Charles A. Pa	ıul
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Page	e 1

2	A.	My name is Lee Roberts. I am Managing Partner of SharpVue Capital, LLC
3		("SharpVue"). My business address is 3700 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 530

Mr. Roberts, please state your name, occupation, and business address.

4 Raleigh, North Carolina 27612.

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Q.

- Q. Mr. Paul, please state your name, occupation, and business address.
- 7 A. My name is Charles A. "Chad" Paul, III. I am the President of Bald Head Island
- 8 Transportation, Inc. ("BHIT"). I also serve as Chief Executive Officer and a
- 9 Manager of Bald Head Island Limited LLC ("BHIL"), BHIT's parent company.
- My business address is 6 Marina Wynd, Bald Head Island, North Carolina 28461-
- 11 5073.

12

13

- Q. You both provided separate direct testimony in this docket; what is the
- purpose of your filing joint rebuttal testimony as a panel?
- 15 A. There have been numerous issues raised and questions asked in the response
- testimony regarding the future plans for the ownership and management of the
- ferry, tram, parking, and tugboat/barge operations post-closing. We will both be
- involved in those decisions; therefore, testifying together will enable us to provide
- the most complete and accurate responses to those questions and address the future
- 20 operation of these assets.

Public Rebuttal Testimony of Lee H. Roberts and Charles A. Paul	
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Page 7	

1	Q.	Does that mean, Mr. Roberts, that SharpVue will be keeping the current
2		management in their current roles post-closing?
3	A.	Yes; Sharp Vue will keep the operations' current management in their current roles
4		and duties, to include (but not limited to): Mr. Paul; Shirley Mayfield, Chief
5		Financial Officer of Bald Head Island Limited LLC; and Captain Bion Stewart, the
6		current Chief Operating Officer of Bald Head Island Transportation, Inc.
7		Further, SharpVue intends to hire almost all of the current employees
8		involved in ferry, tram, parking, and barge operations. In the process of negotiating
9		the transaction and conducting our due diligence, we have been impressed with the
10		knowledge and expertise this team and these employees bring with it.
11		
12	Q.	Mr. Paul, was your continued role in management a consideration in the
13		selection of SharpVue as purchaser of the BHIL assets?
14		
	A.	With regards to my personal role with the company, no; I have other opportunities
15	A.	With regards to my personal role with the company, no; I have other opportunities that I could pursue if no longer involved in these operations. However, providing a
	A.	
15	A.	that I could pursue if no longer involved in these operations. However, providing a
15 16	A.	that I could pursue if no longer involved in these operations. However, providing a seamless transition to a new owner so that operations and customer service will
15 16 17	A.	that I could pursue if no longer involved in these operations. However, providing a seamless transition to a new owner so that operations and customer service will continue without noticeable impact as a result of the transaction was very much a
15 16 17 18	A.	that I could pursue if no longer involved in these operations. However, providing a seamless transition to a new owner so that operations and customer service will continue without noticeable impact as a result of the transaction was very much a

values that legacy and is committed to maintaining continuity of service to support the continued success and stewardship of the island.

That desire was also why we wanted the new owner of the ferry, tram, barge and parking to also purchase most of the Mitchells' remaining operations and commercial real estate assets, so that it would also have an interest in the success of the island and of Brunswick County generally over the long-term.

A.

Q. To follow-up that answer, Mr. Roberts, is that SharpVue's intentions?

Yes. We recognize the attention and care that went into the development of the island in the past, which is why SharpVue wants to be part of its future. As explained in my direct testimony, we see BHIT and BHIL as an unusual situation in which extremely well-run companies need to be sold for external reasons (e.g., the death of Mr. Mitchell), and it is our intent to continue that track record of success and stewardship.

It is in SharpVue's interest for passengers and customers to receive excellent service and to want to return to the island in the future, for the commercial businesses and residential rental properties on the island to succeed, and for the island as a whole to prosper. As the number of residents and visitors to the island grows, ridership on the ferry increases, barge usage increases, and parking facilities are utilized, and the per-unit allocation of the fixed costs decreases. Moreover, as the Mitchells desired, SharpVue is also buying all operations and the majority of the remaining commercial assets from BHIL both on the island and on the mainland

Page 4

in Southport. Therefore, in addition to our personal affection for the island, our economic incentives are aligned with those of the other island stakeholders.

- Q. The Village's response testimony attempts to contrast the economic interests of SharpVue and BHIL with what it describes as "the long term success of the Island"; do you see those interests to be in conflict?
- 7 Absolutely not. As I explained in my testimony in Docket No. A-41, Sub 21, our Α. 8 economic incentives are to maximize asset utilization, which can only be 9 accomplished if the island is successful and is an attractive destination for primary 10 and second-home owners as well as vacationer tourism. We believe that (in the 11 words of BHI Club CEO David Sawyer) there is the "symbiotic relationship 12 between the island community, the Clubs and vacationer tourism" and a "reliable, 13 safe, and affordable transportation system". "Symbiosis" by definition, is a 14 mutually beneficial relationship that runs both ways: a successful island 15 community, the Clubs, and vacationer tourism is essential for a commercially 16 successful transportation system. Neither BHIL/BHIT, SharpVue, nor any other 17 owner would institute a pricing structure or operational practices that would harm 18 the island and thereby negatively impact demand for services. It is in all of our 19 mutual interests to view each other as cooperative partners, working together 20 toward common goals. This is one reason that the adversarial nature of these 21 proceedings with the Village has been, in our opinion, unnecessary and counter-22 productive.

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- Q. How do you respond to the statements that SharpVue has less interest in the
 island than the Mitchell estate has?
- 4 A. Such statements are factually and demonstrably untrue. First, SharpVue is buying 5 all of the remaining operations and substantially all of the remaining commercial 6 property assets that the Mitchell estate still possess in Brunswick County. So it is 7 proverbially "stepping into the shoes" of BHIL. Second, the Mitchell estate and 8 heirs have been clear and unequivocal that, at this point, they are no longer 9 interested in continuing to own and operate the assets associated with Bald Head 10 Island. Their focus is now the liquidation and sale of assets in order to fund the 11 Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation. Accordingly, notwithstanding the plans 12 to institute an electronic ticketing process and reservation system for the ferry 13 discussed below, there is no plan by the Mitchell estate to fund significant capital 14 expenditures in the future.

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- Q. How does the Mitchells' absence of interest in these operations and desire to sell them affect the analysis and criteria considered by the Commission as to whether this sale should be approved?
- 19 A. We understand that, as explained in the Public Staff's response testimony, the
 20 Commission has utilized a three-part test in determining whether a merger or
 21 acquisition is justified by the public convenience and necessity, pursuant to
 22 N.C.G.S. § 62-111. Those criteria require assessments of benefits, costs, and risks.

As Mr. John Taylor's pre-filed rebuttal testimony explains, however, the benefits, costs, and risks of the proposed transaction don't exist in a vacuum; they must be assessed in comparison to the alternative of not approving the transaction, i.e., in this case, requiring the assets and operations to remain in the hands of the Mitchell estate. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, these assets in Brunswick County, North Carolina are the *last* remaining commercial operations in North Carolina still owned by the Mitchell estate. *All* other business operations have been sold and liquidated. In these regards, this proposed transaction is, from our perspective, very different from a more typical utility merger or acquisition.

- Q. Is this comparison instructive in the evaluation of Mr. Lloyd's response testimony expressing concern about the sufficiency of capital for future needs of the operations?
- 14 A. I'll address Mr. Lloyd's response testimony in greater detail below, but, yes, as a
 15 threshold matter. SharpVue's willingness to invest any needed capital in the future
 16 from its current investors, potential future investors, and its lenders—is far greater
 17 than the willingness of the Mitchell estate to do so, and that should be viewed as a
 18 significant benefit to the using and consuming public. The costs and risks that are
 19 identified by the Village's witness can then be addressed by appropriate regulatory
 20 conditions such as those we propose later in our testimony.

Public Rebuttal Testimony of Lee H. Roberts and Charles A. Paul
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1	Q.	Do you have plans for an electronic ticketing process and reservation system
2		for the ferry?

As was discussed during the amendments to the baggage policies in late-2021/early-2022, BHIT current management has been evaluating how to fairly and effectively institute electronic ticketing, which is a necessary step to offering a reservation system. We believe this system will reduce the number of passengers unable to board vessels that are at capacity and generally improve customer service quality.

Current management has been working on implementing an electronic ticketing and reservation system for the past 24-months. During this time, we have completed and conducted interviews and site visits with several software providers, addressed the baggage definition and limitations issues that are central to the implementation to any ticketing and reservation system, and recently executed an agreement with an industry leading provider for the system.

Q. When do you expect the electronic ticketing and reservation system to be implemented?

A. It is our goal for the system to be operational during 2023, and we are currently on schedule to meet that timeframe.

SUFFICIENCY OF CAPITALIZATION / DURATION OF HOLD

- 2 Q. Village Witness Lee Lloyd, in the Response Testimony, projects scenarios in 3 which he claims SharpVue will not be able to fund needed capital 4 improvements; how do you respond to his projections?
- 5 A. We encourage Mr. Lloyd to review closely the investor presentations shared with 6 our prospective investors. The actual financial projections in those materials were 7 prepared using conservative assumptions and demonstrate that cash flows from 8 operations are able to meet all anticipated recurring capital improvements. For 9 larger capital investments, such as acquiring new ferry vessels, we assumed that 10 these purchases were made with a combination of cash flow from operations and 11 third-party debt. Debt capital for asset-based lending is a readily available source 12 of capital, especially for an asset that has such a direct link to revenue generation. 13 This potential financing structure for large capital investments is also conservative. 14 It is likely that it may be more efficient to lease a new ferry, which will require little to no upfront capital investment and no third-party debt. (As a historic footnote, 16 BHIT originally leased both the *Patriot* and *Ranger* vessels it uses in its ferry operations, and the Commission accepted those lease and authorized BHIT to operate accordingly. See NCUC Docket A-41, Sub 4; Order dated September 6, 2007.).

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If sourcing third-party debt capital for capital improvements is in the best interest of the business, we believe many lenders will be interested in providing financing.

If additional equity capital is necessary, we have an existing investor group that believes in this long-term investment and more broadly, we have demonstrated our ability to raise equity capital for this investment.

We recognize external sources of debt capital generally require additional fees, expenses, and time to identify lenders. As a result, using cash flow from operations is the most efficient source of capital that businesses can use, and in this case benefits the public interest. The ability of the businesses' operations to sustain and reinvest in itself using conservative underwriting assumptions, without needing material third party capital is another attribute that attracted us to the business.

- Q. Mr. Lloyd also speculates -- contrary to Mr. Roberts' testimony -- that SharpVue will "flip" the assets in the short run solely for financial gain; what are the key factors that support your plans to pursue a longer-term, buy-and-hold approach to owning these assets?
- 16 A. SharpVue's base case has always been to buy and hold the utility assets for the long
 17 term and provide steady returns to investors. It is the utility's stable and persistent
 18 cash flows that first attracted us to this investment. We intentionally raised capital
 19 from investors who possess the ability and willingness to hold these assets for the
 20 long term.

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2 O. Mr. Lloyd emphasizes the lack of "dry powder" to provide additional 3 financial capital and resources to support ongoing operations, contingencies, 4 and needed capital improvements; is that an accurate characterization of 5 SharpVue's long-term financial modeling and plans? 6 No. it is not. Mr. Lloyd overlooks the fact that, at closing, the businesses will have A. 7 \$2.0 million in cash on hand. As is illustrated in our base-case status quo projections 8 in our investor presentation, the hypothetical sale of the business in year ten also 9 results in the return of cash reserves of more than CONFIDENTIAL 10 END CONFIDENTIAL. This demonstrates that in addition to meeting the on-going

END CONFIDENTIAL. This demonstrates that in addition to meeting the on-going capital improvement needs over this period, the business retains a large cash position throughout the projection period. Additionally, at the transaction's closing we expect to secure a \$2.0 million line of credit that can be used to meet ongoing operations, contingencies, and needed capital improvements. Notably, over ten years of conservative projections, we do not anticipate that this line of credit will be necessary. As a result, the business will have significant "dry powder"; however it has been contributed up-front, which we believe speaks to our and our investors' belief in the business.

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20 Q. Have others reviewed your forward-looking financial models?

21 A. Yes, both debt and equity investors have reviewed our forward-looking financial models.

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O. What has been their assessment?

A. We cannot claim to speak for others. However, it is worth noting that a collection of sophisticated investors and one of the ten largest U.S. banks will fully fund the transaction after reviewing our forward-looking financial models and performing their own due diligence.

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ASSET VALUATION

- Q. Are third-party assessments by others relevant to Julius Wright's opinion that the price being paid is "too high"?
- 11 A. Absolutely, they're relevant in refuting Dr. Wright's opinions.

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- Q. Please explain how.
- 14 A. In anticipation of the sale transaction, the Bald Head Island Transportation
 15 Authority ("Authority"), chaired by former Commissioner Susan Rabon and whose
 16 Board consisted of representatives of the Village, hired not one, but two,
 17 independent appraisers. Because the legislation required the purchase price of the
 18 assets to be purchased to be "at or below their appraised value", the Authority first
 19 engaged Worsley Real Estate Company (Earl M. Worsley, Jr., MAI) in 2019.

¹ Mr. Worsley has on numerous previous occasions been employed by the Village of Bald Head Island to complete appraisals on its behalf, including appraisals associated with property the Village acquired from BHIL and sold to BHIL. The Village had three

Worsley's appraisals of both the mainland real property and on-island real property are filed herewith as LHR/CAP Rebuttal Exhibits 1 and 2, respectively, and they valued the combined real property at a total of \$42,395,000. Valuations of the other assets (e.g. vessels, trams, equipment, materials, etc. totaled approximately \$8,600,000, resulting in a total appraised value of approximately \$51,000,000. This valuation was then considered by the Authority's investment advisor, Davenport & Company, which advises on many, if not most, of the revenue bond issuances in the State of North Carolina and found it to be a fair value. The Authority and BHIL/BHIT then negotiated and agreed upon a purchase price of \$47,750,000. The Authority's total valuation of the assets is shown on page 7 of its presentation at a public hearing on Bald Head Island on February 17, 2021 given at the recommendation of the Local Government Commission and filed herewith as LHR/CAP Rebuttal Exhibit 3. That presentation, in its entirety, is a succinct summary of all the due diligence that went into that transaction, which has been reviewed and seriously considered by SharpVue in its projections and plans in this transaction, which is the subject of our application before the Commission, and also includes more detail of the facts in the following paragraph.

The bond underwriters UBS and PNC then reviewed this purchase price and found it to be at or below the appraised fair value Then the proposed bonds to have

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members on the Authority Board at all times and expressed no concern regarding the engagement of Worsley Company by the Authority.

been issued for the purchase were rated by Standard and Poor's, who found that the valuation and projected cash flows would support an investment-grade rating. (Upon information and belief, the collective assets to have been purchased by the Authority would have been one of the few private ferry operations in the world whose bonds would have had an investment grade rating.)

After concerns raised by certain LGC members,² the Authority engaged a seconder appraiser Newmark Knight Frank (Greg Becker, MAI, MRICS) in 2021 to complete a second set of appraisals for the Authority.³ The Newmark Knight Frank appraisals of both the mainland real property and on-island real property are filed hersith as LHR/CAP Rebuttal Exhibits 4 and 5, respectively, and they valued the combined real property \$39,500,0000 -- within seven percent (7%) of the Worsley appraisals. With the valuation of the vessels, tram, and other tangible real property, this second appraisal also supported the purchase price of \$47,750,000 to have been paid by the Authority.

The legislation authorizing the creation of the Authority mandated, as noted above, that the value to be paid by the Authority be "at or below their *appraised*

² Dr. Wright is correct that the State Auditor noted that these appraised values were higher than the Brunswick County assessed property tax value, but we will defer to the Commission to give that fact whatever weight it deems it deserves.

³ The selection of Newmark Knight Frank was done with full support of the Village's three representatives on the Authority.

value." (N.C. Sess. Law 2017-120, Sec. 6.(a)) (emphasis added). There is specifically no reference in that legislation to net book value of the assets.

Once the Authority did not close on its purchase, the fair market value of the assets – as a basic principle of economics—is what a willing buyer offers to pay a willing seller. BHIL and the Mitchell estate contacted several potential purchasers including ferry companies, maritime transport companies, barge operators, parking operators, infrastructure funds and private equity firms. Ultimately BHIL and BHIT negotiated and accepted the offer by SharpVue Capital to purchase the ferry, tram, barge/tugboat, and parking operations for \$56 million (which includes \$2 million in cash for working capital).

that it was prepared specifically for the SharpVue transaction, the recency of this appraisal, and the appreciation of North Carolina real estate over the past three (3) years, we believe that this is the most accurate valuation of the transportation system assets at issue in this docket.

Based upon all of these valuations, the price being paid by SharpVue is not "too high," as alleged by witness Wright, and represents an appropriate (if not conservative) fair market value of the assets.

A.

Q. Why should the Commission give more weight to these sources than to Dr. Wright's opinion as to the fair value of these assets?

With all due respect to Mr. Wright, he can express whatever opinion he may hold to advance his client's interest. In contrast, appraisers have licensure or accreditation standards and requirements. Investment advisors, banks and bond underwriters have fiduciary, contractual and regulatory obligations. Investment rating firms like Standard & Poor's are held accountable by the financial markets and regulatory agencies. A lender, of course, wants to ensure that its loan is sufficiently collateralized.

We understand that the Village believes the value is "too high" – i.e., higher than they would like, or are willing, to pay – and, accordingly, that's what their witnesses opine. But the overwhelming weight of the evidence – from objective,

third-party, professional sources – is that the price SharpVue is paying for the assets reflects fair market value.

A.

ABSENCE OF "ACQUISITION ADJUSTMENT"

Q. Why did you delete the words "acquisition premium" from the Amended Application, as noted by Mr. Gardner and Dr. Wright?

The original Application contemplated that the ferry and tram would be in rate base, but not the parking and barge assets. To clarify, we have not changed our position from the original Application with regard to the ferry and tram – SharpVue is not asking for an acquisition premium to be included in rate base for those assets and in fact has proposed a condition excluding such a premium (Proposed Condition 3).

The parking and barge were not contemplated in the original application to be regulated utility assets, so after the order in Docket No. A-41, Sub 21, SharpVue was presented with a different scenario. We omitted the words "acquisition premium" from the Amended Application to preserve the right to request that particular regulatory treatment from the Commission. The issue of whether to allow an acquisition premium in rate base for the barge and parking should be decided by the Commission on the basis of proper evidence if the purchase price is not otherwise included in rate base as discussed below.

Q. Does this mean that Sharp Vue will request an increase in parking and barge

rates to "recover an acquisition premium" from customers as witness Wright

postulates?

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- 4 No. We have no plans, or need, for any increases of barge or parking rates beyond A. 5 the rate of inflation for the next four years. The financial models we have used to 6 underwrite the transaction have included the baseline assumption that parking and 7 barge rates grow at the annual rate of inflation. We were pleased to see the 8 Commission, in its Order in Docket No. A-41, Sub 21, "permit the status quo — 9 and the current rates and services of the Parking and Barge Operations — to 10 continue" and allowing the parking and barge/tugboat "to continue to operate, 11 consistent with their existing operation, rates, and services." (Dec. 30, 2022, Order, 12 p. 28). The status quo, consistent with the rate case order in Docket No. A-41, Sub 13 7, has been for aggregate parking rates to increase no more than the compound 14 average growth rate of the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-15 U) as calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. We are willing to condition 16 approval of this transaction on limiting any future rate increase in parking or barge 17 rates to this inflation index for four years after closing or the next rate case, 18 whichever is earlier.
- Q. Just so that it's in the record, what are the rates and schedules for the parking and tugboat/barge operations?

ublic Rebuttal Testimony of Lee H. Roberts and Charles A. Pau	ıl
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Page 1	8

1	A.	Attached as Addendum I is the parking and barge rates and schedules. This is the
2		same information as was attached to the Public Staff's proposed regulatory

conditions.

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- Q. Apart from the commitment to hold parking and barge rate increases to the rate of inflation, is SharpVue requesting a rate base acquisition premium ruling in the present case?
- 8 A. We maintain that the total purchase price for the barge and parking assets should
 9 be included in SharpVue's rate base without need for an acquisition adjustment to
 10 include the purchase price in rate base. However, if the Commission were to
 11 disagree, then we would request that an acquisition premium be included in rate
 12 base for those assets.

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Q. Please explain.

- 15 A. The cost of utility assets is determined when those assets are first owned by a utility.

 16 The regulated utility is BHIT, and it has never owned the parking and barge assets.
- Those assets have never been in rate base and have never been included in the cost

of service used to determine the utility's rates.

Legal counsel has provided Commission precedent that applies to this situation. In a June 15, 1990, order in a Carolina Water Service case, Docket No. W-354, Sub 81, the Commission stated:

As a general proposition, when a public utility buys assets that have previously been dedicated to public service as utility property, the

acquiring utility is entitled to include in rate base the lesser of the purchase price or the net original cost of the acquired facilities in the hands of the transferor at the time of transfer. The theory behind this proposition is that the investor in utility property should only be entitled to recover his own investment. Also, public utility ratepayers normally should only be responsible for reimbursing an investor once for the cost of public utility property through depreciation expense recovered through rates and through payment of a return on the unrecovered investment.

A.

(Emphasis added.) Thus, the use of net original cost instead of purchase price normally applies when the assets are transferred from ownership by one utility to ownership by another utility. That principle applies to the ferry and tram, but not to the parking and barge. The parking and barge have not been owned by a utility previously, so the principle of applying the lower of net original cost or purchase price is not applicable here.

- Q. You have discussed how the normal policy of using original cost instead of purchase price is based on a utility-to-utility transfer of the assets in question.

 Since the proposed transfer of parking and barge assets are from non-utility to utility, how should the rate base be valued in this situation?
 - The rate base value of the barge and parking should be set at the allocated share for those assets of the total purchase price to be paid by SharpVue. There are two main reasons why it would be in the public interest to include the allocated purchase price in rate base if the Commission were to set rates according to traditional ratebase/rate-of-return ratemaking.

First, the financial viability of the transfer would be destroyed if rate base for those assets were to be set at approximately \$9,000,000, as recommended by the Village, rather than approximately \$34,000,000 (the purchase price to be paid by SharpVue less the allocated value of the Deep Point Terminal lease and non-regulated assets). SharpVue has the ability to cancel the transaction if it is not satisfied with the rate base valuation pursuant to Section 7 of its Asset Purchase Agreement with BHIL. The benefits of the transfer, which are discussed below, will not be realized if SharpVue is not allowed to recover its investment – it would be a forced loss of major proportions and SharpVue would be violating its fiduciary duty to investors

Second, in this unique situation, there is no risk of arbitrage, a concern raised by Village witness O'Donnell, who opined: "Placing assets in rate base at market value would, essentially, turn the keys to regulation of utility rates to arbitrage specialists that would buy and sell assets on an endless basis and force consumers to pay higher and higher rates for assets for which they have already paid." Counsel has identified that this same concern is reflected in past Commission decisions:

if it accepted such terms, and its lender would not provide financing on such terms.

"The Hearing Examiner notes also that the danger of including such debit adjustments in rate base - encouraging transfers made to build up rate base-may be adequately guarded against by examining each transaction to ensure that it is prudent, at arms length and the benefits accruing to the customers outweigh the costs of inclusion in rate base of the excess purchase price."

Page 21

(Emphasis added.) Order of April 30, 1997, in Docket No. W-274, Sub 122, quoting from the January 10, 1986, order in Docket No. W-354, Sub 39. However, rate base approval of the SharpVue purchase price would not create such risk. The basis for including the purchase price in rate base is that those assets have never before been owned by a utility. Once SharpVue owns them, the rate base amount could not be bid up in subsequent transfers (if any) because the general rule of not allowing acquisition adjustment into rate base would apply because at that point the parking and barge assets would, in fact, therafter be utility-owned. In other words, the precedent that SharpVue is relying on to allow the purchase price into rate base would also prevent any future purchase prices from going into rate base. The concern raised by the Village about "endless" rate base increases for the same assets is simply incorrect in this case.

We also note that the purchase price in this case is lower than the fair market value as established by the most recent appraisal as explained above. Thus, the public interest is served by setting rate base for the parking and barge assets at the lower of fair market value or purchase price.

- Q. Previously you said original cost instead of purchase price is 'normally" the rate base valuation where a utility asset is transferred from one utility to another utility. Are there exceptions?
- 21 A. Yes. We understand from counsel that in some cases of a transfer of assets from one utility to another utility, the Commission has included an acquisition

adjustment, or "acquisition premium," in rate base. In other words, the purchase price instead of net original cost was allowed into rate base for the acquiring utility. This is a case-by-case determination, and the standard is whether the burden on customers of a higher rate base is outweighed by the public benefit of the transfer. For instance, the Commission's order of April 30, 1997, in Docket No. W-274, Sub 122, found that "The acquisition will benefit the customers of Hardscrabble by ensuring the long term viability of their water system" and then concluded "that the acquisition is in the best interests of the customers and that Heater should be allowed to make the requested debit acquisition adjustment to rate base after the transfer has been completed."

In a subsequent order, Docket No. W-1000, Sub 5, issued on January 6, 2000, the Commission observed that its test for when to include an acquisition adjustment in rate base had varied among past cases, and established one consistent test going forward:

the Commission should refrain from allowing rate base treatment of an acquisition adjustment unless the purchasing utility establishes, by the greater weight of the evidence, that the price the purchaser agreed to pay for the acquired utility was prudent and that both the existing customers of the acquiring utility and the customers of the acquired utility would be better off [or at least no worse off] with the proposed transfer, including rate base treatment of any acquisition adjustment, than would otherwise be the case.

In that case the Commission approved the transfer as in the public interest, but declined to allow the acquisition premium (amount of purchase price above the net original cost of the selling utility) into rate base: "it appears to the Commission

Page 23

that all of the benefits which would accrue to North Topsail customers from an acquisition by UI will exist whether or not the acquisition adjustment is included in rate base."

A.

Q. How is the reasoning in those prior decisions applicable to the present case?

As noted above, based on past Commission precedent in Docket No. W-354, Sub 81, there should not be a need to address original cost versus purchase price for the parking and barge assets because the purchase by SharpVue would be the first time those assets enter utility ownership. Accordingly, the purchase price is the proper rate base amount.

However, if the Commission were to decide differently, the present case would justify inclusion of the purchase price in rate base under the Commission's standard for an acquisition premium. The reasons are that (a) the purchase price is a reasonable amount, set by arms' length bargaining and below fair market value, and (b) the benefits of the transfer will outweigh the burden of the higher rate base amount by replacing an owner that does not want to continue the utility business with a new owner that has the ability and desire to operate the utility.

With respect to the reasonableness of the purchase price, there are multiple appraisals that support the price, as we discuss in detail earlier in this testimony. With respect to the benefits of the transfer, the Mitchell estate is no longer interested in owning and operating a utility business. An indifferent owner is not in the best interest of utility customers. An estate where the other assets have been distributed

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to heirs is not in a position to fund future capital improvements. In contrast, SharpVue has the financial capability and willingness to fund future capital needs of the utility. Just as with the Hardscrabble system acquired by Heater in the Docket No. W-274, Sub 122, case noted above, "The acquisition will benefit the customers . . . by ensuring the long term viability of" the ferry and transportation system."

At the same time, the present case is starkly different from the UI (Utilities Inc.) acquisition of the North Topsail system in Docket No. W-1000, Sub 5, because SharpVue has the contractual right to cancel its transaction with BHIL whereas UI did not have that right. Without including the purchase price in rate base, there is considerable jeopardy to the benefit of transferring the regulated operations serving Bald Head Island to a willing and capable owner (SharpVue) from a utility that is ultimately owned by an estate that intends to sell off its assets and not continue as a utility business. This benefit outweighs the burden of higher rate base for the parking and barge assets. This is especially true in light of SharpVue's commitment not to increase parking and barge rates more than the CPI for the next four years.

Q.

VILLAGE'S EXPRESSED CONCERNS

Both Mr. Gardner's and Dr. Wright's testimonies refer to the results of a survey conducted by the Bald Head Association; has the Village of Bald Head Island—which seeks to acquire the ferry and tram for itself and has intervened in this docket—been lobbying island residents and landowners to oppose the requested CPCN transfer in this?

Page 25

1 Yes. It's a small island with roughly 300 registered voters, and of course the Mayor, A. 2 Mayor Pro Tem, and Village Council members live on the island, so we had 3 assumed that there had been a lot of coordination of communications to shape onisland "public opinion." But then, on November 16, and again—a second time— 4 5 on November 18, the Mayor sent out an official email, from the public.information@villagebhi.org email address, using the official Village of Bald 6 7 Head Island letterhead, stating the Village's position that it "does not have 8 sufficient answers . . . necessary for us to support the transfer" and asking residents 9 to "please vote "No" or "Do not know enough" (emphasis in original) in response 10 to the BHA's November 14 survey. A copy of the November 16 email is attached.

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- Q. What is your reaction to the Village's claim that it "does not have sufficient answers" and Mr. Gardner's statements about what he believes are "missing" from the applicant's testimony?
- 15 A. They are astonishing statements. Mr. Paul and I answered questions for more than 16 two hours at an island forum sponsored by the Bald Head Island Association, at 17 which the mayor attended. As noted above, I have testified and been cross-18 examined by the Village's attorneys in Commission Docket No. A-41, Sub 21. I 19 have personally met with the Mayor, the Mayor pro tem, and their attorneys on 20 three occasions and would have been willing to meet more often if requested. I 21 have been available to be deposed in both Docket No. A-41, Sub 21, and Sub 22. 22 Our counsel has responded to voluminous sets of Data Requests from both the

Village and the Public Staff in the two dockets, and we have provided thousands of pages of documents to the Village in response to their Data Requests and those from the Public Staff.

On the other hand, the tactic represented by the mayor's emails is not surprising because it has unfortunately become a recurring motif. In the Village's public communications to the LGC about the Bald Head Island Transportation Authority (BHITA), the Village argued that there wasn't enough information validating the valuation, yet the Village used the same information to support its \$54 million bond referendum to purchase the Transportation System assets. In meetings I have attended with the mayor and mayor pro tem, they said they needed more information before making a decision, yet they have never specifically indicated what information was needed. In response to the offer for the Village to buy the transportation system on the same terms we are buying it, the Village said they didn't have enough information, and yet again did not specifically state what information was needed. Nor did it pursue any independent due diligence opportunities afforded to them by BHIL and BHIT to conduct its own due diligence. It is our opinion that it's not at all about information; it's about outcome: the Village wants to kill the sale to SharpVue, like it did the sale to the Authority, so that it can buy the transportation system itself for less than its fair market value.

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0. Dr. Wright testified that he believes the corporate structure SharpVue will utilize will make it difficult to regulate the operations. How do you respond?

Page 27

Sharp Vue will be the manager of Pelican Legacy Holdings, LLC. In addition, the SharpVue management team (Lee Roberts and Doug Vaughn) will own and/or directly control more than 50% of the investments in Pelican Legacy Holdings, will be the managers on the Board of Managers for these entities (along with Chad Paul), and will be the strategic decisionmakers, along with Chad Paul, for the ferry and tram. Although there will be other investors in Pelican Legacy, they will not be able to change management or separate SharpVue from Pelican Legacy Holding the owners/managers of SharpVue (Roberts and Vaughn will be the majority owners/managers of Pelican Legacy Holdings.) This ownership/management structure is not unusual; it's very common among private equity-owned utilities and infrastructure assets. Moreover, SharpView's proposed ownership and management structure is consistent with the current ownership structure by the Mitchells of BHIL and BHIT.

Finally, the regulatory conditions proposed by the Applicants, attached to this testimony, which follow very closely the conditions proposed by the Public Staff address, specifically provide the Commission tools to monitor and regulate distributions to SharpVue and its affiliates (Condition 7), notice of certain investments that affect the books, costs, rates, revenues, etc. of BHIFT (Condition 9), management changes (Condition 15), and, of course affiliated agreements (Condition 19).

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Dr. Wright is also critical of a private equity firm owning the operations. Do

2 you believe those concerns are well-founded?

A. Absolutely not. As I just indicated, it's not uncommon for private equity firms to own utilities and infrastructure assets. In fact, I think it's very likely that in the changing market, private equity-owned utilities are going to be more and more common. Dr. Wright seems to have a misconception about how private equity works and the role it plays in the market. This is not an instance where we intend to flip these assets to make a quick profit. We plan to hold them long-term as explained in more detail above.

Moreover, SharpVue is willing to agree to conditions that resolve Dr. Wright's concerns. For example, Proposed Condition 7 would limit the amount of distributions that BHIFT can pay to SharpVue and its affiliates. Similarly, Proposed Condition 8 would impose required equity capital levels until the next rate case, and Proposed Condition 9 would require notice of certain types of investments. These are just a few of the conditions that alleviate the concerns raised by Dr. Wright.

Q.

- Q. Has SharpVue demonstrated sufficient experience in and expertise with the operation of a utility and/or transportation system?
- As we have consistently stated, including in our verified Application, and as expressed above, the skilled management team who has been managing the operations for over a decade will remain in place. Chad Paul will be responsible

Page 29

for the day-to-day management of the transportation system. Bion Stewart will be assisting him with day-to-day operational decisions. Shirley Mayfield will be responsible for financial accounting. With this management team in place, SharpVue will have more experience in, and expertise with, the operation of the Bald Heald Island ferry than any other conceivable purchaser.

- Q. Mr. Lloyd raised some concerns about an investor presentation from March 2022 in which he says reflected a short-term investment strategy. How do you reconcile that presentation with your testimony that SharpVue plans to hold the assets long term?
- A. As I have consistently explained, and testified in Docket No. A-41, Sub 21, our ownership of the assets being purchased from BHIL will not be held in a limited life fund, but in an LLC with a perpetual life. That plan was also included in the March 2022 investor presentation. But we are structuring the ownership of the transportation system for long-term ownership. We will be hiring employees and management in anticipation of long-term ownership, and we have absolutely no obligations, and no plans, to divest any of the assets within any time period. The Mitchells have provided ferry and tram services for more than thirty years; our plans and commitments are the same as theirs were and generally the same as that of any utility owner. We have never contemplated selling the ferry operations to another private buyer.

- Q. Dr. Wright also suggests that the transaction poses no meaningful benefit to the public. Do you believe that to be true?
 - A. First, I would like to start by noting that BHIL's owners have made it very clear to everyone that—since they have been actively trying sell the ferry and tram for over five years, and have every intention of selling it—BHIL has no long term capital plan to invest any additional funds in the utility. Despite Dr. Wright's opinion that there is no risk of service disruption, the reality remains that BHIL and BHIT cannot continue to operate the ferry long-term due to the realities associated with Mitchell estate.

Second, and contrary to Dr. Wright's implication that there are serious quality problems with the operations, the due diligence reports contracted by and provided to the Bald Head Island Transportation Authority, including the Bond Feasibility analysis and Seller's Due Diligence Report conducted by Mercator, and reviewed by its finance advisor (Davenport & Company) and bond underwritiers UBS and PNC, all consistently found that that the transportation system has been well run, and that its assets have been well maintained. Specifically, the Due Diligence Assessment by Moffat & Nichol, filed concurrently herewith as LHB/CAP Rebuttal Exhibit 8, found no high repair priorities, and a structure condition rating of all the marine assets to be "good" or "satisfactory" (other than the passenger landing on the island which is "fair" and may require replacement within ten years – a condition that we were already well aware of). Moreover, the United States Coast Guard, North Carolina DOT Ferries Division, and the

Passenger Vessel Association of America all consider BHIT and its management team to be "best in class" operators. SharpVue's own due diligence confirmed these conclusions. Having a new owners committed to continue this level of service is a very meaningful benefit to the public.

That having been said, we do think steps can be taken to improve system operations that current management has been evaluating and working on for the past 24 months. A starting point would be improved information technology, that would allow reservations and electronic ticketing discussed earlier in this testimony. We also believe that—once the ownership of the system is settled and the sale to SharpVue has closed—we will be able to more effectively address employee hiring, training, and retention—issues that remain "clouded" due to the uncertainty of future management and ownership. 2023 will be the first full calendar year that the new baggage policies approved by the Commission in Docket A-41, Sub 20 will be in place, and we are hopeful that, with better public understanding of those policies, baggage handling will improve, which should improve on-time performance. But, as we stated in our verified Application, we will also evaluate with management how to improve baggage handling operations, and when and how to replace the next ferry in the fleet. SharpVue will be assessing operations during our first year of ownership and evaluating other steps we can take, and prudent investments we should make, to improve operations. SharpVue is also willing to agree to conditions relating to quality of services (for example, see Proposed Conditions 18 and 25).

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All to say that we are confident SharpVue's acquisition will ensure continued stability of the operations and enable improvements that will further benefit the public. It's certainly in the public interest to have a ready, willing, and able operator who is committed to investing what is necessary to carry the ferry operations into the future, which is certainly not the current situation with the Mitchell estate.

A.

- Q. Mr. Gardner testified at length about the ferry's poor on-time performance and maintenance issues. Does SharpVue have specific plans for improving on-time performance and for maintenance of the ferries and trams?
 - Although the Mitchells have not made any major capital expenditures in the ferries and trams while trying to sell these operations (and will not), every well-informed and knowledgeable evaluator of the system has concluded that the ferries and trams have been well maintained. That is our own assessment as well. We will absolutely continue that tradition and record of maintenance. Additionally, despite comments about poor maintenance of the terminal, our due diligence uncovered no such problems and neither did the Authority's advisors who evaluated the vessels and the terminal and marine infrastructure. *See, e.g.* Exhibit 8 filed herewith. To the contrary, the facilities are top notch and much nicer than one would encounter in your typical ferry experience.

The on-time performance issues are complex, but, as Bion Stewart's testimony shows, they are not nearly as grim as Mr. Gardner paints them. SharpVue

will be studying the situation during the first year of our ownership, and we have not jumped to any conclusions as to how they should be addressed. We know the problems are seasonally impacted (and even vary day-to-day over the course of the week in the summer). We are confident that the baggage policies approved by the Commission in Docket No. A-41, Sub 20 will help once they are fully internalized by vacationers in 2023. We also know that on-time performance can be affected by factors beyond the operator's control (e.g., weather, Cape Fear River channel dredging, other traffic in the river), and delays are cumulative over the course of the day when operating 30-minute departure times. It is too early for us to know whether the solution will include adding more resources (at additional cost) or altering schedules, some combination of the two, or different solutions altogether.

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Dr. Wright expressed concerns regarding the fact that the real estate used in the ferry operations will not be owned by Bald Head Island Ferry Transportation but will instead be held by an affiliate who theoretically could sell the real estate to a third party. Will Sharp Vue commit to maintaining the existing continuity of ownership or control in all components of the transportation system, including the ferry, parking, and barge operations? Yes. That is our current plans, and we do not anticipate or foresee any changes in our ownership in the foreseeable future. It is worth noting that the mainland terminal at Deep Point in Southport and the Island terminal are currently leased by

BHIT and not owned by BHIT. Our proposed ownership structure mirrors the

current ownership structure. Most importantly, proposed Regulatory Condition 22 expressly commits that

BHIFT shall continue to have the right to maintain the long-term lease for ferry terminal facilities on the mainland and island (Terminal Lease) and the right to secure and maintain a perpetual easement(s) or long-term lease(s) or <u>otherwise ensure</u> <u>ownership or control of all property necessary for regulated</u> parking and barge and tug operations at reasonable rates...

(emphasis added). When read along with the "Successors" condition (Number 28), and the "Parking Availability" condition (Number 4), these conditions fully address witness Wright's concern.

No business or political leader can honestly make guarantees in perpetuity—BHIL never has and no future owner ever would. But, as previously stated in my rebuttal testimony in Docket No. A-41, Sub 21, there will be no less spaces for parking than the aggregate of: (i) the current number of paved, lined spaces at the Deep Point lots (1,955) and (ii) the number of overflow cars that it can currently accommodate on the unpaved, gravel lots at Deep Point (347), and we have memorialized that again in this docket in proposed Regulatory Condition 4.

O.

Although SharpVue's legal position is that parking services cannot be regulated under Chapter 62 of the General Statutes, is SharpVue willing to accept voluntarily a condition, enforceable by the Commission, regarding the pricing of parking services at the Deep Point Terminal?

Public Rebuttal Testimony of Lee H. Roberts and Charles A. Paul
Docket No. A-41, Sub 22
Page 35

1 A. Yes. As memorialized in proposed Condition 4, SharpVue has committed that it
2 will not increase the aggregate rates for parking ticket classes or levels in the
3 foreseeable future more than the then-applicable Consumer Price Index for All
4 Urban Consumers (CPI-U) as reported by the United States Bureau of Labor
5 Statistics for at least four years or until the next rate case.

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- 7 Q. You've mentioned proposed conditions several times. Do you agree with the
 8 regulatory conditions proposed by the Public Staff?
- 9 Conceptually and in large part, yes. The Public Staff has undertaken a rigorous 10 investigation of the details of the transaction, and we appreciate their efforts and 11 support their role in evaluating the benefits and risks of the sale on behalf of the 12 using and consuming public. But there are some details of their proposed 13 conditions that we believe should be modified for clarity, for more efficient 14 administration, and to ensure that they appropriately correspond to and address the 15 potential risks of a transaction such as this, while still enabling the owners and 16 managers to exercise their best judgment for the future of the assets and operations 17 to serve those utilizing them.

- 19 Q. Do have a set of regulatory conditions that you believe are appropriate to
 20 impose on the approval of this transfer of the certificate?
- 21 A. Yes. Our proposed Regulatory Conditions are set forth in Appendix A attached to 22 this testimony. When we refer to proposed conditions throughout our testimony,

we are referring to our proposed conditions attached to our testimony in Appendix

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Q. What are some of the other commitments that SharpVue has previously made to the intervenors about rates and is now willing to memorialize in Regulatory Conditions to the order approving the transaction?

SharpVue has committed that it will not seek a change in rates for at least one (1) year following a prospective transfer of the CPCN under which BHIT's ferry and tram services operate. (Proposed Condition 27). SharpVue has concluded that it can continue to operate the ferry and tram services at the approved rates at this time, assuming that there are no significant changes to its regulated status or to the rate base. SharpVue would, however, consider a decision to include the assets of the parking and barge businesses in the ferry/tram rate base, or to otherwise regulate those assets, as a "significant change." However, SharpVue will not increase the aggregate rates for parking ticket classes or levels or barge/tugboat services more than the compound average growth rate from January 1, 2023 of the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) as calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for a period of four years following closing or the next rate case. (Proposed Condition 5). SharpVue will also not seek to recover any direct costs and expenses related to the transfer (proposed Condition 1).

Sharp Vue further commits that Bald Head Island Ferry Transportation, LLC is "stepping into the shoes" of BHIT such that it assumes responsibility for all rights and obligations of BHIT that flow from the Commission's order approving a settlement of the 2010 Rate Case for the ferry and tram services in Docket A-41, Sub 7. (Proposed Condition 4). Specifically, this includes, but is not limited to, the provision of that order that \$523,725 of annual revenues (including regulatory fee impact) from the parking business that Sharp Vue seeks to acquire from BHIL will continue to be imputed to the revenue requirement of the utility with respect to the existing Commission-ordered rates until such time as the Commission may approve an adjustment to rates.

SharpVue also agrees that conditions are appropriate expressly requiring it to abide by the terms of the existing lease agreement between BHIT and BHIL (included in the current ferry rate base under the terms of Docket A-41, Sub 7) to lease real property in Southport, North Carolina and on Bald Head Island (Proposed Condition 22).

Q. Does this conclude your testimony?

18 A. Yes, at this time.

1		Addendum I
2 3		Parking, Barge, Tug rates and operation schedules
4 5		Deep Point Parking Rates
6 7	•	\$12.00 - Daily General Lot Rate (overnight lot and no limit on length of stay);
8	•	\$10.00 - Daily Contractor Lot Rate (no overnight parking permitted);
9	•	\$1,400 - Annual Premium Lot Rate (overnight lot and no limit on length of stay);
10	•	\$1,150 - Annual General Lot Rate (overnight lot and no limit on length of stay);
11	•	\$700 - Annual Contractor Lot Rate (no overnight parking permitted);
12 13	•	\$650 - Annual Employee Lot Rate (no overnight parking permitted - we do allow overnight parking given special, case-by-case circumstances in this lot);
14 15 16 17 18 19	•	QR Code Exit Passes - Parking pass afforded to accommodate primarily Island-based businesses with seasonal or short-term employee needs. QR Code Exit Passes are \$6.00 per use-swipe to get out of a daily ticketed lot only (General Lot and Contractor Lot). QR Code Exit Passes are the responsibility of the businesses purchasing them and they are responsible for keeping track of their balances. Each business is given a code to go online to our website and view their balances.
20 21 22 23 24 25 26	•	\$20.00 - Oversized Vehicle – Barge Landing Overnight-Oversized Parking - We charge an oversize rate of \$20.00 per day (this rate is based on a customer's vehicle taking up the equivalent of two standard-sized parking stalls). Barge Vehicle-Oversized Vehicles are parked in designated parking stalls located behind the Shipping & Receiving facility. All customers receive a tag to show they have paid before parking. This is the only parking area that we require prepayment before parking the customer. These spots are on a first come, first serve basis.
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28 29 30 31 32		Please note that on a case-by-case basis, BHIL provides accommodation in the Employee Lot for employees who may have to stay overnight on occasion. Examples include the Conservancy, The BHI Club Chefs who sometimes stay a few nights in a row, and employees of the Village who may need to stay on-island on occasion.
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Rebuttal Testimony of Lee H. Roberts and Charles A. Paul Docket No. A-41, Sub 22 Addendum I

2 3	Serv	Barge & Tug
4	Sinc	e November 7, 2022, the barge has been operating on the following schedule:
5	•	Departure from Deep Point Terminal: Monday-Friday: 8am, 10am, 12pm, 2pm;
6 7	•	Departure from Bald Head Island Terminal: Monday-Friday: 9am, 11am, 1pm, 3pm;
8	•	Barge Maintenance days 1st and 3rd Wednesday beginning October 5, 2022.
9		
10 11		of March 12, 2023, the barge is currently expected to operate on the following dule:
12 13	•	Departure from Deep Point Terminal: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 7am, 9am, 11am,1pm, 3pm;
14 15	•	Departure from Bald Head Island Terminal: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 8am, 10am, 12pm, 2pm, 4pm;
16 17	•	Departure from Deep Point Terminal: Wednesday, Friday: 7am, 9am, 11am, 1pm;
18 19	•	Departure from Bald Head Island Terminal: Wednesday, Friday: 8am, 10am, 12pm, 2pm;
20	•	Barge Maintenance days 1st and 3rd Wednesday ending April 12, 2023.
21		
22	Char	ges for Barge Transport
23 24 25 26	space barge	e deck space ticket charges are currently \$60.00 each. Each ticketed deck e authorizes the holder to utilize six feet in one of three lanes aboard the e for one round trip. Vehicle size determines the number of deck space tickets ired. Lengths over an increment of six feet are rounded to the nearest six feet.

 $^{^4}$ The November – February schedule is the off-peak schedule, and the March – October schedule is the peak season schedule.

1	ADDENDUM II
2	DOCKET NO. A-41, SUB 22
3	REGULATORY CONDITIONS
4 5	These Regulatory Conditions set forth requirements imposed upon Pelican Legacy
6	Holdings, LLC (Holdings), Bald Head Island Ferry Transportation, LLC (and BHIFT), a
7	wholly owned subsidiary of Pelican Legacy Holdings, LLC (Holdings), SharpVue Capital,
8	LLC (SharpVue), and other entities that invest in Holdings that are owned or controlled by
9	SharpVue or its principals, Lee Roberts and Douglas Vaughn, which are currently SVC
10	Pelican Partners, LLC (Partners), SharpVue Real Estate Partners II, LP, Pelican Co-Invest,
11	LLC, and SharpVue Real Estate Partners II AI, LP (as well as any successor entities)(
12	"SharpVue Affiliates"), as a condition of approval of the application by BHIL, BHIT, and
13	BHIFT pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 62-111 and Commission Rule R2-8.1 for authority
14	(1) to transfer BHIT's Common Carrier Certificate to BHIFT to operate the passenger ferry
15	transportation services to and from Bald Head Island, the tram services on the island, and,
16	the parking, barge, and tug operations (collectively, the Transportation Assets) (the
17	(Transfer), and for BHIFT or SharpVue to pledge assets and borrow or issue debt pursuant
18	to N.C.G.S. §§ 62-160 and 62-161 secured by the Transportation Assets as may be
19	necessary to finance the Transfer (the Pledging of Assets, and collectively with the
20	Transfer, the Proposed Transaction).
21	These Regulatory Conditions, which become effective only upon closing of the
22	Transfer, shall apply jointly and severally to Holdings, BHIFT, SharpVue, and SharpVue

- 1 Affiliates, and shall be interpreted in the manner that ensures BHIFT's customers (a) are
- 2 protected from any known adverse effects from the Transfer, (b) are protected as much as
- 3 possible from potential costs and risks resulting from the Transfer, (c) receive sufficient
- 4 known and expected benefits to offset any potential costs and risks resulting from the
- 5 Transfer. These Regulatory Conditions do not apply, however, to how the SharpVue
- 6 Affiliates operate or manage cash for other investments separate from and unrelated to their
- 7 investment in Holdings and that have no effect on the rates and services provided by
- 8 BHIFT.

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For purposes of these Regulatory Conditions, the North Carolina Utilities Commission is referred to as "the Commission," and the Public Staff – North Carolina Utilities Commission is referred to as "the Public Staff." For purposes of these Regulatory Conditions, the term "affiliated" or "Affiliate" (other than previously defined SharpVue Affiliate) shall mean Holdings, BHIFT, and any business entity of which 10% or more is owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by Holdings and BHIFT, including but not limited to Pelican Real Property, LLC, Pelican Logistics, LLC, and Pelican IP, LLC.

Each entity bound by these Regulatory Conditions must acknowledge and consent to these Regulatory Conditions and is further required not to cause any subsidiary entities to violate such Regulatory Conditions, nor to prevent any bound entity from taking action to comply with the Regulatory Conditions, as long as the Regulatory Conditions remain in effect. The consent and acknowledgment as set forth above does not constitute a general consent to expansion of the Commission's jurisdiction over such entity(entities) beyond

- 1 that established by Chapter 62 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Further, as long as
- 2 SharpVue and its affiliates own or operate ferry, tram, parking, barge, and tug operations,
- 3 SharpVue and the SharpVue Affiliates agree to submit to the Commission's regulation and
- 4 oversight of those operations as set forth in the Regulatory Conditions herein and the
- 5 Commission's December 30, 2022 Order in Docket No. A-41, Sub 21, unless and until and
- 6 to whatever extent such Order may be overturned, reversed, or replaced and is thus no
- 7 longer valid and enforceable.
- The Commission retains the right to impose future limitations on BHIFT that the
- 9 public interest requires.
- 10 1 Transfer-related Direct Costs and Expenses. Direct costs and expenses 11 associated with the Transfer will be excluded from the regulated expenses of 12 BHIFT for Commission financial reporting and ratemaking purposes. Direct 13 Transfer expenses are change-in-control payments made to terminated 14 executives, Transfer-related bonuses, severance payments, regulatory process 15 costs, and transaction fees (such as, but not limited to, acquisition, architectural, 16 broker, environmental, financing, investment banker, and legal fees for due 17 diligence, transaction structuring, financial market analysis, and fairness 18 opinions based on formal agreements with investment bankers). BHIFT will 19 file a summary report of its final accounting for direct Transfer and Transfer-20 related -expenses within 120 days after the close of the Transfer, and

- supplemental reports within 60 days after each quarter until such expenses cease.
- Non-Consummation of Transfer. If the Transfer is not consummated, neither the cost nor the receipt of any termination payment shall be allocated to BHIL or BHIT or included in regulated expenses of BHIL or BHIT for Commission financial reporting and ratemaking purposes. BHIL's and BHIT's customers shall not otherwise bear any direct expenses or costs associated with a non-consummated Transfer.
- Acquisition Adjustments. SharpVue, SharpVue Affiliates, Holdings, and
 BHIFT shall neither pursue nor recover an acquisition adjustment on assets
 used and useful in provided ferry or tram services in any future rate case.
- 12 4 Parking Availability. SharpVue, SharpVue Affiliates, Holdings or their 13 affiliates will provide no less spaces for parking than the aggregate of: (i) the 14 current number of paved, lined spaces at the Deep Point lots (1,955) and (ii) the 15 number of overflow cars that it can currently accommodate on the unpaved, 16 gravel lots at Deep Point (347). Holdings and its affiliates also commit that it 17 will meet the parking space commitments of this paragraph in one, or a 18 combination of, the following ways: (i) at the Deep Point parking lots currently 19 used by BHIL; (ii) through the acquisition and development of other 20 conveniently located parking lots with regular shuttle service to convey

1		passengers and their baggage to and from the Deep Point terminal; or (iii)
2		through the construction of parking decks or garages in lieu of surface lots.
3		This obligation would continue until such time as the Commission were to
4		allow a waiver or modification of this condition upon a showing of a
5		demonstrable decline in demand for parking at Deep Point or the availability of
6		equivalent parking by a third-party provider.
7	5.	Parking and Barge/Tugboat Rates: For a period of four years following the
8		closing of the sale and barge/tugboat assets and the parking facilities at the
9		Deep Point Terminal, or the next rate case filed by BHIFT, whichever is earlier,
10		Holdings or its affiliates will not increase the aggregate rates for parking ticket
11		classes or levels or barge/tugboat services more than the compound average
12		growth rate from January 1, 2023 of the Consumer Price Index for All Urban
13		Consumers (CPI-U) as calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
14	6.	Hold Harmless Commitment. The Transfer shall be effectuated in a manner
15		designed to prevent harm to BHIFT's ratepayers. Notwithstanding this,
16		SharpVue, SharpVue Affiliates, Holdings, and BHIFT (as well as any successor
17		entities directly or indirectly owning or controlling BHIFT assets, operations,

or its employees) shall take all such actions as may be reasonably necessary and

1		appropriate to hold BHIFT's customers harmless from the effects of the
2		Transfer.
3	7.	Distributions to SharpVue, SharpVue Affiliates, and Holdings. BHIFT shall
4		not pay to SharpVue, SharpVue Affiliates, Holdings, or their members or
5		managers any distribution that would result in a cash balance of less than
6		\$500,000 for ferry, tram, parking and barge operations.
7	8.	Common Equity Capital. Until a final order is issued in BHIFT's next (first)
8		general rate case, BHIFT shall maintain common equity capital at levels equal
9		to or greater than 40% of total adjusted booked capital (including common
10		equity, preferred stock, long-term debt, and long-term capital leases) (On Day
11		1, booked capital is invested common equity). No equity distributions, whether
12		by dividend or other form, such as the management fees of SharpVue, may be
13		made that would result in invested equity capital of BHIFT falling below this
14		minimum 40% level without prior approval of the Commission.
15		Notwithstanding the foregoing, BHIFT may petition the Commission for an
16		exception to this Regulatory Condition.
17	9.	Notice of BHIFT-related Investments. Whenever SharpVue, SharpVue
18		Affiliates, or Holdings makes any new or increased direct or indirect
19		investment in a business entity other than Holdings and/or BHIFT where: (a)
20		such investment appears or will appear on the books of BHIFT, or will

1		otherwise have a direct effect on the books, costs, rates, revenues, charges,
2		obligations, services, capitalization, or indebtedness of BHIFT, and (b) the
3		amount of such investment is equal to 10% or more of BHIFT's book
4		capitalization, then BHIFT shall file or cause to be filed, as soon as practicable
5		following Board or other approval of the subject transaction and any public
6		announcement thereof (if any), a confidential notice of the investment with the
7		Commission. The notice shall include a full description of the investment and
8		an explanation of how will appear on the books of BHIFT, or will otherwise
9		have an effect on the books, costs, rates, revenues, charges, obligations,
10		services, capitalization, or indebtedness of BHIFT.
11	10.	Notice of Default or Bankruptcy. If SharpVue or SharpVue Affiliates
12		experiences a material default on a Holdings or BHIFT-related obligation or
13		files for bankruptcy, Holdings and BHIFT shall notify the Commission of the
14		event in advance, if possible, or, if not, as soon as possible but not later than ten
15		days after such event.
16	11.	Non-attribution or Forgiveness of Intercompany "Loan." To the extent that
17		closing of the Transfer memorializes any intercompany "loan" between BHIL
18		and BHIT (see \$19,808,223 of Related Party Loan(s) as reported in BHIT's
19		Financial Report of December 31, 2021), SharpVue, SharpVue Affiliates,
20		Holdings, and BHIFT must disclaim any such "loan" and any such "loan" or

1		indebtedness shall not be binding upon Holdings and BHIFT and shall not be
2		presented for Commission consideration whatsoever, whether for rate base
3		purposes or otherwise. This requirement applies to all existing or subsequent
4		indebtedness of BHIL or BHIT through closing, but not to cumulative negative
5		retained earnings as shown on BHIT's balance sheet prior to closing.
6	12.	Post-Closing Financial Information. Holdings and BHIFT shall file
7		confidentially pre-and post-Transfer closing balance sheets and the associated
8		closing journal entries, including relevant descriptions and disclosures for the
9		transactions recorded as soon as practicable but not later than the end of the
10		second full quarter following the close of the Transfer, and shall provide
11		confidentially to the Public Staff closing documents for the consummation of
12		the Proposed Transaction, including closing statements for Holdings and
13		BHIFT.
14	13.	Meetings with Public Staff. Holdings and BHIFTA management shall meet
15		periodically with the Public Staff, whenever requested, to discuss Holdings'
16		financial condition, BHIFT's financial condition and results, service quality
17		metrics and maintenance initiatives and results, and the ferry, barge, tug, and

1 tram transportation services, parking services, and any changes and potential 2 improvements, and new tariffs. 3 14. Access to Books and Records. In accordance with and to the extent provided by 4 North Carolina law, the Commission and the Public Staff shall continue to have 5 access to the books and records of Holdings and BHIFT. 6 15. Management. SharpVue, Holdings, and BHIFT have indicated that they intend 7 to maintain current management comprised of existing key BHIL and BHIT 8 employees Chad Paul, Shirley Mayfield, and Captain Bion Stewart. Holdings 9 and BHIFT shall notify the Commission at least 14 days prior to any 10 termination of agreements (except for termination for cause) with or resignation 11 by these key personnel or as soon as practicable following their knowledge of 12 any such termination or resignation. 13 16. **Regulatory Reporting Requirements.** BHIFT shall comply with all regulatory 14 reporting requirements, including Annual Report, Quarterly Report, and 15 Quarterly Financial Report of monthly information. 16 17. **Regulatory Staffing.** Holdings and BHIFT shall maintain sufficient, adequately 17 trained personnel to ensure that regulatory reporting requirements are complied

with in a timely and accurate manner. BHIFT shall notify the Public Staff when

- there is any change in regulatory or compliance personnel at the management level.
- 3 18. Overall Service Quality and On-Time Performance. Upon consummation of 4 the Transfer, Sharp Vue, Holdings, and BHIFT shall continue to provide safe 5 and reliable parking, ferry, barge, tug, and tram services consistent with current 6 practices. Holdings and BHIFT shall have a goal of on-time ferry departures of 90%, excluding delays caused by force majeure events beyond their control, 7 8 including, but not limited to, adverse weather conditions, river and port traffic, 9 requested emergency response and evacuation services, and dredging by third-10 parties that affect transit to and from Bald Head Island. BHIFT shall evaluate 11 service delivery and related components to maintain and improve overall 12 ridership experience and report findings of its evaluation to the Public Staff at 13 meetings pursuant to Regulatory Condition #14 and at public meetings 14 conducted pursuant to Regulatory Condition #22.
- 15 19. Affiliated Agreements. Holdings and BHIFT shall file with the Commission

 16 agreements pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 62-153. All such agreements that involve

 17 payment of fees or other compensation by Holdings or BHIFT shall require

 18 acceptance and authorization by the Commission and shall be subject to any

 19 other Commission action required or authorized by North Carolina law and the

 20 Rules and orders of the Commission. Holdings, and BHIFT shall file notice

1		with the Commission of any proposed amendments to, assignment of, or
2		transfer of management rights under the Management Agreement (referred to
3		by BHIFT as an "Investment Management Agreement") among SharpVue,
4		Partners, and Holdings that would result in SharpVue Managing Partners Lee
5		Roberts and Douglas Vaughn no longer be leading the provision of
6		management services under the Management Agreement.
7	20.	Intellectual Property. All intellectual property currently used in parking, ferry,
8		barge, tug, and tram operations shall continue to be available for use by BHIFT
9		at no additional charge. To the extent that intellectual property of BHIL
10		conveyed to Pelican IP, LLC, at closing is currently used in parking, ferry,
11		barge, tug, or tram operations, BHIFT shall have the continued right to utilize
12		such intellectual property and shall not be charged a licensing fee or any other
13		sum associated with such use.
14	21.	Public meetings with Stakeholders. Management of Holdings and BHIFT shall
15		meet at least semi-annually in a noticed public meeting (one of which must be
16		on Bald Head Island) with ferry, barge, tug, and tram service constituents to
17		receive input on all aspects of such services.
18	22.	Ferry Terminals, Barge, and Parking Access. BHIFT shall continue to have
19		the right to maintain the long-term lease for ferry terminal facilities on the
20		mainland and island (Terminal Lease) and the right to secure and maintain a

1		perpetual easement(s) or long-term lease(s) or otherwise ensure ownership or
2		control of all property necessary for regulated parking and barge and tug
3		operations at reasonable rates, with escalations not to exceed the rate of
4		inflation for an annual 12-month period at a rate greater than the annual
5		increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers, CPI-U, as
6		published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unless any such rent
7		escalation at a different rate is approved by the Commission in a rate case
8		proceeding. In the event that any such easement or lease is terminated, expires,
9		or is rendered inoperable, the grantor/lessor shall file written notice in this
0		docket at least 90 days in advance and BHIFT shall be granted access (for
1		example, by new easement or lease) to such facilities necessary for regulated
2		operations at reasonable rates.
3	23.	Supplemental Assets. The subsequent sale, assignment, lease, easement, or
4		other transfer of any right or interest in and to supplemental assets (assets other
5		than regulated assets) under the Asset Purchase Agreement (APA) for the
6		Transfer shall not materially impact customers of regulated operations for the
7		ferry, tram, parking, barge, or tug.
8	24.	Mergers and Acquisitions. For any proposed merger or other business combination that would affect BHIFT, Holdings, or SharpVue, BHIFT shall file

an application for approval pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 62-111(a) at least 90 days

- 1 before the proposed closing date for such merger or other business
- 2 combination.
- Vessel Replacement. Within one year of the closing of the Transfer, Holdings and BHIFT shall file a ten-year plan for the capital expenditures to replace any of BHIT's current ferry vessels, including the proposed financing of any capital expenditures related to the vessels.
- 7 **26.** Transfer Pricing Between Affiliates. For untariffed goods and services 8 provided by Holdings, BHIFT, SharpVue, or Sharp Affiliates to a non-utility 9 Affiliate, the transfer price paid shall be set at the higher of market value or 10 Holdings', BHIFT's, SharpVue's, or SharpVue Affiliates' cost. For untariffed 11 goods and services provided to Holdings, BHIFT, SharpVue, or SharpVue 12 Affiliates by a non-utility Affiliate, the transfer price charged by a non-utility 13 Affiliate to Holdings, BHIFT, SharpVue, or SharpVue Affiliates shall be set at 14 the lower of market value or the non-utility Affiliate's cost. Services provided 15 by Holdings, BHIFT, SharpVue, or SharpVue Affiliates to utility Affiliates or 16 by utility Affiliates to Holdings, BHIFT, SharpVue, or SharpVue Affiliates

- shall be transferred at the supplier's cost, unless otherwise directed by order of the Commission.
- Rate Case. BHIFT agrees not to seek an increase in rates for at least one year following the consummation of the Transfer, other than as allowed under Condition 5 above.
- Tariff/Service Regulations. Within thirty days of the issuance of the final

 Order in this docket, the Applicants will file tariffs/service regulations, with

 rates and operating schedules, for parking and tugboat/barge services for

 approval by the Commission consistent with its Order in this docket.
- 29. Successors. The respective successors and assigns of Holdings, BHIFT,
 SharpVue, and SharpVue Affiliates shall be bound by these regulatory
 conditions, Commission rules, and Commission jurisdiction established by
 Chapter 62 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Any successor or assign
 shall file in this docket consent to submit to the Commission's jurisdiction for
 the limited purpose of allowing the Commission to oversee and enforce these
 regulatory conditions

Lee H. Roberts and Charles A. Paul, III Testimony Summary Docket No. A-41, Sub 22

We are Lee Roberts, the Managing Partner of SharpVue Capital, LLC ("SharpVue"), and Charles "Chad" Paul, the President of Bald Head Island Transportation, Inc. ("BHIT") and Chief Executive Officer and Manager of Bald Head Island Limited LLC ("BHIL"). Our rebuttal testimony addresses issues and questions raised in the response testimony regarding future plans for ownership and management of the ferry, tram, parking, and barge operations post closing.

In finding a purchaser for the transportation assets, it was important to BHIL (and the Mitchells) to identify a new owner who is committed to maintaining the ongoing success of the island. SharpVue intends to keep the current management in place and hire current employees of the operations to provide a seamless transition. SharpVue's ownership will ensure ratepayer will receive high-quality service and continue to come to the island for commercial, residential, and recreational purposes.

Contrary to assertions otherwise, SharpVue's interests are aligned with the Island and its stakeholders—just like the Mitchells' have been in the past. Our economic incentive is to maximize asset utilization, which is dependent on the success of the Island itself. When Bald Head Island flourishes, so will we. Moreover, SharpVue is willing to invest in the system to improve service, accommodate growth, and prepare for contingencies – something BHIL and BHIT are no longer in a position to do.

Sharp Vue is willing, able, and planning to be a long-term owner and operator of the system and will have sufficient capital to execute these plans. After closing, we will have \$2 million in cash on hand and a \$2 million revolving line of credit available. In addition, Sharp Vue has the ability to call upon additional capital for future investments if needed. Sharp Vue's base case has always been to buy and hold the utility assets for the long term.

Concerns about the purchase price being too high are also not supported by the facts. Instead, multiple independent appraisers been valued the property. The most recent appraisal has clearly established that the amount being paid by SharpVue is at or below fair market value. Significantly, its lender is willing to provide financing based upon that valution.

As reflected in the regulatory conditions we propose, SharpVue is ready and willing to make commitments to mitigate perceived risks and protect ratepayers going forward. Those conditions (largely following those proposed by the Public Staff) address concerns such as parking availability and rates (which will survive regardless of the Sub 21 appeal), affiliate transaction pricing, on-time performance metrics, cash distributions, debt/equity ratios, ownership or control of necessary property, and ten-year capital expenditure plans, among others.

The systems may be well run for now, but the absence of investments and engaged ownership will result in deteriorating equipment and declining service quality in the future. Ownership of the transportation systems by SharpVue is far beneficial to customers compared to forcing a liquidating estate to continue to own it. The biggest stumbling block that may prevent the realization of this benefit is if SharpVue cannot earn a return on its full investment in the parking facilities and the tugboat/barge operations, as proposed in the response testimony. We believe that Commission precedent, economic principles, and sound regulatory principles support establishing the rate base for these assets at their fair market value, as represented by the allocated purchase price. Perhaps most significantly, doing so will not result in a mateiral increase in rates.

SharpVue is excited to consummate this transaction and looks toward the future. We hope the decision of this Commission recognizes the benefits and allows this transaction to proceed.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that a copy of the foregoing Testimony Summary of Bion Stewart has been served by electronic mail, hand delivery, or by depositing a copy of same in the United States Mail, postage prepaid, properly addressed to parties and counsel of record as shown on the Commission's Service List in docket A-41, Sub 22, and has also been provided to Commission's Counsel and to the appropriate members of the NC Public Staff.

This 10th day of March, 2022.

Isl M. Gray Styers. Jr.

M. Gray Styers, Jr. Counsel for Bald Head Island Transportation, Inc. and Bald Head Island Limited, LLC 1

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MR. FERRELL: And the only other note I would make is that Exhibit 6 and Exhibit 7 are confidential, attorneys' eyes only exhibits.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: And Exhibit 6 and Exhibit 7 will be treated as confidential, attorney eyes only.

MR. FERRELL: Thank you. The witnesses are available for cross examination.

CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. TRATHEN:

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Marcus Trathen for the Village of Bald Head Island.

MR. TRATHEN: Chair Duffley, I have just one, kind of, administerial matter. I had a conference with counsel for Limited Transportation about designating a couple of exhibits which will help streamline the cross examination. There's essentially two exhibits. They're from the last proceeding and financial statements of Bald Head Island Limited Parking from 2016 through 2021. These are the audited financial statements and then the comparable statements for the Barge Department. And these were previously marked as confidential, but I understand from counsel that this falls within the rubric of historic financial information

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1	and it be filed as nonconfidential.
2	MR. STYERS: They can be filed as
3	nonconfidential and we'd have no objection to they
4	being admitted in the record by stipulation.
5	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: And are we
6	marking them?
7	MR. TRATHEN: I don't see a need to. If
8	I can get them into the record, I don't need to ask
9	questions about them.
10	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. Thank you,
11	Mr. Trathen.
12	MR. TRATHEN: Thank you for that.
13	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: So we are going
14	to go ahead and admit those two documents into the
15	record now.
16	(Village Roberts-Paul Rebuttal Cross
17	Stipulation Exhibits 1 and 2 were
18	admitted into evidence.)
19	MR. TRATHEN: Thank you. And I do have
20	some copies if anybody wishes to have copies,
21	they're available.
22	Q. Gentlemen, with respect to your rebuttal
23	testimony pages 16 through 24, you've got an extended
24	legal discussion about acquisition premium.

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Can I assume that neither of you is offering legal opinions on these issues?

- (Lee Roberts) No, I'm not offering a legal Α. opinion on the term acquisition premium. We don't believe there is an acquisition premium in the sense that we understand the term as corporate finance professionals.
- Okay. And you're aware that there's Q. typically legal briefing after the evidentiary hearing, correct?
 - Α. That's my understanding, yes.
- And it wouldn't surprised you if the Village Q. made its legal arguments in its post-filing briefs, would it?
 - Α. I suppose not.
 - Okay. So I'm not going to ask you any Q. questions about those matters.

Mr. Roberts, we had a discussion, I don't remember how many days ago it was, a couple of days ago, with regards to performance fees and you had kindly agreed to run a calculation for us and I understand that you have done that now. I don't know whether or not this has been passed out. I've got a copy of it.

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1	Mr. Ferrell, has this been passed out
2	generally?
3	MR. FERRELL: It has not. We provided
4	it to counsel this morning after we received it
5	early this morning, and so it wasn't clear to me
6	whether or not that was going to be offered by
7	anyone as a exhibit. We have copies if folks would
8	like them or if you would like to use it as an
9	exhibit, we have copies.
10	MR. TRATHEN: Okay. Why don't we just
11	go ahead and pass that out. I've just got a couple
12	of quick questions on that document. And if we
13	could mark this as Village Roberts-Paul Rebuttal
14	Number 1?
15	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: It shall be so
16	marked.
17	(Confidential Village Roberts-Paul
18	Rebuttal Exhibit 1 was marked for

identification.) 19 MR. TRATHEN: And this is labeled 20 confidential, attorneys' eyes only. 21

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: It will be designated as such.

Do we need to clear the room? Are we

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1	going into a confidential session?
2	MR. TRATHEN: I believe we are.
3	MR. STYERS: Yes, but I think everyone
4	in the room is probably
5	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay,
6	Mr. McCoy?
7	MR. TRATHEN: Agreed.
8	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Thank you.
9	(Due to the proprietary nature of the
10	testimony found on pages 72 to 122, it
11	was filed under seal.)
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18	(Confidential testimony ended at
19	1:49 p.m.)
20	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: So now we're back
21	out of confidential session. We'll go back to
22	Mr. Trathen.
23	EXAMINATION BY MR. TRATHEN:
24	Q. Yes. Mr. Roberts, I just want to touch on an

- issue that is certainly of concern to the Village. 1
- 2 Will not be a surprise to you, I believe you understand
- that the Village wishes to be clear that the Commission 3
- has the unfettered ability to regulate the consolidated 4
- 5 transportation structure.
- 6 You know that's a desire of the Village,
- 7 right?
- 8 (Lee Roberts) When you say the consolidated Α.
- transportation structure, you mean? 9
- Parking, barge, ferry. 10 0.
- 11 Α. Yes, absolutely.
- 12 Okay. And you understand the appeal that Q.
- 13 SharpVue's a party to challenges and threatens that
- 14 prospect, don't you?
- 15 I do. Α.
- Okay. And in this room, in this hearing 16 Q.
- 17 you've invoked the Commission's regulatory oversight as
- a reason for assurance that the public will be 18
- 19 protected, haven't you?
- 20 Α. I have, yes.
- So I'm just curious, how do you square the 21 Ο.
- 22 position in the room with the appeal you've taken to
- challenge the Commission's determination of its 23
- 24 oversight belief?

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- Α. Well, so you looked at our investor presentations and I think it's fair to say in painstaking detail and even prepared a summary of them, so you've looked at them grossly enough to know that what we've forecasted for the parking, to take an example, was an increase raise of rates of 50 cents every other year. That's what we forecasted long before the Sub 21 ruling, that's what we continue to forecast, that's obviously well within inflation. so you don't have to take my word for the fact that we don't have a plan to raise parking rates faster than inflation. It's consistently what was presented to investors and what was underwritten. So in our view, it's not necessary. The regulation itself imposes its own cost which is then borne by the rate payers. And it obviously creates a lack of flexibility. So in our view, the regulation of the parking and I'd say the same thing about the barge imposes a cost without a countervailing benefit.
- Q. Reflecting on Mr. Taylor's testimony and understanding that the current rate of return is 8.33 percent, will your investors be satisfied with 8.33 percent?
 - Α. Yeah, that's a WACC. So that includes both

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the debt and the equity.

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- It does? Ο.
- So that's not the return to our investors. Α.
- Okay. But it's the return on the investment. Q. Are your investors satisfied with 8.33 percent? Can you make a business case based on that?
- Again, my investors are the equity investors. Α. So they're at the 40 percent of the -- that goes into the WACC calculation. So -- but, yes. The answer to your broader question is the -- the returns implied by the 8.33 percent WACC are attractive to our investors.
- Okay. And just to be clear, obviously there Q. was disagreement about how the ratemaking rules apply in this context, but from your perspective, you're not asking for any special ratemaking treatment or rules with respect to this investment, correct?

That's a legal question to MR. STYERS: some agree. I mean, to the extent that the witness can answer factually, but I mean, to the extent that you're asking him about alternative ratemaking processes or what their rights may be under the statutes, that goes on the issues of law that would be the province of counsel.

MR. TRATHEN: Sure. I'm fine with him

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answering to the extent he can.

MR. ROBERTS: I'm not sure I understand what you're asking. I'm sorry.

- To your knowledge, are you asking for any Q. special ratemaking approach or treatment or are you satisfied with the Commission's existing rules and processes with respect to setting rates?
- (Lee Roberts) I have to say this is my Α. first -- this transaction is my first interaction with the North Carolina Utilities Commission as an applicant and so I don't believe that we're asking for anything unusual, but I'm not sure I have the experience to answer that conclusively.

MR. TRATHEN: Sure. That's a fair response. That's all I have. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Mr. Higgins.

MR. HIGGINS: Thank you.

EXAMINATION BY MR. HIGGINS:

Excuse me. Mr. Roberts, at the time SharpVue entered into its asset purchase agreement with Bald Head Island Limited for the assets that we've spent the week talking about, SharpVue knew the Commission regulation of the parking and barge assets was, in fact, a possibility, correct?

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- (Lee Roberts) Absolutely. Α.
- And did SharpVue's due diligence include an Q. analysis under a scenario where the Commission subjected the parking and barge assets for regulation?
- Well, I think I'd give the same answer. So Α. because our -- because our underwriting assumes that the rates for parking and barge would increase significantly inside the rate of inflation, we didn't think that the prospect of regulation would affect our underwriting, our economic case for the -- for the transaction. I don't know if that answers your question.
 - I'm sorry to say I don't think it does. 0.
- Well, so the -- when we thought about the Α. prospect of parking and barge being regulated, what we thought was the -- if parking and barge become regulated, our understanding of the Commission's process and guidance is that rates may still increase at the rate of inflation and because our assumptions were that even in a unregulated environment, our rates would increase significantly less than inflation than our underwriting case, our assumptions of what the economic returns of the parking and barge business could do would not be affected. At the same time,

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- there is the cost of the regulation itself and the lack of flexibility.
- You heard Mr. Taylor's testimony earlier Ο. today about his analysis with regard to the parking and barge operations --
 - I did. Α.

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- -- if the XXXXXXXXXXXX was included? Ο. this is a --
 - MR. FERRELL: Presiding Commissioner Duffley, I think that might have been a part of a confidential testimony. Maybe just strike that number and refer to it generally.
- COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: We will strike that number and we will work on the video as well.
- 15 MR. HIGGINS: I should be put in time 16 out.
 - MR. PAUL: You're riding outside on the ferry on the way home, Mr. Higgins.
- 19 MR. HIGGINS: On the front.
- 20 MR. PAUL: On the front and it will be 21 the Patriot, so you get really wet, okay?
- MR. HIGGINS: I look forward to that. 22
- 23 Did SharpVue determine whether -- subject to O. 24 your point about raising your projections that you're

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23 24 outside the rate of inflation, did SharpVue determine or project in its underwriting analysis that it could fulfill its or honor its projections to its investors with or under the existing ferry, barge, and parking rates? (Lee Roberts) Without ever increasing for Α. inflation?

on that -- but you don't anticipate raising rates

No. With your -- with taking that into the Ο. equation.

So I was asked by Α. Yes. senator McKissick in the Sub 21 hearing whether we would go ahead and close on the parking and barge assets even if the Commission did decide to regulate them in the Sub 21 hearing. And what I said was that I believe we were contractually obligated to do so under the APA and that -- I said that because it's true and that's our -- that's continued to be our intent. So we believe it's preferable if they're not regulated for the reasons that I've stated, but we've been prepared all along to move forward with those assets being regulated.

Q. All right, sir. Thank you for that.

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Mr. Paul, a question for you. When was the Deep Point ferry terminal put into -- actually into service?

- (Charles A. Paul) In the summer of 2009. Α.
- Okay. Would you agree that since then, since Ο. it was put into service, that the parking lots at the Deep Point ferry terminal have been used by the ferry riding public to park their vehicles?
- The ferry riding public in addition to other Α. people from the public park in that parking lot, yes.
- Those people who decide to come and have Ο. lunch at the ferry terminal?
- Α. And folks that are using the residential marina and folks that are visiting the shipping and receiving facility.
 - MR. HIGGINS: All right, sir. I don't have any other further questions, gentlemen.
- 18 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Mr. Creech.
- 19 EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:
 - Quick question. We've talked about closing Q. the confidential session, but not -- this wouldn't be confidential, but when do you anticipate at this stage when closing would actually occur? You've got the ROFR, you've got your appeal, you've got the

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Commission's order, of course.

What is your timeline now?

- A. (Lee Roberts) So our closing timeline does not depend on the appeal Sub 21 as I tried to make clear. Were it not for the ROFR litigation, our plan would be to close as -- assuming -- were the Commission to approve our application, our plan would be to close as rapidly as possible after that approval. There's nothing else we need to do from our end to proceed to closing and we've been in that posture now for many months. So we would like to close as rapidly as possible, but I said leaving the ROFR litigation aside and we're not a party to that litigation. We're obviously curious about how it turns out, but I'm not sure I can give you a forecast.
- A. (Charles A. Paul) We are moving forward with the assets that are part of the asset purchase agreement. They're not part of this hearing. We are moving forward to close those assets by the end of the month.
- Q. So what you're contemplating is a two-step closing then?
- A. We're going to have at least a two-step closing.

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- Α. (Lee Roberts) Yes. I'm sorry, I should have -- there are the supplemental assets that I mentioned before that we plan to close on imminently.
- All right. And what you're saying is --Q. without going into purchase price or anything like that, what you're saying is obviously understandably any transaction, that the -- a portion is allocated to the issues before us today and a portion is allocated to these other assets that are not regulated or might be alloca- -- the universe of nonregulated assets, whatever the universe may be, you are going to close on those here coming up?
 - (Charles A. Paul) Yes, sir. Α.
- (Lee Roberts) Yes, sir. Α.
 - All right. And would you amend your APA to O. provide for that or do you think your APA already provides for that?
- (Charles A. Paul) The APA allows for that. Α. Notwithstanding, we will have -- we've already circulated closing conditions for those supplemental assets to make sure that we don't have any misunderstanding. So, for example, there could be a claim that a portion of those supplemental assets might be involved with the ROFR. And we have mitigated that.

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SharpVue is going to close on those assets all cash. The reason why we wanted to do that is, if you look at the broad APA, there's no financing requirement there. The Mitchells' estate has not got a financing Cash. condition. So if their lender goes poof, well, then we're going to be a all cash purchase. And so because of that, SharpVue is going to close all cash on the assets that are not part of this -- this hearing. And the estate will manage whatever ROFR cloud to title. They will be effectively the title insurer on that specific issue.

(Lee Roberts) I just want to be completely Α. clear that those assets -- or none of the assets that we've discussed this week here are included. We're talking about real estate on the -- on both the island and on the mainland, the marinas, and some -- we call them the supplemental assets for a reason. They're assigned from the transportation infrastructure that we've been discussing. I would note, though, that that's -- that's close to a \$12 million purchase. That's a significant investment in the island and what I've been calling it's ecosystem apart from its transportation system purchase, that's about the Village's annual budget being invested in one ancillary

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- And don't answer this if you think it's a 0. confidential question, but will any of those assets be pledged as part of the known loan transaction?
- Well, we're closing all cash as Mr. Paul indicated. The -- I do think the answer to that is probably confidential. But I would refer you to the term sheet.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: We have it in the record, in the term sheet.

MR. ROBERTS: It's in the record.

MR. CREECH: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Mr. Ferrell.

EXAMINATION BY MR. FERRELL:

- Mr. Roberts, you've testified that the regulation of parking and barge did not impact your or the investors' decision to make this deal move forward, correct?
 - A. (Lee Roberts) That's right.
- And that's also correct testimony as it Q. relates to the lender and their willingness to fund this deal and loan money on this deal, correct?
- I'm not sure they said that no matter what Α. happens, we're there to fund; but upon receiving and

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reading the Sub 21 ruling, they did confirm their willingness to continue to proceed with the transaction.

MR. FERRELL: No further questions.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Commissioner

questions, Commissioner Brown-Bland.

COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Yes.

EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND:

- Mr. Paul, a minute ago in answering a Ο. question, you discussed the Sub 21 order and said that it didn't -- your reading of it is that it didn't require any type of rate setting and could even continue with the imputation from the parking or the barge or whatever; do you recall that?
 - (Charles A. Paul) Yes, ma'am. Α.
- Would it provide any benefit from a business Q. perspective and either one of you can answer, but would it provide any benefit if the Commission's order were to state exactly that?
- Α. I think that it would benefit everybody if we had a clear understanding how the assets would be operated from a regulatory perspective. So if that's one way the Commission wanted to go, it would provide clarity. I think that my answer to that prior question

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- was that the Village has proposed throughout this hearing that that order is that you will fully regulate from a rate perspective all of the assets from a full-on perspective using a rate-base methodology. Ι did not read Sub 21 to say that that was the absolute answer. I read it was that you were going to evaluate it. You were going to provide whatever flexibility you wanted to do for yourselves as well as the operator, but it would provide clarity, absolutely, yes ma'am.
 - Or even if it stated something like regulatory -- something as simple as securing the right to parking and barge services for the ferry?
 - Α. That would be fine. Again, I think that the key to it is what Mr. Taylor pointed out today. was a lot of submittals in Sub 21 and a lot of submittals here. We pulled, I think, 13,000 emails to try to find something about a rate problem or people complaining about rates. We don't have people complaining about rates for parking and barge. That's not an issue in terms of what we're charging for a service. So to the extent that we need to talk about that in Sub 21 or in this here that you would say hey, you might look to that, that would be a great way to provide some clarity.

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In terms of, Mr. Roberts signing up, remember even though it's his stipulations, whatever he agrees to, you all are going to pretty much look to us if we're still owning it and we would be fine with committing to providing the same number of parking spaces available and grow those rates at inflation and with the barge, grow the barge rates in inflation. Ιf that became the order, we can live with that. confident SharpVue can live with that because that's how they modeled it. They modeled it just like it was coming out of the authority and just like Standard and Poor's did.

COMMISSIONER BROWN-BLAND: Okay. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Chair Mitchell? EXAMINATION BY CHAIR MITCHELL:

Gentlemen, a couple questions for you. I Q. think y'all were both in the room, Mr. Paul I think you were for sure; Mr. Roberts, you may not have been, when I asked Mr. Gardner some questions about the dialogue between the Village and Transportation Limited. And so I want to ask y'all those questions. In general -- in general, I want to understand how much conversation has happened between the parties. I'm clear on how much

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litigation has happened, but how much conversation has happened? How much have you all heard from the Village about specific service quality concerns that the Village or customers may have that you could address? So help me understand some -- just respond to the question and I'll ask follow ups, if necessary.

(Lee Roberts) Yes. Thank you. So I wrote Α. down what you said in that line of the questioning because I liked it a lot. It was consultation and cooperation can go farther than litigation and we agree. So the day we announced the transaction, I traveled to the island to meet with the mayor, and introduced myself, and explained who we were, and explained what we were trying to do. And we reached out to the Village several times. You've heard testimony about the meetings that we've had with them. They unilaterally stopped those -- stopped those discussions. But the Village is only a subset of the -- I've been using the term ecosystem, so 275 full-time residents voted in their bond referendum. That's not the ecosystem, that's not this business, that's less than two ferry loads. They could all ride the ferry every day and that wouldn't be a business. The island and the ecosystem is it's the homeowners and

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then it's obviously the renters and the contractors and the employees and the day trippers, but the homeowners are represented by the association. And that's the 1350 homeowners. We've had excellent dialogue with them. We have presented to them formally twice. I'm afraid you weren't here, Commissioner, in the Sub 21 hearing, but the head of the Bald Head Association presented, talked about our cooperation and the dialogue that we have had underway and that's been very productive and constructive and that's just been the formal dialogue. There's really not certainly a week, but maybe not a day that goes by when I don't get a call, or an email, or a text from somebody with an interest on the island, generally a homeowner, sometimes a frequent vacationer with suggestions and dialogue and some of it's -- some of it's more constructive than others, sometimes it's, you know, my dog got seasick on the ferry, or a baggage handler wrinkled my outfit, but a lot of it is constructive and thoughtful and helpful to us as we try and learn more about the system and the infrastructure. So we feel as though the dialogue with the island at large has been very positive and very constructive. And we would hope that the dialogue with the Village, that narrow subset

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- of full-time residents, can be restarted and that we can work with them cooperatively and move forward together as partners.
- All right. Mr. Roberts, I appreciate that. 0. That is very helpful to my understanding and I appreciate your filling in some of those gaps in my understanding. Some of the things I heard Mr. Garter testify to, it seemed very pragmatic and simple things that could be addressed or planned for at some point down the road. So I do hope at some point that the relationships are mended enough between all the parties in this room to have civil conversation again, because I think everybody would benefit.
 - Α. By all means.
- (Charles A. Paul) And, Ms. Mitchell, we have Α. a very open and collaborative discussion daily with Chris McCall and the staff. There is not an open war out there politically nor operationally.
 - And those are Village staff, just to --Ο.
- Village staff. Chris McCall is the town Α. manager and I am probably talking to Chris two or three items a week and he's talking to Byron Stewart (phonetic spelling) about whatever we need to do. Most of the issues that have been raised about on-time

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performance were primarily due to COVID. And that's people's most recent expectation and to put that into perspective, it's not just the Village that I have to work with. The majority of these assets lie within the city of Southport and I would suggest to you the mayor of Southport and his view of how we're going to operate under COVID in his jurisdiction was very different than what the mayor of Bald Head was going to do in his jurisdiction.

And then we had the governor was going to say one thing. So balancing those out, we balanced those things out every day. Did we get it all right in COVID? No, but I would suggest we did the best we could and the delays and the baggage with people bringing supplies for months, that all impacted. That's everybody's most recent expectation and memory. But we get -- if we get complaints daily, if I get a call at all by from the Commission staff, if Ms. Rajeev calls me, I get right on it. He emails me the issue that someone brought up and we're on it. And the same thing with the Village, when they get a complaint, they just push it onto me and we try to resolve those.

CHAIR MITCHELL: All right. Thank you,

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Mr. Paul.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: So Chair Mitchell jumped ahead of me. I mean, had the same line of questioning as I was going to do, but I did want to reiterate you heard my line of questioning with Mr. Gardner.

- A. (Lee Roberts) Yes.
- Q. And he is sincere. He wants to work with you. But I heard you say the Village unilaterally stopped meetings. I think Mr. Gardner's testimony is that the two of you are not meeting with him. So, obviously, the truth probably lies somewhere in the middle and I would really encourage the two of you, it sounds like both groups, all three groups, do want to open up conversation again and I kindly encourage it as well, as Chair Mitchell did.
 - A. Yes.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Commissioner
Clodfelter.

EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER CLODFELTER:

Q. Okay. This may take a little time. And let me say a couple of things by way of preliminarily first. I haven't thought about exactly how to ask the question before. So that's why it's going to take a

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little time. So to set the question up, I may need to say a few things to you so you understand the context of why I'm asking what I'm asking and what I really want to know.

Α. Sure.

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First point. Second point is an obvious one. Ο. I think this Commission has regulatory jurisdiction over the ferry and tram operations. And that's not even in dispute. In the Sub 21 order, we were trying to -- trying to wrestle with the question of how does that jurisdiction play when the assets over which we have jurisdiction are so intertwined with other assets over which whether or not they're subject to the statute is a matter of statutory law. It's not a matter for us to say or not; it's a matter of what the statute says. But we have an exercise. Whatever jurisdiction might have existed or might not have existed. We just haven't played it. That's what we're wrestling with. And we were wrestling with that in the 21 order. I consider this proceeding to be a second stage in trying to deal with that question. They're not separate in my mind. They're two stages of trying to answer a very complex question. So speaking only for myself as a Commissioner, I would see great benefit

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not only to the Commission or to the parties but to the public in general if we can use this second stage of addressing the question to try to resolve it all. Boy, that would be a great outcome, I think, for everyone. So I'm going to sort of say those two things preliminary.

One, it's going to take me a while to set up the question. Second, I think you see what my ultimate objective is. It's to try to see if there is a way that we can address that fundamental question, how does the regulated asset relate to the other assets, whether they are regulated under the statute or not. How do they fit together?

So let me back up. I try to put myself and think about that in the perspective of not the Village, not the perspective of Bald Head Association, or the club, or the conservancy, or the Mitchell family, or SharpVue, or the town of Southport, or any of those constituencies. I'm trying to think what matters to me as a member of the using public who uses that transportation complex. And that, to me, defines the public interest.

That's what defines the public interest and my job as a commissioner, I think, is to give the

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public interest priority. So I try to think well, as a member of the public, what do I care most about. And that's what I think as a commissioner, I need to care most about. Well, I care about price okay. I care about price and we've spent a lot of time talking about price, charges, fares, tariffs, regulated rates, nonregulated rates, increases at the rate of inflation, this, that and the other, all of that. I want to leave all of that to one side because there's something that I care about even more than that and that is that I have a seamless experience. When I go down to Bald Head Island, I park my car, I come up to the window, I buy my ticket at the terminal. I may have lunch at the terminal; I may not, I may have eaten on the way. But I may have lunch at the terminal. I wait around. Ι get on the ferry, I go over there. I know my bags are going to get across. And maybe I live there, maybe I don't, but maybe I'm renting, but maybe I'm bringing something too big for the ferry and it's got to go over the barge. I know it's going to get there, that they're all going to get there about the same time. They're going to be protected and taken care of. And when I get there, I'm going to have a great time on the island and then when I get back home, I have the same

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seamless experience. That really is what I think the fundamental public interest is all about. So what are the things that could threaten the public interest? Well, again, I want to say cost is a important one, but there are all sorts of ways too address cost. You guys have put all kinds of things in the regulatory conditions and to talk about cost for parking and all of that sort of stuff and we've got jurisdiction over the ferry rates, and you're not going to get out of line on the barge rates, I trust, because it's going to blow the whole system up if you do. You know, there are elements there -- there are other ways to deal with cost issues. We got control of some of them, and we could help influence some of the others, and you give an undertaking. So let me put cost to one side again. Rates and charges to one side. How do I protect against the real risk? And that is that the seamless experience blows up. That's all about whether the assets are under common ownership, management, and control, and they have been. They have been under the Mitchell family; that's just the history. Well, I'm not really hung up on who owns those assets. Again, I'm a consumer. I don't really care as a consumer who owns them. I don't care whether it's the Mitchell

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family. I don't care whether it's the Village of Bald Head. I don't care whether it's the authority. don't care whether it's an investment firm or a group of investors. The ownership is not what matters to me. It's the integrity of the group of assets as a combined operation.

And so I'm thinking from the public interest and my attention to the public interest as a Commissioner, what matters to me most is the assurance that those pieces of that seamless experience not get fractured and broken up in a way to where now I have to deal with one group of employees from one company here. One group of employees from that company there. Different operating policies, different operating practices who are not talking to each other, working to each other and just, I mean, working as a single teem. That to me is the most important single regulatory condition in this case. And it might actually help answer the question of what kind of regulation was the Commission really struggling for in the Sub 21 docket? That's the set up for the question. Got it?

Α. Yes, sir.

So suppose the regulatory conditions in this O. case didn't say anything about -- beyond what you guys

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have already proposed about leases and rates and increases and the cost of living and all of that sort of stuff and when you come in for general rate cases, suppose it said "whatever you guys would propose," but suppose it said, fundamentally, that the package won't be disbanded and split up under different owners, unaffiliated, unrelated, unintegrated, operationally integrated owners without the Commission having a chance to blow the whistle.

What would you say?

So I think Mr. Paul should answer as well, Α. but the -- my -- I think would be receptive to something like that. The -- it has operated well for a long time as you say because of the -- because of the common ownership. And I gave the example in the Sub 21 hearing of I used the example of Carowinds, that there's some differences, but when -- nobody has to go to Carowinds and when you go there, you have to park in their parking lots, and you have to buy their food, but if you don't like the experience or it costs too much, you just won't go. And that's true of most of the users of this system. There is this small group of permanent residents who don't have -- their demand's pretty inelastic, but for most of the users, certainly

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all the marginal users of the system, all the demand comes from -- the marginal demand comes from pretty -users whose demand is pretty elastic. It's certainly true if you're a day tripper. It's certainly true if you're a renter on the island. You'll go rent a house somewhere else for the summer if you don't have a good experience. And maybe you won't buy there if it's too much of a hassle. It's already a little bit more of a hassle than going to any other beach, but you do it because it's worth it. And so, that's how we think about it, is that it needs to be attractive to people who have other choices, not just the full-time residents who have relatively limited choice. It needs to be an attractive destination and the experience of parking your car and getting there and pulling up with three kids and a dog and your coolers for the week has to flow pretty well. And so we completely understand that and we're receptive to any dialogue that the Commission or the public staff wants to have about how to address that. I don't know if that fully answers your question or not.

It's as far as I think we ought to take it O. today, but again, I think I've made the observations I wanted to make, which is that, again, what we were

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- grappling with in 21 -- what I was grappling with, 1 speaking again only for myself, I shouldn't say "we." 2 What I was grappling with in 21 was what does this 3 Commission need to do to preserve the integrity of that 4
- operating -- unified operating experience. 5
 - Α. Yes.

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- And it may or may not require -- as the Ο. Commission said in the 21 order, it may not require the full panoply of what we do with Duke Energy.
 - Α. Right.
- But it fundamentally and maybe most Q. importantly of all, maybe it's the only thing that matters, it's the most important thing that matters to me is the integrity of the combined operation. there's a way to address that in the regulatory conditions, that may make a lot of the other issues easier to settle among the parties.
 - Α. I understand.
- 19 COMMISSIONER CLODFELTER: I'm done.
- 20 THE WITNESS: So,
- 21 Mr. Clodfelter, I would say that that's what we've 22 been trying to do with public staff and the Commissions since we first sat in here in 2016, was 23 24 to create an opportunity where the status quo could

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continue to exist and we have -- the Mitchells were gracious enough to try to make it status quo opportunity, and we have found a status quo owner that has made commitments to you all to try to keep that as seamless as possible.

- I like what you say. Now, the lawyer in me says go back and tinker a little bit with those commitments, okay?
- Α. Yes, sir, I would -- on all of those commitments, including that 5.4 million.
- How they're written down and how they're Q. expressed.
 - Α. Yes.

COMMISSIONER CLODFELTER: Go back and do some tinkering. Thank you. That's all.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: So I had written down the question in a bit different way, but I think it could also help with the task that you're being asked to do. So I think when you're looking at the regulatory conditions, write the conditions or look at the conditions assuming that the Court of Appeals reverses that December 2022 order in Sub 21. Assume that order does not exist and look at the conditions to protect against this what

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Commissioner Clodfelter so eloquently stated about seamlessness of the experience of the -- but also keep in mind the employees as well. And thinking about the employees, they're a little bit more inelastic and have to be there to support the island, so thinking about the employees and that issue -- figuring out what type of conditions that you can agree to that really addresses Mr. Gardner's concerns.

MR. ROBERTS: Very good. Thank you. COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Were there any other questions? Commissioner McKissick.

And I quess I'll start on these regulatory conditions as I was about an hour ago. In any case, based upon the regulatory conditions that have been proposed by the public staff at this time, and I've looked at them and compared and contrasted them to one's that SharpVue has outlined as attached in your rebuttal testimony.

EXAMINATION BY COMMISSIONER MCKISSICK:

Are there any conditions that the public staff has recommended that you consider to be seriously problematic and why?

Α. (Lee Roberts) I don't think so. There might

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be wording that we're still iterating but in general I think there's been broad agreement between us and the public staff.

That's encouraging. And, of course, kind of, Ο. count me in on this note of trying to come up with things that might be -- provide some creativity that might answer some of the questions that were enforced at this time. I would likewise encourage you and the public staff to give thought to what further regulatory conditions might be included that would address some of these concerns. And I know you pointed out the difference between the Village and I believe you said the 254-odd people that were there versus the association.

I take it your relationship with the association has been pretty good, historically?

- I'd characterize it as excellent. Yes, it's Α. been a robust and positive and constructive dialogue.
- And, as I recall, I actually saw a testimony from someone on behalf of the association that was in support of this transaction, is that correct?

Is my recollection serving me well?

They filed the testimony. Maybe Mr. Paul can Α. explain exactly what happened. I think what happened

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is they filed a testimony and then they had a new leadership and then couldn't agree and then I think they split 3/3 and then decided --

- Become neutral? Q.
- Α. Become neutral.
- O. Is that an accurate --
- (Charles A. Paul) Yes, sir, that's what Α. happened.
- All right. Let me ask you this: As it O. presently stands, I mean, obviously working together collaboratively, cooperatively in the association Village, the SharpVue group can obviously be the mutual benefit of all of the parties. I mean, in terms of resuming discussions and conversations to address issues, do you see an opportunity to do that? Because I think that the Commissioner's here would certainly like to see that improve or see that dialogue --
- Absolutely, Mr. McKissick. So let me Α. reiterate. Operationally, we do not have any issues talking with the Village. Those channels are absolutely wide open. Where we have conflict with the Village is their intervention here and with the ROFR to prevent the sale of the system. As it relates to talking about improving on-time performance, or adding

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some shading, or maybe converting the Chandler building to a non-island terminal, those conversations are fluid and active every day of the week. Where we have issues is that we have a competing bidder who wants to upset this transaction. On the operational side and improvement side, we have not closed those doors and we're interacting with the Village and the island constituents on a daily basis.

- And I believe you indicated you and the town O. manager have almost a daily --
- Chris McCall has daily interaction with our Α. organization daily. And I would say that I talk to Chris somewhere between one and three times a week and Mr. Stewart's talking directly to Chris one to three times directly a week.
- And in terms of members of the association, Q. approximately how many are there based upon the number of homeowners there?
- I believe it's about 1500 members of the Α. association. There's 1800 properties, but I could be wrong a little bit there, Mr. McKissick.
- And have they had significant dialogue with Ο. you in the past?
 - Α. Yes. We have had significant dialogue with

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the association to include Mr. Roberts and I appeared before the association at two town hall meetings that they held to talk about the transaction and to talk about issues that they may have relative to the ferry and the operations. And we've committed in those -the stipulations that we would continue to have a formal meeting on the island and a formal meeting off the island once a year to talk about operations on a formal basis, not just through the Village or not just through the association.

- And I know most associations have some type Q. of a newsletter for communicating with their members. Assuming this transaction were to go through, would you -- when I say you, the SharpVue entities -- have your own newsletter in trying to communicate with --
- We communicate through -- the association has Α. a very robust newsletter. Every single filing in this docket and in 21 is presented on there and all the links to our websites are on there. But we -- what I would anticipate is, in the stipulation, when we say we're going to have two meeting a year, that we would do that through them not just ourselves, for public notice periods. But we routinely post things on the Village website and on the association website when it

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comes to things about the ferry.

Excellent. I think the more interaction that Ο. can occur the better in the association is willing to serve as a conduit for that communication moving forward, and I think that would be an excellent way to proceed. I think we have a lot to deliberate over. There's been a lot of testimony this past week. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Commissioner Kemerait.

COMMISSIONER KEMERAIT: And I want to follow-up for all of the parties on what Commissioner Clodfelter had stated. Following up on that, I want everyone -- all the parties and everyone in the room to not forget that we -- and to stay focused on we still have two heavily litigated issues that have not been resolved. The first one is among other issues, but one is whether the rate base is going to be established in this proceeding and the second one is what the rate base will be. So following up on what Commissioner Clodfelter said, let's stay focused on those two unresolved issues.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. Questions

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on commission questions?

EXAMINATION BY MR. CREECH:

- Q. One quick question, if I may? Following up on Commissioner Brown-Bland's question related to sub 21 and various comments there, regardless of this two-step closing, that first closing would not prevent or impact, give an effect to the regulatory conditions that are being discussed; is that correct?
 - A. (Charles A. Paul) That's correct.

MR. CREECH: All right. No other questions.

12 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: The Village.

MR. TRATHEN: Yes.

EXAMINATION BY MR. TRATHEN:

- Q. Mr. Roberts, with respect to some questions about your dialogue with the Village, you've never asked for a meeting with Mayor Quinn and he's refused to meet with you, has he?
- A. (Lee Roberts) Well, as you know, Mr. Trathen, because you were a part of these discussions. We had, I think, three in-person meetings and then we were told that the Village didn't -- didn't see a point in talking to us anymore, so.
 - Q. Well, that was in the context of a

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- negotiation of some sort of solution and what they told you was there had been nothing offered that was feasible; wasn't that correct?
 - Did they make an counter proposal? Α.
- My question to you is: Has Mayor Quinn or O. Scott Gardner -- have you ever reached out to them and they said, "No, I don't want to talk to you and I refuse to meet with you, " or, "I won't take your call"?
- Α. No, but what I said was accurate, was that we were in a dialogue and they cut off that dialogue.
- You were in a negotiation that was Q. unsatisfactory and that was the end of negotiation?
 - Α. They could have made a counter proposal.
- Okay. In any event, the door's never been Q. closed from their perspective for any continued dialogue. I think you heard Scott Gardner talk about the desire for, you know, more cooperative relationship, did you not?
 - We -- we share that desire. Α.
- Α. (Charles A. Paul) And that door is not closed. The only issue has been the acquisition piece. The operational pieces, the improvement pieces, those doors have never been closed. We can call -- the Mayor's on my speed dial, I'm on his. When he calls

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- me, I pick up or if I am on that phone, and he has 1 2 extended to me the same courtesy. The only issues that we have had with the Village are related to the 3 acquisition and the ROFR, not operational issue 4 communications and not capital improvement 5 communication and how we're gonna increase and better 6 7 the system.
- 8 Q. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Paul.

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- With respect to the reference to the association, you're aware of the survey that they conducted where only 23 percent responded in support of the transfer?
- 13 (Lee Roberts) I've heard of it, yes. Α.
- (Charles A. Paul) I'm aware of it, yes. 14 Α. 15 After the mayor lobbied on the Village of Bald Head website as the mayor to provide those answers. 16
 - Okay. But nonetheless --Q.
 - And less than half of the association, I Α. think that only about a third of the association actually voted.
 - Ο. Okay. But nonetheless, 23 percent of the respondents supported the transfer; is that your understanding?
 - Α. Yes, sir, it is.

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1	MR. TRATHEN: That's all I have. Thank
2	you.
3	MR. HIGGINS: NO, ma'am. No questions.
4	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Mr. Ferrell.
5	Okay. Gentlemen, we have come to the
6	end of the day. We thank you for your testimony.
7	And we did accomplish this in one week. You may be
8	excused off the stand.
9	MR. ROBERTS: Commissioner, may I just
10	say one sentence? I realize that the Commission
11	generally deals with matters of greater statewide
12	importance than this, and I might have an above
13	average understanding of what public service
14	entails. So thank you for the time that you've
15	spent on this transaction and for your
16	consideration. We appreciate it.
17	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Thank you for
18	those comments.
19	So do we have any motions? Mr. Ferrell?
20	The entry of the exhibits.
21	UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Entry of the
22	exhibits and the prefiled.
23	MR. FERRELL: I think you've already
24	accepted them.

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1	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: We've identified
2	them, but we will
3	MR. FERRELL: If we need to move them,
4	let's move them in, 1 through 8.
5	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: That motion is
6	allowed.
7	(LHR/CAP Rebuttal Exhibits 1 through 5 and
8	8; and Confidential LHR/CAP Rebuttal
9	Exhibits 6 and 7 were admitted into
10	evidence.)
11	MR. TRATHEN: And, Madam Chair, we had
12	one Cross Examination Exhibit, Village Roberts-Paul
13	Cross Examination Exhibit 1, Rebuttal.
14	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: And you're moving
15	those that exhibit? How many exhibits, two?
16	MR. TRATHEN: It was one exhibit, two
17	pages.
18	COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: One exhibit, two
19	pages will be received into evidence at any time.
20	(Confidential Village Roberts-Paul
21	Rebuttal Cross Examination Exhibit 1
22	was admitted into evidence.)
23	MR. STYERS: Commissioner Duffley, just
24	for the record to be clear since it was raised

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Page 163 1 earlier in the docket, we have filed with the 2 Commission non-confidentially the Spoil's Survey, 3 so that, the Spoil's Survey, that is now a matter of public record and has been filed in this docket. 4 5 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Thank you for 6 filing that. 7 MR. FERRELL: And just, again, to clarify, I think Exhibits 6 and 7 were confidential 8 9 and attorneys' eyes only. COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Yes, those have 10 11 been received into evidence confidentially and we'll take care. 12 13 MR. CREECH: Commissioner Duffley, to 14 the extent that it's not been entered, I wanted to 15 make certain that we entered the summary of the 16 amended and supplemental testimony of Michelle Boswell, Krishna Rajeev, and John R. Hinton 17 given -- provided yesterday, three pages, if I may. 18 19 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. 20 summary is received into evidence at this time. 21 (The Summary of the Amended and 22 Supplemental Testimony of 23 Michelle Boswell, Krishna Rajeev, and 24 John R. Hinton was previously received

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into evidence in Volume 6.)

MR. CREECH: I'd also like to ask in concluding my involved discussion today but also throughout the hearing that the Commission take judicial notice of the hearing and of the record in the Sub 21 docket.

MR. STYERS: Can we be heard on that?

MR. CREECH: Yeah.

MR. STYERS: And unfortunately I started packing up my papers before that. So Mr. Creech had mentioned that to me.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. You have your papers?

I do. MR. STYERS: I do. So the Commission has a specific rule on judicial notice. It's Statute §62-65. And so I understand Mr. Creech's request not to add all that to the record in this docket. There are facts that were stated under oath by witnesses for the Village and others that we disagree with and that I'm sure there are facts that our witnesses stated that other parties disagree with, so if the Commission took judicial notice of all records that were submitted in there, I'm not so sure what that

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means. I certainly have no objection to either party citing testimony that may have been uttered from the witness stand and this Commission can give whatever weight they want to, and if they take judicial notice of a fact, then §62-65B applies to it. So I would object to there being judicial notice of the entire record without prejudice to the clients -- the parties to cite whatever reference they think is relevant for this Commission's consideration.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Mr. Creech, does that satisfy you?

MR. CREECH: If you're indicating that the testimony in the Sub 21 docket as given will be -- if you'll --

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: He's saying that if you want to cite that in a brief and it'll -we'll receive it in the brief and we'll give it the weight that it's due.

MR. CREECH: Thank you. That's sufficient.

MR. STYERS: And if the Commission were to make a finding based upon that fact, then §62-65B would apply.

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1 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. I think that issue is resolved. Any other issues? 2 3 MR. TRATHEN: Madam Chair, if I could just restate the Village's continuing objections to 4 5 the extent of confidential designation in this 6 proceeding and the impact that it's had on the 7 public's ability to participate and the ability of counsel to advise clients. I raised that a couple 8 of times. I do think it's a potential due process 9 issue with respect to the conduct of this 10 proceeding and as I've indicated, I'd like to 11 12 preserve the ability to seek to de-designate 13 certain materials, if necessary, post hearing. 14 COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: I will allow 15 that. Do you want to be heard? 16 MR. STYERS: I do. I've really been 17 thinking about that. At such time as the Village's actions are no longer as a competing bidder, 18 19 objecting to and opposing the transaction, the 20 dynamics of a lot of that information is completely 21 and totally deferent, but so long as there's

ongoing litigation in Brunswick County and

continued opposition as they have their full right

to, then we have to consider a competitive threat

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by competing bidder and that -- and I wanted to explain the assertion of confidently that we've made to the State.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. I don't mean to interrupt, but all I heard Mr. Trathen arguing is the ability to make a motion to de-designate confidential information.

MR. STYERS: And he can certainly make that motion and we would certainly respond. And so I have no objection to that motion being made at the appropriate time and pursuant to the Commission's procedures.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Mr. Ferrell.

MR. FERRELL: I quess I would raise some concern about the motion, given that the parties entered an agreement to allow documents to be shared in that manner. This Commission ordered certain documents to be provided with that designation. I believe the orders on the motions to compel specifically instructed, and primarily these are SharpVue documents, to provide those documents with that designation. Those documents have been provided throughout Sub 21 and Sub 22 with that designation. There's been no prohibition

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on the Village filing a motion prior to this hearing on that issue. So we're concerned about this late-raised issue just here at the hearing, as opposed to dealing with it before all these documents come in. I mean, the hearing has already occurred. The closed sessions have already occurred. This motion and this issue could've been addressed before this hearing instead of in some post-hearing motion that would require us to take our focus away from trying to come up with regulatory conditions that we can all support to dealing with this additional issue. And so I would oppose and object to the allowance of this late-filed motion after the hearing's already concluded on an issue that's been present since the beginning of the Sub 21 proceeding. And, again, we were ordered to provide documents and protect them in that fashion because these are confidential and business trade secret documents.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Mr. Trathen, do you have a response?

MR. TRATHEN: Yes. Thank you. First, with respect to the agreement, the agreement does provide the parties the ability to contest the

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designation. With respect to the timing, you know, we've been trying to see how this hearing would work out. We didn't know exactly what would happen with respect to confidentiality designations at the hearing. We were hopeful that it would have been more open than it was and so --

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Why did you not make any objection during the hearing if you felt like there was an issue with how closed it was? Why did you not make an objection at the time that you were feeling that it was potentially too closed?

MR. TRATHEN: We've given continual notice of the concern. I'd like the ability to, kind of, reflect on this and evaluate, you know, whether we need to pursue a motion, a formal motion.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. I am going to take this motion under advisement and I will issue an order accordingly after I make a decision. Are there other issues holding the record open? Was there anything else, Mr. Trathen?

MR. TRATHEN: I hadn't actually made a motion, but I understand you want to reflect upon

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the conversation that we're having.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Yes, I do.

MR. TRATHEN: I'm not aware of any other open issues with respect to --

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: There were --I think the public staff, there was some data request that we were going to hold the record open.

MR. CREECH: Well, what occurred is that there was a filing earlier this week on some supplemental information and I think that's been addressed by Mr. Styers' filing. It was part of that disclosure in the asset purchase agreement and there may -- well, if we have questions I'd have to review your filing, but maybe you can speak to that.

MR. STYERS: I'm not aware of any open issues or any documents that have been requested that we haven't fully now provided all parties.

MR. CREECH: You indicated earlier though that you would be open to discovery and supplemental testimony on that, should we have it. I'm not trying to bind you now, that's what I remember on the record.

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1 MR. STYERS: I think the hearing's 2 closed. I consider the hearing closed at this 3 point.

> MR. CREECH: Okay. We'll just reflect on what the record is.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: We can always reopen the record.

MR. CREECH: Okay. No problem. I will say while we're here of course, the public staff remains open for business to hear from anybody, any party on these regulatory conditions, any way to make them better, so.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Okay. So transcript. Let's talk about briefs, proposed orders, 30 days from the transcript?

MR. TRATHEN: At least 30 days, maybe 45.

MR. STYERS: I was -- Mr. Trathen and I have not agreed on a lot in this docket because I was saying, you know, the sooner the better I think from my client's perspective, so I was going to say at most 30 days. So I think Mr. Trathen said "at least" and I'll say "at most." We would do our -we'd be willing to do a shorter period of time, if

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that would be the Commission's preference. I think it's probably my client's preference. But we can live with 30 days, but no longer. It would be -that I would be authorized to consent to.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: You all practice in front of the Commission. We most 100 percent say 30 days and we go shorter. So 30 days from the transcript.

MR. STYERS: Thank you.

MR. TRATHEN: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: Any other

matters?

MR. FERRELL: The only other matter I might raise is we have been working with the public staff on the regulatory conditions. Our proposed conditions are in the record, so are the public staff's. I would just ask that if any other intervener has conditions they want us to consider, that we have a dialogue about it. And if we don't get those in a cooperative format, if they're just added or included in a brief or a proposed order for the first time and we haven't seen them, that we get some reasonable opportunity to address those. Again, our hope is that it would be a

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cooperative process to try to work through some of the regulatory condition to details. But, again, we just haven't seen any yet from the intervenors, so I just wanted to have some opportunity to respond if necessary.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY: I understand your concern, but we have to cut it off at some point. So when the proposed orders come in, we'll have all of the regulatory conditions and we'll be able to pick and choose from those if we want to, or --

MR. FERRELL: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DUFFLEY. I think -- I think we're done with the hearing though.

Anything else? Okay. We are adjourned. Thank you, all.

MR. STYERS: Thank you.

(The hearing was adjourned at 3:51 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

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

This the 27th of March, 2023.

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Kaylene Clayton

Notary Public 202228500270