

**BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**DOCKET NO. W-354, SUB 360**

In the Matter of  
Application by Carolina Water Service, Inc. of North Carolina  
for Authority to Adjust and Increase Rates for  
Water and Sewer Utility Service in All of Its Service Areas in  
North Carolina, Except Corolla Light and Monteray Shores Service  
Area

Pre-filed Direct Testimony  
of  
DEBORAH CLARK  
Communications Coordinator

On Behalf Of  
CAROLINA WATER SERVICE, INC. OF NORTH CAROLINA

September 4, 2018

1 **Q. Please state your name, occupation and business address for**  
2 **the record.**

3 A. My name is Deborah Clark. I am employed as the Communications  
4 Coordinator for Carolina Water Service, Inc. of North Carolina (“CWSNC”  
5 or “Company”), 4944 Parkway Plaza Boulevard, Suite 375, Charlotte, North  
6 Carolina 28217.

7 **Q. Please summarize your professional background.**

8 A. I have been employed by CWSNC since August 1, 2017. I have a  
9 Bachelor of Science degree in Communications from East Tennessee State  
10 University. I also possess a Master of Public Administration degree from  
11 East Carolina University. Finally, I was awarded a Master of Human  
12 Resource Development degree from Clemson University.

13 Prior to joining CWSNC, I was the Director of Communications for  
14 two North Carolina cities—Concord and Greenville. Also, I served as a  
15 Public Engagement Coordinator with Duke Energy.

16 During my 20-year career as a communications professional, I have  
17 been responsible for developing and implementing strategic and other  
18 communications programs focused on traditional (i.e., print); electronic (i.e.,  
19 video, cable access, or radio); and social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter,  
20 websites) methods providing meaningful information proactively to  
21 customers.

22 **Q. Please explain your job responsibilities at CWSNC.**

1 A. My role with CWSNC is to proactively serve and engage with our  
2 customers to ensure they receive the highest level of customer experience  
3 and to develop strategies and plans to effectuate this level of service.

4 **Q. What is the purpose of your direct testimony?**

5 A. The purpose of my direct testimony is to explain CWSNC's success  
6 with its increased efforts to engage with and improve each customer's  
7 overall interaction and experience with CWSNC.

8 **Q. How has CWSNC improved its customer engagement  
9 throughout North Carolina?**

10 A. Customer engagement has improved through the development and  
11 implementation of very intentional and innovative community outreach  
12 approaches. To enhance our customers' experiences, we implemented  
13 multiple communication channels from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and  
14 our Water Drop podcasts, to bill inserts, phone calls, and face-to-face  
15 meetings. For example, I designed eight WordPress sites (i.e., free web  
16 pages) for our customers in several communities to provide updates on  
17 projects, water saving tips, hurricane preparedness tips, frozen pipes  
18 prevention tips, drought information, and CWSNC employee spotlights (see  
19 exhibit A). Also, I routinely attend meetings with Homeowner Associations  
20 (HOAs) and Property Owner Associations (POAs) statewide, including  
21 Sugar Mountain, Connestee Falls, Belvedere Plantation, Carolina Trace,

1 Brandywine Bay, Fairfield Harbor, Nags Head, Elk River, Bradfield Farms,  
2 Danby / Lamplighter Village, Riverpointe, the Pointe, Stone Hollow, Bear  
3 Paw Resort, The Ridges at Mountain Harbor, Fairfield Mountain, and  
4 Sapphire Valley. Topics discussed during the meetings include planned  
5 capital projects, timeframes and schedules of other projects, conservation  
6 tips and sustainability ideas, and other issues of significance. (Exhibits 1-5)  
7 See Appendix 1 for description.

8 HOAs also receive articles from CWSNC for inclusion in their newsletters.  
9 This includes a plethora of stories ranging from updates on projects,  
10 services, and CWSNC employee updates (i.e. “who works in my  
11 community”), to techniques for water conservation. (Exhibits A1-3) See  
12 Appendix 2 for description.

13 I have connected with every established and active HOA and POA within  
14 North Carolina. This involved contacting approximately 130 communities.

15 Routine articles and information that proactively address water  
16 conservation, drought management, hurricane preparedness, avoiding  
17 freezing pipes, outage notices, and facts (“did you know?”) are published to  
18 the CWSNC website, social media accounts, and through written  
19 documents. (Exhibits B1-8) See Appendix 3 for description.

20 In addition, I often address and resolve billing, service and other complex  
21 customer concerns that requires in-depth communication and problem-  
22 solving proficiency. Examples include my assistance with the CWSNC

1 Customer Courtesy Leak Adjustment Program (where water losses due to  
2 leaks in the customers' infrastructure resulting in large bills is corrected), to  
3 helping customers obtain irrigation meters and understand their billing  
4 information.

5 Furthermore, I have the pleasure of leading our community service  
6 program, which includes activities such as food drives for both Loaves and  
7 Fishes and Second Harvest Foodbank; delivering snacks for women and  
8 children at Safe Alliance—a domestic violence shelter; adopting Angel  
9 Trees and Silver Bells for the Salvation Army Christmas program; adopt-a-  
10 street campaigns; supporting Grandfather Mountain Stewardship  
11 Foundation's water education program; Special Olympics of Western North  
12 Carolina; and local charity races and events statewide in an effort to  
13 promote safe, clean, and reliable water.

14 **Q. Please explain why CWSNC determined that it needed to**  
15 **increase its customer engagement and experience activity?**

16 A. Broadly, customers have expressed concern over CWSNC's level of  
17 customer communication. For example, multiple customers complained of  
18 a lack of communication, no social media presence, and untimely  
19 responses from customer service representatives. CWSNC determined it  
20 needed to improve its customer engagement and experience activity.

1 **Q. How has CWSNC measured the degree of success of the**  
2 **Company's communication and outreach efforts in terms of benefits**  
3 **to customers and customer satisfaction?**

4 A. CWSNC's measured degrees of success include: (1) the  
5 development and implementation of the social media applications and the  
6 number of followers, the number of stories and articles posted, and visits to  
7 our sites; (2) the number of CWSNC--developed WordPress websites  
8 requested by HOAs or POAs; (3) the significant number of customer issues  
9 received and successfully resolved involving billing issues, irrigation meter  
10 connections, reimbursements for unused water, and other customer service  
11 complaints; and (4) the number of HOA and POA meetings attended.  
12 Feedback I have received from customers indicates they appreciate the  
13 communication efforts and continued delivery of relevant content through  
14 email, phone calls, social media, or at face-to-face meetings within their  
15 communities.

16 **Q. How is your work and this testimony relevant to this rate case**  
17 **proceeding?**

18 A. CWSNC understands that adequate service to customers includes  
19 active engagement, positive experiences, and clear communication, in  
20 addition to the operational obligations discharged by a regulated public  
21 utility. CWSNC's increased efforts to improve customer engagement and  
22 awareness about service protocols and rates is an essential component of

1 the service provided by this Company. CWSNC is fully committed to  
2 excellent customer relationships and providing adequate, efficient, and  
3 reasonable service consistent with the requirements of G.S. 62-131(b). In  
4 summary, meaningful and effective customer engagement and experience  
5 is an essential element to achieving this goal.

6 **Q. Is this testimony true and accurate to the best of your**  
7 **knowledge, information, and belief?**

8 A. Yes, it is.

9 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

10 A. Yes.