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BEFORE THE
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

DOCKET NO. 20200139-WS

APPLICATION FOR INCREASE IN
WATER AND WASTEWATER RATES IN
CHARLOTTE, HIGHLANDS, LAKE, LEE,
MARION, ORANGE, PASCO, PINELLAS,
POLK, AND SEMINOLE COUNTIES, BY
UTILITIES, INC. OF FLORIDA.

_____ /

PROCEEDINGS: SERVICE HEARING

COMMISSIONERS
PARTICIPATING: CHAIRMAN GARY F. CLARK
COMMISSIONER ANDREW GILES FAY
COMMISSIONER MIKE LA ROSA

DATE: Thursday, January 7, 2021

TIME: Commenced: 6:00 p.m.
Concluded: 6:47 p.m.

PLACE: Betty Easley Conference Center
Room 148
4075 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, Florida

REPORTED BY: DEBRA R. KRICK
Court Reporter

PREMIER REPORTING
114 W. 5TH AVENUE
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
(850) 894-0828

1 APPEARANCES:

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4 32801; JOHN L. WHARTON, ESQUIRE, Dean Mead Law Firm, 106
5 E. College Avenue, Suite 1200, Tallahassee, Florida,
6 32301, appearing on behalf of Utilities, Inc. of Florida
7 (UIF).

8 J.R. KELLY, PUBLIC COUNSEL; STEPHANIE MORSE,
9 ESQUIRES, OFFICE OF PUBLIC COUNSEL, c/o The Florida
10 Legislature, 111 West Madison Street, Room 812,
11 Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1400, appearing on behalf of
12 the Citizens of the State of Florida (OPC).

13 WALT TRIERWEILER, BIANCA LHERISSON and
14 JENNIFER CRAWFORD, ESQUIRES, FPSC General Counsel's
15 Office, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida
16 32399-0850, appearing on behalf of the Florida Public
17 Service Commission (Staff).

18 KEITH HETRICK, GENERAL COUNSEL; MARY ANNE
19 HELTON, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL, Florida Public Service
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21 Florida 32399-0850, Advisor to the Florida Public
22 Service Commission.

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1 PROCEEDINGS

2 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Good evening. I would like
3 to welcome everyone to the customer service hearing
4 in the Utilities, Inc. of Florida's rate case.
5 Today's service hearing is an important part of the
6 rate case process and is dedicated to hearing from
7 you, the consumer.

8 My name is Gary Clark. I have the privilege
9 of serving as Chairman of the Florida Public
10 Service Commission. On the line today are of
11 Commissioner Andrew Fay and Commissioners Mike La
12 Rosa. They are also interested in hearing your
13 comments. I would like to give them an opportunity
14 to make any opening remarks if they would like to.

15 Do the Commissioners have any comments before
16 we begin tonight?

17 All right.

18 COMMISSIONER FAY: Mr. Chairman, just really
19 quick.

20 I appreciate you set a number of these, and I
21 think it's given a good opportunity for the
22 customers to weigh in, so thank you for doing that.

23 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Yes, sir. Thank you,
24 Commissioner Fay.

25 All right. Staff, would you please read the

1 notice.

2 MS. LHERISSON: By notice issued on November
3 13th, 2020, this time and place has been set for a
4 customer service hearing in Docket No. 20200139-WS.

5 CHARIMAN CLARK: All right. Thank you very
6 much.

7 We will now take appearances. I will begin
8 with UIF. Mr. Friedman.

9 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
10 Commissioners.

11 My name is Marty Friedman of the Dean Mead Law
12 Firm. We represent Utilities, Inc. of Florida in
13 this proceeding.

14 Thank you.

15 CHARIMAN CLARK: Office of Public Counsel, Ms.
16 Morse.

17 MS. MORSE: Hello. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 This is Stephanie Morse with the Office of
19 Public Counsel representing the customers and
20 citizens of the state of Florida.

21 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Thank you very much.
22 Staff.

23 MS. LHERISSON: Bianca Lherisson on behalf of
24 Commission staff. I also want to enter an
25 appearance for Walt Trierweiler and Jennifer

1 Crawford.

2 MS. HELTON: And finally, Mr. Chairman, Mary
3 Anne Helton is here as your advisor. I would also
4 like to make an appearance for your General
5 Counsel, Keith Hetrick.

6 CHAIRMAN CLARK: All right. Thank you. Did
7 we get everyone?

8 All right. Let me begin by thanking all of
9 you for taking time out of your schedules to call
10 in to this customer service hearing this evening.
11 We appreciate your interest in the petitions filed
12 by UIF.

13 As I mentioned, this hearing is designed so
14 that we can hear directly from you, the consumer.
15 This is your opportunity to express your thoughts,
16 concerns and comments related to Utilities'
17 request -- request and their quality of service.

18 Later this month, there will be a technical
19 hearing where the Commission will take in technical
20 evidence in the case. If you have a specific
21 service or billing issue, UIF has two
22 representatives to contact specifically for those
23 that are participating in this proceeding. You
24 will note, if you are on the Zoom call, that their
25 numbers are on the screen, but I would also give

1 you Ms. Amber Norris from our Accounting & Finance
2 Division is the Public Service Commission's
3 representative for this docket. She can be reached
4 by emailing her at amnorris@psc.state.fl.us, or by
5 calling (850)413-6984.

6 At this time, I would like to also acknowledge
7 the additional Commission technical staff that are
8 on the line. From the Accounting & Finance
9 Department, Amber Norris, Dale Buys and Andrew
10 Maurey. From the Economics Department, Sonica
11 Bruce. From Engineering, Kerri Maloy and Marissa
12 Ramos. From Consumer Assistance & Outreach, Kelly
13 Thompson and Cindy Muir.

14 This is an official hearing that will be
15 transcribed and become part of the official record.
16 As such, I will swear you in over the phone before
17 you share your comment. Please note that your
18 comments may also be subject to cross-examination;
19 that is, you may be asked questions by the parties
20 or by one of the Commissioners.

21 For those of you who are calling in, please
22 keep your phone on mute until you are called on.
23 Don't place your phone on hold or your device will
24 be muted from our end, or even disconnected.

25 When you are speaking, please do not use the

1 speaker function. Speak directly into your phone
2 or use a headset. The audio gets really, really
3 bad on this end when we try to use speakerphones.

4 We appreciate the professional nature of the
5 proceedings and ask that you do the same. Be
6 courteous to others who have taken time to call in
7 today.

8 In addition to sharing your comments here, you
9 may also share your comments and any additional
10 materials that you would like to submit for the
11 Commission's consideration via mail or email. To
12 contact the PSC by mail, you can find a
13 pre-addressed comment card for download on our
14 website. If would you like to email, please email
15 the Commission's Clerk at clerk@psc.state.fl.us,
16 reference Docket No. 20200139-WS.

17 During the course of this hearing, another
18 customer has said something that you wanted to say,
19 or you absolutely agree with, please feel free to
20 reference there remarks and just say ditto. We
21 want to make you feel as comfortable as possible
22 when providing testimony. Whether your comments
23 are made verbally today or received in writing, be
24 assured your comments will be reviewed and taken
25 into consideration during the course of these

1 proceedings.

2 Before we begin, I would like to ask the
3 parties if they would like to make an opening
4 statement today, and we will begin with UIF.

5 MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
6 Commissioners, customers.

7 Again, I am Marty Friedman, and I am the
8 attorney for Utilities, Inc. of Florida in this
9 proceeding. I would just like to add to what the
10 chairman says, that please, after you speak, remain
11 on the line in case I have any questions in order
12 to better understand the nature of your comments.

13 The customer service representative number
14 that has been posted is a dedicated customer
15 service representative for this particular hearing.
16 If you have any customer service concerns after
17 today, please use the regular customer service
18 number, which is (866)842-8432.

19 Now, Gary Rudkin, who is the President of
20 Utilities, Inc. of Florida, would also like to have
21 some comments with you.

22 Thank you very much.

23 MR. RUDKIN: Thank you, Marty. And good
24 evening. Thank you, Chairman, representatives of
25 the PSC, OPC and, of course, customers, for joining

1 us today. I really appreciate your time. A
2 special thanks to the customers for taking time out
3 of their busy schedule. We look forward to hearing
4 your feedback. And again, really appreciate you
5 calling in.

6 I am Gary Rudkin, President of Utilities, Inc.
7 of Florida. I joined the Florida team in January
8 of 2020 following Jon Hoy's retirement. Previous
9 to that, I led a multi-utility system at the
10 University of Oklahoma for over six years within
11 the Corix group of companies. My goal today is
12 provide some background on our company and why we
13 are seeking to invest in the infrastructure that is
14 changing the water and wastewater rates.

15 Utilities, Inc. of Florida is the largest PSC
16 regulated water and wastewater utility system in
17 Florida, providing service for over 40 years with
18 40 systems, and over 70,000 water, wastewater and
19 reuse connections in 10 counties. We take our
20 responsibility to maintain the infrastructure
21 seriously. We are committed to ensuring quality of
22 service to the clients in this ever-changing
23 environmental regulatory environment.

24 In the four years since the last rate case we
25 invested in more than 60 million in capital

1 improvements primarily due to end-of-life of
2 assets. We will continue to invest in
3 infrastructure, such as mains, lift stations,
4 treatment plants, to ensure we can provide safe,
5 reliable service to our customers.

6 As expenses such as energy, chemicals, taxes,
7 purchased water, purchased sewer, et cetera,
8 increase, we have the opportunity to recover those
9 through the rate-making mechanism, as well as our
10 capital investments in the infrastructure.

11 Just to give you an example how critical the
12 situation is of need, the Environmental Protection
13 Agency estimates that Florida will need to spend 20
14 billion in the next 20 years upgrading drinking
15 water infrastructure to ensure it can provide safe,
16 reliable drinking water within the state.

17 Similar issue on the wastewater side for us,
18 and more immediate, that's where our primary
19 investments are, and then we will shift to water.

20 Our communities, again, some are over 40 years
21 old, and they are approaching end-of-life. It's
22 time to replace them and stay on top of that.
23 That's our primary responsibility.

24 We -- we provide service to a variety of
25 communities, from 55 and up neighborhoods, mobile

1 home neighborhoods, RV parks, apartment complexes
2 and single family homes. We continue to diligently
3 address customer concerns in each individual
4 system. When asked, I address concerns with
5 customers just to make sure that we are trying to
6 satisfy their needs. We are committed to investing
7 in technology that allows us to better serve our
8 customers and frequently examine new technologies.

9 Customer service is a part of our company, one
10 of our number one top strategic initiatives.
11 Recently we implemented a customer service tool
12 known as MyUtilityConnect. This allows you to pay
13 your bill, check on your monthly usage, do
14 stop/starts and other activities such as trouble
15 calls and work orders. We are also on Facebook,
16 Twitter, Google. And we can, of course,
17 communicate by email and USPS. If you are not on
18 MyUtilityConnect yet, I recommend you do so.

19 Additionally, we commissioned the Chlorine
20 Dioxide Pilot Study for the Summertree system. The
21 UIF water provided to Summertree comes from Pasco
22 County and is treated by Tampa Bay Water. They use
23 chlorine ammonia -- chlorine ammonia for
24 disinfectant to avoid the formation of disinfection
25 byproducts. Pasco County water is uniform and in

1 compliance, however, our daily monitoring over the
2 past four years showed a wide fluctuation in
3 chlorine ammonia and required UF to spend a lot of
4 time and resources monitoring and flushing to be
5 compliant with the DEP, Department of Environmental
6 Protection.

7 Chlorine dioxide is a proven and successful
8 chemical treatment preventing the formation of
9 disinfectant byproducts in piping and accumulating
10 in the piping. Also, it conserves water and costs
11 by reducing flushing. Just another technology that
12 we are exploring to solve a problem for customers.

13 Our focus continue to be providing safe,
14 reliable water and high quality service for
15 wastewater collection. This proposal ensures that
16 our infrastructure will continue to allow us to
17 provide that service.

18 Again, thank you for your time, and we look
19 forward too hearing your comments.

20 Chairman, this concludes our opening
21 statement.

22 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Rudkin.

23 Ms. Morse.

24 MS. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

25 Good afternoon, good evening again. My name

1 is Stephanie Morse. I am one of the attorneys in
2 the Office of Public Counsel.

3 To our customers on the line today, our office
4 represents you, the customers as a group, in rate
5 cases. We are working on your behalf to
6 independently analyze the information submitted by
7 the utility and the reports generated by PSC staff
8 as we prepare for the technical hearing scheduled
9 for February.

10 We hired three independent rate consultants to
11 testify on your behalf. Those include a utility
12 accounting expert, a utility engineering expert and
13 a utility cost of capital expert. In addition, we
14 have our in-house accounting staff working on this
15 case.

16 Our four witnesses filed testimony in November
17 in contesting several aspects of UIF's rate case.
18 The major issues involve UIF asking for an 11.75
19 return -- percent return on equity, which we feel
20 is just too high, particularly in light of today's
21 low interest rates and impacts of the coronavirus.

22 Second, we are challenging several of UIF's
23 requested projects because they either have not
24 begun construction or have not provided the
25 requisite documentation and evidence to support

1 those projects.

2 And the third major issue involves a proposed
3 planned UIF -- (inaudible) -- for this case, which
4 they call the Sewer and Water Improvement
5 Mechanism, or by the acronym SWIM. Their proposal
6 would allow UIF to recover the costs for certain
7 new capital projects between rate cases without the
8 benefit of proper vetting or independent review or
9 consideration of the company's current earnings.
10 They would simply file these costs as pass-throughs
11 right their rates. We do not believe any such new
12 program is necessary under current law, and also
13 that would need to be authorized by the Florida
14 Legislature to go into effect.

15 The bottom line is that UIF has requested an
16 annual increase in water revenues of approximately
17 \$2.8 million, or 17 percent. And they asked for an
18 annual increase in wastewater revenues of 6.5
19 million, or 32.2 percent. We don't believe the
20 evidence supports those increases.

21 Today, this is your meeting, and it's vitally
22 important for you to speak directly to the
23 Commissioners and their staff to share your
24 experiences about your water quality, the quality
25 of the customer service, including your

1 interactions with the utility, and your thoughts
2 about the proposed rates.

3 If you want to follow up to talk with our
4 office after this meeting, please call us at
5 (850)488-9330, or reach out to us on the web at
6 www.floridaopc.gov.

7 We thank you for being here and for
8 participating in this process.

9 And that's all I have, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Morse.

11 As part of our practice, if there are any
12 elected officials on the line that would like to
13 provide comments or provide testimony, we are going
14 to invite them to do so. Do we have any elected
15 officials on the line?

16 All right. We also want to give each customer
17 that has signed up the opportunity to speak. Each
18 customer have three minutes for public comment so
19 that everyone will have a chance to make their
20 comments. I will call your name when it is your
21 turn it turn to speak in the order in which you
22 signed up. When it's your turn to speak, I will
23 swear you in before you begin your verbal comments.
24 I would also like to remind everyone that once
25 sworn in, the testimony you provide will be under

1 oath. When you come on the line, please give us
2 your name, address, and whether or not you are a
3 UIF customer.

4 Your verbal comments are being transcribed and
5 will become part of the official record for this
6 case.

7 If you have addressed the previous -- the
8 Commission at a previous service hearing in the
9 docket, I would ask that you please limit your
10 testimony -- your comments to new testimony.

11 With that, I am going to begin. I am actually
12 going to begin with Ms. Ann Marie Ryan. Ms. Ryan is
13 member of the Public Service Nominating Council.
14 Someone that we have worked with on a number of
15 occasions, and always appreciate her involvement
16 and her leadership as a customer advocate.

17 Ms. Ryan, are you on the line?

18 MS. RYAN: Yes, I am.

19 Whereupon,

20 ANN MARIE RYAN

21 was called as a witness, having been first duly sworn to
22 speak the truth and testified as follows:

23 MS. RYAN: I do.

24 CHARIMAN CLARK: You are recognized.

25 PUBLIC COMMENT

1 MS. RYAN: Okay. My name is Ann Marie Ryan.
2 I'm a leader from the Summertree Water Alliance. I
3 live at 11436 Windstar Court. That's in New Port
4 Richey, Florida.

5 I would like to thank you, Commissioners, for
6 taking my testimony, and I want to thank you for
7 all that you do for the customers of Florida.

8 I spoke with you yesterday on -- on questions
9 and comments that my community had. Today I would
10 like to address something different. I would also
11 like to address something that was brought up by
12 colleagues from other communities, in particular
13 the SWIM program.

14 The SWIM program, as was mentioned by the
15 Office of Public Counsel, is a mechanism for them
16 to -- to make pass-through -- to put capital
17 projects on a pass-through mechanism like they have
18 right now for their regular costs. And right now,
19 our pass-throughs and our indexing has amounted
20 between 2016 -- 2018 and 2020 to be \$1.4 million of
21 increases. Every six months, they put the costs
22 through, and that's for just every day costs that
23 they get along the way. This one would be for
24 their capital projects, which is much greater.

25 I am going to ask that the Commission not do

1 this. I think it's really important, based on
2 previous cases as well as cases going forward.
3 Listening to the Office of Public Counsel and
4 things brought before you in the past, it's really
5 important that Utilities, Inc. improve their
6 infrastructure. And I want to make this clear. In
7 the past, we have been very critical of things that
8 Utilities, Inc. has done. Right now, I would like
9 to thank them for the improvements that they've
10 implemented and some of the testing that they have
11 done without being asked. So those improvements
12 are appreciated and we hope continue going forward.

13 So when it comes to these monster capital
14 projects, we believe they need oversight. They are
15 not putting their paperwork in. They don't have
16 all their ducks in a row. I don't think that they
17 should get the money before the projects --
18 (inaudible) -- their validity and all the costs and
19 everything are taken care of.

20 So please, when you are taking this into
21 consideration, please don't start something new,
22 especially with the infrastructure. Most of these
23 facilities are 35, 40 years old. We do need
24 someone to make sure that things are going right.
25 It's just a good way too for, I think, Utilities to

1 do business. I know there is a little bit more
2 cost involved, but I think it's a practical and
3 viable solution, and I thank you for your time.

4 Do you have any questions?

5 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

6 Commissioners, do you have any questions for
7 Ms. Ryan?

8 No questions from Commissioners.

9 Parties, do either of the parties have
10 questions?

11 MR. FRIEDMAN: We do not -- no, we do not.

12 Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

13 MS. RYAN: Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRMAN CLARK: All right. Ms. Morse, no
15 questions?

16 We are going to, guys, adopt the same
17 procedure we did last night. If you don't have any
18 questions, just leave your mic muted and I will
19 recognize it and we will keep rolling. All good?
20 All right. Thank you very much.

21 Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

22 Next on the list Mr. Larry Skinner.

23 Mr. Skinner, are you on the line?

24 MR. SKINNER: Yes, I am.

25 Whereupon,

1 LARRY SKINNER

2 was called as a witness, having been first duly sworn to
3 speak the truth and testified as follows:

4 MR. SKINNER: I do.

5 CHAIRMAN CLARK: All right. You are
6 recognized for three minutes, sir.

7 PUBLIC COMMENT

8 MR. SKINNER: All right. Thank you.

9 Well, to begin with, my rates, before they had
10 of that 100 percent increase a couple three years
11 ago, ran \$40 to \$60 if I, you know, ran some water
12 in my yard, now I am averaging \$121, and if I do
13 any irrigation, it goes up to 160. And I took the
14 rates as of 12/31/19, which is, of course, the
15 first of the year, for 5,000 gallons and -- of
16 usage, and then I did the requested 5,000, and it
17 amounts to \$33.78 increase, which is almost 40
18 percent increase, which I find just truthfully and
19 this, today's economy, and I was laid off because
20 of COVID, and so on, you know, that's a pretty, I
21 feel, way too high of an increase.

22 And also they used the 5,000 gallons. Well, I
23 daresay not many people just use 5,000 gallons.
24 For instance, just my wife and I, WE ARE both in
25 our 70's, and we average, again with irrigation

1 sometimes, not so much this year, but 13,200
2 gallons, and they are saying that would increase by
3 \$20 with the 5,000. Well, you can see I am looking
4 at probably \$40, \$50 increase, and now my bill is
5 going to average \$170, \$180 a month for water, and
6 that is, I think, way out of line.

7 My son-in-law, who lives two miles from me, in
8 Orange County, he pays \$20 a month for his water
9 and he has two teenagers. So, you know, it's
10 just -- I am paying more for water than I do my
11 electricity; which, by the way, Duke Energy took a
12 two-percent decrease.

13 So I guess I would appeal to the Commission.
14 You can see with these figures that these rate
15 increases are just, I feel, way out of hand with
16 today's economy, and so on and so forth, for things
17 that are going on. So I would appeal to you to put
18 a restraint on this increase because, like I say,
19 another \$40 a month for water, you are going to put
20 a real hardship, not just me, but my neighbors who
21 obviously have more kids, and so on and so forth.

22 So I thank you for listening and for your
23 consideration.

24 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Thank you very much, Mr.
25 Skinner.

1 be saving money, and so if we are going to be
2 saving money, I would hope that our rates would go
3 down once the -- if we end up staying on that
4 program.

5 So I certainly don't think that there should
6 be an increase in anything, and I am hoping at some
7 point perhaps our rates would actually go down.

8 I am also opposed to the SWIM program. I echo
9 everything that Ann Marie Ryan has said regarding
10 Summertree.

11 Thank you very much.

12 CHARIMAN CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Smith.

13 Commissioners, do you have questions?

14 Parties, questions?

15 All right. Thank you very much for your
16 participation today.

17 Next up is Gabrielle Milch. Ms. Milch, are
18 you on the line? Ms. Milch, your phone is muted
19 from our end. Can you unmute?

20 MS. MILCH: I unmuted, yes, sir, Gabrielle
21 Milch.

22 Whereupon,

23 GABRIELLE MILCH

24 was called as a witness, having been first duly sworn to
25 speak the truth and testified as follows:

1 MS. MILCH: I do.

2 CHAIRMAN CLARK: You are recognized for three
3 minutes, please.

4 PUBLIC COMMENT

5 MS. MILCH: Thank you.

6 My name is Gabrielle Milch. I live at 252
7 Coble Drive, Longwood, Florida. I am -- I have the
8 service of U -- United -- Utilities, Inc.

9 I would like to thank you, Chairman, Staff and
10 all of the UIA representatives for allowing us to
11 talk about the rate increase today.

12 I have new information. I spoke to the
13 Commission last month. Then we got a lovely
14 Christmas present here in our wastewater treatment
15 discharge of raw sewage. On December 27th, I
16 believe there was a 74,000 gallon raw sewage
17 discharge in Sweetwater Creek connected to the
18 Wekiva. This is some new testimony.

19 I also am not in favor of the SWIM project.
20 And I would say no to the rate increase, and want
21 to know how we as customers can verify that they
22 are actually investing the money back in? I
23 appreciate the \$60 million that they have invested,
24 but I don't know exactly how much that was within
25 my system in the Wekiva Hunt Club area, which is

1 one of their larger systems, and probably one of
2 their oldest systems.

3 I believe in the last seven years -- or five
4 years, there has been approximately seven spills
5 that I have been able to look up through the
6 Florida Department of Environmental Protection. I
7 would hope that Utilities, Inc. will invest in the
8 correct Best Management Practices, improve their
9 stata.

10 And also I know that we have about 10 lift
11 stations that they are working on, I believe, and I
12 just am very concerned about the Wekiva Basin
13 Management Action Plan and the pollution to the
14 river.

15 And the rate increase is unreasonable for
16 folks who are filling swimming pools in our area.
17 They oftentimes charge people for the sewer when
18 they fill the swimming pool, and it's not a, you
19 know, they put the water in the pool and there is
20 no wastewater discharge from that, but we still get
21 charged for both of us, and I just hope that we can
22 get these issues and make sure that our
23 distribution lines are safe, and don't cave in and
24 cause harm to other folks in the neighborhood.

25 And I appreciate your time today. Thank you.

1 CHARIMAN CLARK: Thank you very much, Ms.
2 Milch.

3 Commissioners, do you have questions?

4 Commissioner La Rosa.

5 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Thank you, Chairman,
6 and thank you, Ms. Milch for your testimony.

7 Chairman, can we have is somebody from UIF
8 maybe go over a little bit on the sewer discharge
9 that Ms. Milch had just -- had just mentioned?

10 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Mr. Friedman, do you have
11 anybody available that can address that?

12 MR. FRIEDMAN: Yes, I do. Mr. Flynn, he is
13 the Vice-President, is familiar with that issue.

14 MR. FLYNN: Yes, can we hear you,
15 Commissioner?

16 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Not real good. Can you speak
17 up?

18 MR. FRIEDMAN: Let me -- I'm going to --

19 MR. FLYNN: Commissioner, this is Patrick
20 Flynn.

21 We did have a spill at Christmastime, a loss
22 of power at a lift station resulted in lack of
23 pumping capacity for a period of time, and so we
24 responded and corrected the situation.

25 The spill was actually contained in a

1 retention pond casing to the lift station. We
2 reported all of that information to the DEP timely,
3 and also investigating the issues that we had the
4 generator there, they had a generator that didn't
5 run when it was supposed to, to figure out what we
6 can do to make sure it doesn't happen again. So we
7 are looking into that very issue.

8 It did not go into Sweetwater Creek. It went
9 into a retention pond isolated from a drainage
10 structure.

11 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Commissioner La Rosa --

12 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Yes, thank you,
13 Chairman, that -- I am good.

14 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Thank you very much.

15 Other questions from Commissioners?

16 All right. Questions from the party for the
17 witness?

18 All right. Let's move on -- thank you, Ms.
19 Milch, for your testimony today.

20 MS. MILCH: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Next up is Vera Wilson. Ms.
22 Wilson, are you on the line?

23 MS. WILSON: I think so. Can you hear me?

24 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Yes, we can hear you loud and
25 clear.

1 Can you hear me?

2 MS. WILSON: Okay, thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Ms. Wilson, do you -- let me
4 swear you in, Ms. Wilson.

5 Whereupon,

6 VERA WILSON

7 was called as a witness, having been first duly sworn to
8 speak the truth and testified as follows:

9 MS. WILSON: Yes.

10 CHARIMAN CLARK: All right. You are
11 recognized for three minutes.

12 PUBLIC COMMENT

13 MS. WILSON: Hello. I go by Vicki Wilson, and
14 my husband and I, we are in our 70's, and we have
15 lived in the Wekiva Sabal Point development area
16 for 43-and-a-half years. We raised our kids here.

17 When Utilities, Inc. took over from Sanlando,
18 our lives totally changed. Like I said, we are in
19 our 70's. We are now retired. We are living like
20 poppers as far as water goes. I am ashamed to say
21 some of the things I am going to say, but I think
22 they need to be done because we are not the only
23 people that are doing it.

24 We are no longer taking daily showers. If
25 it's raining or we use pool water, because there is

1 a lot of pool water available, we flush our toilets
2 with the pool water. We share toilet use. We only
3 flush a few times a day. We only take a shower
4 twice a week. We've been married for 50 years.

5 When we watered our lawn in Sabal Point, we
6 were using 1,800 gallons per time. And I asked
7 several lawn professionals, and they said that's
8 average, which would mount up to 14,400 per month
9 if we do it twice a week in the summertime. We are
10 no longer doing that. You can't fill your pool.

11 Laundry, I -- we do laundry twice a week. In
12 fact, we do the sheets, and then we do the darks,
13 and I just tell my husband, you have to wear all
14 dark clothes one week so that I can put them in the
15 same -- same washing machine.

16 I read my meter every single day. Every
17 single day. I have not missed a water reading. I
18 record the number, the gallons we've used and what
19 we did that day. I can tell you down to one gallon
20 how much it costs me to run my dishwasher, my
21 washing machine, take a shower, anything. And it's
22 just -- it's just -- just ridiculous the way we are
23 living our retirement years after both of us
24 working for 40 or 50 years.

25 We live in a beautiful home. We don't feel

1 like we can use water at all in order to keep it at
2 the cost that we want to pay. And the neighbors
3 across the street, I was just talking to them
4 tonight, and they paid 200 a month. One time it
5 was 800 a month.

6 It's -- I -- I keep my water bill reasonable,
7 but it's because of how I am living my life. And I
8 am ashamed to say that it's a terrible way to be
9 retired and to work your whole life to be living it
10 so that you have to read your meter every single
11 day.

12 And when I found out they made a \$10,000 -- I
13 mean, a 10,000 gallon mistake, and I called them.
14 They said, oh, don't worry about it, Mrs. Wilson,
15 we will just distribute it over the next, you know,
16 the next water bill. I only use 1,500 gallons a
17 month, a month now. A month. And I was using
18 1,800 to water my lawn once. Once.

19 So you can see, the only way I can keep my
20 water bill where it needs to be like it used to be,
21 and I don't mean 20 years ago, or 30 years ago, I
22 mean just a few years ago, is to not -- is to
23 change the way we live. And I am totally against
24 any kind of increases at all.

25 We live off of Timber Ridge Road and Sabal

1 Point Elementary, and there is leaking water every
2 day for the last 25 years on Timber Ridge Road. So
3 if they just would fix that leak one and for --
4 once and for all, I don't have to -- I don't have
5 do live the way I do, because they are wasting
6 water every single day on Timber Ridge Road.

7 So that's all I have to say. If you have any
8 questions, I will be happy to answer them.

9 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Wilson.

10 Let me ask you one question. You said your
11 monthly usage is -- 1,800 gallons a month is your
12 average usage now, is that right?

13 MS. WILSON: It's more between 15 and 18. We
14 don't have company anymore. We don't have the
15 grandkids come or the kids come because it costs
16 too much money when they come --

17 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Right. And --

18 MS. WILSON: -- they have to take a shower or
19 a bath, so we just don't have them come anymore.

20 CHARIMAN CLARK: And how much is your monthly
21 bill --

22 MS. WILSON: It's terrible?

23 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Ms. Wilson, how much is your
24 monthly bill running?

25 MS. WILSON: For 1,500 gallons, divide by 30

1 days, it runs about \$48 a month. I have kept every
2 bill since they started, and I record it every
3 single day for the last, what, what's it been, two
4 or three years now? I have a record of everything.

5 CHAIRMAN CLARK: All right. Thank you.

6 Mr. Friedman, a question for, and I'm -- just
7 out of curiosity here. What is -- I can't remember
8 your rate structure. How many gallons comes with
9 the standard residential charge?

10 MR. FRIEDMAN: Nothing. It's a base facility
11 charge based on the meter, and it does not include
12 any gallons.

13 CHAIRMAN CLARK: No gallons, okay. You don't
14 have a flat amount --

15 MR. FRIEDMAN: No gallons -- no, and I don't
16 know of any times that y'all have done that.

17 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Well, I'm --

18 MR. FRIEDMAN: You have been doing just the
19 opposite. In order to conserve -- in order to
20 improve conservation, you have gone a policy of not
21 including anything in the base charge.

22 CHARIMAN CLARK: Yes, sir, I understand. I
23 didn't know if there were any leftovers out there.

24 So am looking at your rate case overview, and
25 what it's showing me here is a typical

1 residential -- I am sorry, that is way -- I am on
2 the wrong page. That's wastewater. Let me find
3 the -- that's what was throwing me off, Mr.
4 Friedman. I was looking at the wastewater, and it
5 had 6,000 gallons, I believe, on it.

6 So is that right? So \$17 --

7 MS. WILSON: 1,500 gallons isn't normal for
8 anybody. Even the meter reader says, do you live
9 here? And I said, yes, we do. And I know exactly
10 what day they comes because he leaves the little
11 tab up, and then I know he has read it that day, so
12 then I write down what he read, and then I also
13 check it with the company to make sure, and that's
14 when I realized they overread it by 10,000 gallons.
15 It would take me six months to make up the money
16 for 10,000 gallons. And I said, no, I want you to
17 come out here and read it again. You have made a
18 mistake. And they did. They -- I made them come
19 out. I shamed them to coming out because I wasn't
20 going to pay six months worth of my water bill in
21 one month. So they came out. It would have been
22 what, \$300 or something, instead of \$50, or
23 whatever it was. But, you know -- you know, so
24 that altitude alone was, oh, was we couldn't have
25 made a mistake. You don't know what you are doing.

1 I am an educated person with a Master's
2 degree, and I worked for Seminole County School
3 Board and retired after over 30 years, so I am very
4 well-disciplined, and that's why we keep our water
5 bill the way it is, but I hate it. I hate it.
6 I -- I am miserable, but I am not going to spend
7 \$800 or \$600 or even \$500 or \$400 on a water bill.
8 I'm not going to do that.

9 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Mr. Friedman, let me finish
10 my question with you.

11 I am looking at your -- now I am looking on
12 the correct page -- your average monthly water
13 bill, your current rate, it says typical
14 residential 5/8 or 3/4 inch meter bill comparison
15 for 3,000 gallons should be \$16.66, is that
16 correct? Do I have the right page?

17 MR. FRIEDMAN: I'm going to ask -- of course,
18 it sounds low to me, but -- but I don't have what
19 you are looking at is my problem, Mr. Chairman. I
20 don't know what you are looking at, so I can't -- I
21 can't say, but that sounds low for 5,000 gallons,
22 that it would only be \$16.

23 MS. WILSON: Yeah, it's not. I have got my
24 bills right here.

25 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Ms. Wilson, hang on one

1 second. Let me get -- one second. Let me get some
2 clarification.

3 The thing that -- the publication that we put
4 out, it shows UIF monthly water bills the current
5 rate, has a typical residential 5/8 inch by 3/4
6 inch meter bill comparison, for 3,000 gallons of
7 water is \$16.66. Amber, are you on the line?

8 MR. FRIEDMAN: Is that right?

9 MS. NORRIS: Yes, sir. And I am going to go
10 if I can get someone from our Economics staff, they
11 are looking at the rates and on the rate schedules
12 to take a look the rates overview is what you are
13 referring to, correct?

14 CHAIRMAN CLARK: It is on the PSC rate case
15 overview, page three at the bottom, typical
16 residential meter bill comparison.

17 MS. NORRIS: Yes, sir. I believe someone from
18 Economics is on the line to respond to that.

19 CHARIMAN CLARK: Okay.

20 MS. BRUCE: Commissioner Clark, this is Sonica
21 Bruce I am on the line. And that is correct. For
22 3,000 gallons that is \$16.66, so that is correct.

23 CHAIRMAN CLARK: That would be 16.66?

24 MS. BRUCE: Yes, for 3,000 gallons.

25 CHAIRMAN CLARK: That includes the base

1 facility charge -- when you do the comparison, that
2 should include the base facility charge, right?

3 MS. BRUCE: Yes, it does.

4 CHAIRMAN CLARK: So I am having a difficult
5 time understanding how 1,800 gallons is \$48 a
6 month. Mr. Friedman, can you help me with this?

7 MR. FRIEDMAN: Yeah, that -- that -- that --
8 the -- that rate includes wastewater. The \$16 that
9 you mentioned is only the water, and then you have
10 got to figure out -- you got to look on the
11 wastewater side and add that to it. You add the 16
12 or 25 or so for the wastewater, and that's how you
13 come back with --

14 CHAIRMAN CLARK: I am sorry, Ms. Wilson was
15 telling -- I am sorry, Ms. Wilson, I assumed that
16 was just your water bill. That's water and sewer,
17 Ms. Wilson?

18 MS. WILSON: That's our Utilities, Inc. bill.
19 We used 900 gallons last month, and it was \$45.82
20 for 900 gallons. The month before, we used 1,580
21 gallons and it was \$49.50. That's what I write the
22 check out for. The month before, we used -- the
23 month before, we used \$1,480 -- 1,480, and it was
24 \$48.55. So to keep it under -- under \$50 a month
25 as far as writing a check goes, I use less than

1 1,600 gallons.

2 CHAIRMAN CLARK: I'm just -- I'm looking at
3 the simple math here, and it looks to me like you
4 can double your usage and still stay under \$50,
5 because 3,000 gallons on both sides is 19.17 and
6 16.66. You should still be under \$50.

7 You answered my question, Ms. Wilson. I
8 wanted to know if that was water and wastewater, or
9 just -- but that is both of your services?

10 MS. WILSON: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Okay.

12 MS. WILSON: So you are saying I can use
13 \$3,000 and only go up another dollar? I don't
14 think so. I don't see -- I don't see how I can do
15 that, uh-uh. It's at \$49 now.

16 CHAIRMAN CLARK: And I'm sure there is some
17 taxes and -- there is some taxes and fees --

18 MS. WILSON: Yeah.

19 CHAIRMAN CLARK: -- that are included in there
20 too, yes, ma'am.

21 MS. WILSON: Yeah. Yeah, the taxes and fees,
22 and, yeah, there is.

23 CHAIRMAN CLARK: All right. Well, thank you.

24 Commissioners -- other Commissioners have
25 questions?

1 Commissioner Fay.

2 COMMISSIONER FAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 I was going to ask if Mr. Friedman or someone
4 from UIF could respond to Ms. Wilson's comments
5 about an error in her -- her bill, a significant
6 error in her bill that as then resolved?

7 MR. FRIEDMAN: Yes. Commissioner Fay, that
8 was -- that occurred back in 2018, I think is what
9 our records show, that there was a misread of her
10 meter in 2018, and, as she mentioned, it was
11 resolved.

12 MS. WILSON: Yes. Yeah, it was resolved
13 because I called before we got the bill. I called
14 that day, because I was reading my meter, then as
15 soon as I read my meter, within a day or two I
16 would call and talk to the little girl on the line,
17 and I would say: What was my meter read at? And
18 she would tell me the numbers, and that's when I
19 said: No. No. No. You are 10,000 off. She
20 said: Oh, don't worry about it. We will just
21 apply it to the next month. And I said: No,
22 that's going to take me six months. I said: I
23 want someone to reread it now.

24 COMMISSIONER FAY: Have you had communications
25 with the utility since that?

1 MS. WILSON: Well, I used to call them every
2 single month when I read my meter, when the little
3 guy would leave the flap up. I haven't done that
4 lately because I have just been overwhelmed with
5 everything else, but I still read it every single
6 day. And before we would leave the house, like, if
7 we are going to go someplace for two days, we turn
8 off our water, I read the meter as we are driving
9 out the driveway, and I read the meter again before
10 my husband turns the water back on.

11 Like I said, we are very diligent about it,
12 and we are very conservative about it because I am
13 just that kind of person, you know.

14 COMMISSIONER FAY: Yeah. I appreciate that.
15 And we appreciate all of the information, Ms.
16 Wilson.

17 Some of the customers have mentioned to the
18 Commission that the customer service has improved
19 over time with the utility, and so I just -- I was
20 just checking to see if you had a comparison to --

21 MS. WILSON: No, I am okay now. I am okay. I
22 am okay.

23 COMMISSIONER FAY: Yeah, but I do appreciate
24 all of the comments. It's very helpful for us
25 going forward, so thank you for taking the time.

1 MS. WILSON: Thank you very much for listening
2 to my story, and I am sorry it was such a sob
3 story, but this is not how I should be living my
4 retirement. I'm not -- this is not how anybody
5 should be living their retirement, not as hard as I
6 worked, and my husband has worked, and we live in a
7 beautiful, beautiful home, so -- but anyhow, that's
8 the way it is, and unless -- if the rates continue
9 to go up, we will move some place where Utilities,
10 Inc. does not service us, so thank you very much.

11 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Other Commissioners have any
12 questions? Other Commissioners have questions?

13 All right. Parties, any questions?

14 All right, seeing none.

15 Thank you so much for your testimony tonight,
16 Ms. Wilson.

17 MS. WILSON: Thank you.

18 CHARIMAN CLARK: Next up is Timothy Reiner.
19 Mr. Reiner, are you on the line? Mr. Reiner. Do
20 we show Mr. Reiner on the line? Never checked in,
21 okay.

22 All right. Does that get everyone that signed
23 up to speak tonight, Staff? Okay. I believe we've
24 got everybody covered this evening. Very good.

25 Staff counsel, do you have anything for us?

1 MS. HELTON: No, sir. I don't think Ms.
2 Lherrison does either, but I will -- we should
3 maybe check.

4 CHAIRMAN CLARK: All right. Ms. Lherisson, do
5 you have any comments?

6 MS. LHERISSON: Nothing further.

7 CHAIRMAN CLARK: Very good.

8 Commissioners --

9 MS. LHERISSON: Nothing further,
10 Commissioners.

11 CHARIMAN CLARK: Commissioners, any final
12 closing comments?

13 All right. Let me thank you again for taking
14 time out of your schedules to call in to this
15 service hearing tonight. Your comments and
16 testimony are very important to this process, and
17 we appreciate you assisting us with this
18 proceeding.

19 If you have any questions, please feel free to
20 discuss them with one of our staff members or a
21 company representative. Their contact information
22 has been provided in the notices for this
23 proceeding.

24 If the Commissioners don't have any other
25 questions or comments, then we are going to stand

1 adjourned for the evening. No other comments, we
2 are adjourned.

3 Thank you so much.

4 (Proceedings concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF LEON)

I, DEBRA KRICK, Court Reporter, do hereby
certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the
time and place herein stated.

IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I
stenographically reported the said proceedings; that the
same has been transcribed under my direct supervision;
and that this transcript constitutes a true
transcription of my notes of said proceedings.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative,
employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor
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attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I
financially interested in the action.

DATED this 22nd day of January, 2021.



DEBRA R. KRICK
NOTARY PUBLIC
COMMISSION #HH31926
EXPIRES AUGUST 13, 2024