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BEFORE THE
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the matter of:

DOCKET NO. 20220067-GU

Petition for rate increase by Florida
Public Utilities Company, Florida Division
of Chesapeake Utilities Corporation,
Florida Public Utilities Company - Fort
Meade, and Florida Public Utilities
Company - Indiantown Division.

_____ /

PROCEEDINGS: SERVICE HEARING

COMMISSIONERS
PARTICIPATING: CHAIRMAN ANDREW GILES FAY
COMMISSIONER GARY F. CLARK
COMMISSIONER GABRIELLA PASSIDOMO

DATE: Wednesday, August 31, 2022

TIME: Commenced: 10:00 a.m.
Concluded: 10:30 a.m.

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

REPORTED BY: DEBRA R. KRICK
Court Reporter

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

1 APPEARANCES:

2 BETH KEATING, ESQUIRE, Gunster Law Firm, 215
3 South Monroe Street, Suite 601, Tallahassee, Florida
4 32301; appearing on behalf of Florida Public Utilities
5 Company (FPUC).

6 RICHARD GENTRY, PUBLIC COUNSEL; PATRICIA A.
7 CHRISTENSEN, ESQUIRE, OFFICE OF PUBLIC COUNSEL, c/o The
8 Florida Legislature, 111 West Madison Street, Room 812,
9 Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1400, appearing on behalf of
10 the Citizens of the State of Florida (OPC.).

11 RYAN SANDY and JENNIFER CRAWFORD, ESQUIRES,
12 FPSC General Counsel's Office, 2540 Shumard Oak
13 Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, appearing on
14 behalf of the Florida Public Service Commission (Staff).

15 KEITH HETRICK, GENERAL COUNSEL; MARY ANNE
16 HELTON, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL, Florida Public Service
17 Commission, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee,
18 Florida 32399-0850, Advisor to the Florida Public
19 Service Commission.

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1 PROCEEDINGS

2 CHAIRMAN FAY: All right. Good morning,
3 everyone. I would like to welcome you to this
4 virtual -- excuse me, this customer service hearing
5 for the FPUC rate case. Today's service hearing is
6 part of the process dedicated to hearing from the
7 customers.

8 My name is Andrew Fay. I serve as the Chair
9 of the Public Service Commission. Also here this
10 morning with us is Commissioner Gabriella Passidomo
11 and commissioner Gary Clark. Commissioner
12 Passidomo or Commissioner Clark, if you would like
13 to say something for the record, you are welcome to
14 do so.

15 MS. PASSIDOMO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 I just wanted to take this moment to thank the
17 customers that are call -- in advance who have
18 called in, and also address those customers that
19 have sent us letters. We've received -- my office
20 has received a lot of letters, and so we take those
21 all into consideration as well. So thank you for
22 those customers who have written in or will
23 continue to write in.

24 CHAIRMAN FAY: Great. Thank you, Commissioner
25 Passidomo.

1 Commissioner Clark?

2 COMMISSIONER CLARK: No thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN FAY: Great. With that, we will move
4 on.

5 Staff, will you please read the notice?

6 MR. SANDY: Good morning, Commissioners.

7 By notice issued on August 12th of this year,
8 this time and place has been set for a customer
9 service hearing in Docket No. 20220067. The
10 purpose of this hearing is set forth more fully in
11 the notice.

12 CHAIRMAN FAY: Great. Thank you.

13 Next we will move on to appearances, starting
14 with Florida Public Utilities.

15 MS. KEATING: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,
16 Commissioners, and customers of FPUC and
17 Chesapeake.

18 My name is Beth Keating, and I am an attorney
19 with the Gunster Law Firm, and I am here on behalf
20 of Florida Public Utilities.

21 I would also like to note that joining us
22 today via video is Mr. Mike Cassel. He is the
23 Vice-President of Governmental and Regulatory
24 Affairs. We also have a number of consumer affairs
25 experts on the line that are going to be available

1 to reach out to customers and assist with any
2 concerns they may have.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. Great. Thank you, Ms.
5 Keating.

6 Next we will recognize the Office of Public
7 Counsel. The Office of Public Counsel is on the
8 line, just give them a minute here.

9 All right. With that, we will next move on to
10 the overview of this proceeding, and so I am going
11 to walk through some of the details of how we will
12 move forward this morning with this just to make
13 sure all the callers and the participants know how
14 we will proceed going forward.

15 Once again, we do appreciate your interest and
16 taking the time to reach out during these customer
17 meetings as it is the customers' opportunity to
18 weigh in on their concerns and thoughts.

19 Just for clarification, this customer meeting
20 allows that those opinions by the customers to be
21 given. In October, there will be a technical
22 hearing where the Commission will take up the
23 substance and the evidence of this specific docket.

24 If would you like to speak with somebody
25 within FPUC's customer service department, the

1 phone number is 1(800)524-1495. And those are
2 typical business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

3 And additionally, our office is providing a
4 contact for customers, which is Sevini Guffey, who
5 is from our economics division and is
6 representative of the PSC. Her e-mail is
7 S-G-U-F-F-E-Y@psc.state.fl.us. We will also
8 provide a contact number which is (850)413-6204.
9 So either of those entities, either the Commission
10 or the utility can be contacted by those means.

11 Just a reminder, because this is an official
12 hearing, the testimony -- the -- what's provided by
13 the customers will be transcribed for the record.
14 We will make sure that we swear you in. Those that
15 signed up on-line have already been sworn in, and
16 those on the phone, we will swear you in before you
17 provide your testimony at that time.

18 Just a reminder, as you provide testimony,
19 there can be -- you are subject to
20 cross-examination, which essentially just means
21 that either the parties or the Commissioners may
22 have a question -- follow-up question for you at
23 that time.

24 Just a few things for those on the line to
25 remember. Make sure to keep your phone on mute so

1 we don't interrupt any of the other customers that
2 are speaking. Make sure you use the either the
3 direct telephone function or a headset, and not to
4 use the speaker function on the phone, as sometimes
5 that will create feedback within our system.

6 And additionally to that, if you are watching
7 the live stream on-line and participating by phone,
8 if you could make sure that your audio is off on
9 the live stream, because sometimes we get feedback
10 when both of those are on.

11 And last but not least, if you do get
12 disconnected, please just dial the number back and
13 we will make sure when you get reconnected we will
14 give you the opportunity to address if it's at the
15 end of the speakers.

16 Just as a obvious reminder, make sure the
17 professionalism and respect for all the speakers
18 and parties involved are taken into account as you
19 participate in today's customer service hearing.

20 With that, I do want to just finalize for the
21 customers that you also are welcome to provide
22 comments in this docket either by mail or by email,
23 and you can go directly through our website to do
24 so. But just in case, we are going to give you the
25 direct email, which is clerk@psc.state.fl.us.

1 That's C-L-E-R-K at P-S-C dot S-T-A-T-E dot F-L dot
2 U-S. And make sure that that correspondence is
3 labeled for this docket, which is 20220067.

4 Whether your comments are made today in this
5 customer service hearing, or provided in the
6 record, they will be -- or provided by writing,
7 they will be put into the record and reviewed for
8 this proceeding.

9 So with that, we have all the information for
10 the customers. We will move on to the parties, if
11 they would like to provide an opening statement.
12 We will first recognize Ms. Keating and FPUC.

13 MS. KEATING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 If I may, I would like to defer to Mr. Cassel,
15 who has a few brief opening comments.

16 CHAIRMAN FAY: Sure. Thank you.

17 Mr. Cassel, you are recognized.

18 MR. CASSEL: Thank you, Chairman and
19 Commissioners. And especially thank you to our
20 customers who have taken time today to dial in.
21 And we value your comments, and we appreciate you
22 being here with us.

23 As said, I am Mike Cassel. I am the
24 Vice-President of Government and Regulatory Affairs
25 for Chesapeake. That's the parent company of FPUC,

1 Central Florida Gas as well as the Division's of
2 Indiantown, Fort Meade and FPUC. I have been with
3 the company over 14 years, and like you, I am also
4 a Floridan.

5 We are here today because our natural gas
6 companies have filed for a rate increase, and we
7 believe our rates are currently no longer enough to
8 allow us to continue making the necessary
9 investments to ensure the continued reliability of
10 our service to our customers.

11 We've also requested the ability in that case
12 to consolidate our units, including our rate
13 structures, and that will enable us to simplify our
14 operations and better serve our customers with
15 responsiveness and customer-focused nature, and do
16 it in the most efficient manner possible.

17 We have over -- the most recent rate relief
18 that we requested has been over 13 years. And over
19 that time, we've managed our costs well. We've
20 also green and we have expanded into areas of the
21 state that previously had no access to natural gas.
22 Most notably that would be in Nassau and Escambia
23 Counties. At that same time, we also focused on
24 our customers, trying to drive improvements of our
25 customer service as well as communications. As a

1 result, that's made us have to make some
2 significant capital investments. And to meet that
3 demand and fulfill those requests is what drives us
4 hear today.

5 We currently operate about 3,000 miles of gas
6 mains in the state, and serve roughly 92,000
7 customers across all of Florida. And our customers
8 are the most important thing, and it's the core of
9 everything we do. Nothing is more important than
10 your safety. Because of that, we have made and
11 continue to make improvements in our gas systems,
12 our training, our technology, specifically around
13 cybersecurity, and improvements that will help
14 protect our customers' personal information.

15 In addition, our commitment do our customers
16 is to continue to increase our customer engagement
17 and our retention activities while making it better
18 and easier for our customers to do business with
19 us.

20 Our accountability starts with a commitment to
21 listen and learn from our customers so that we
22 fully understand what your energy needs are. And
23 we value that, and we value our customers, and we
24 are honored to serve you. We work daily to ensure
25 that our service reflects that altitude.

1 On the video today with me is Todd Kelley. He
2 is our Manager of Customer Care. He is here to
3 ensure that any questions that our customers have
4 about your bill, the service or otherwise related
5 to this request will be answered as quickly as
6 possible.

7 So thank you for your time.

8 CHAIRMAN FAY: Great. Thank you, Mr. Cassel.

9 Next we will just see if Office of Public
10 Counsel is on the line for any opening statement.
11 It does not appear they are on the line. But just
12 for the customers' sake, the Office of Public
13 Counsel does serve as the legal consumer advocate
14 for this docket. So in addition to the utility and
15 our contact, the Office of Public Counsel can be
16 contacted if needed by the customers.

17 With that, we will move into the customer
18 testimony. Each individual will be provided three
19 minutes to provide their testimony for the record.
20 What I will do is call your name and recognize you.
21 And then once again, if you have been sworn in
22 already, you are welcome to go ahead and speak. If
23 not, we will swear you in briefly so you can
24 provide your comments for this docket.

25 If you could, just state your name, address

1 and if you are a customer of FPUC the Division of
2 Chesapeake Utilities, Indiantown division or the
3 Fort Meade part of Florida Public Utilities. And
4 just a reminder, your comments will be transcribed
5 for the record.

6 So with that, I am first going to recognize
7 Mr. Neugebauer. I probably did not pronounce that
8 right, but Frank Neugebauer, are you on the line?

9 MR. NEUGEBAUER: Can you hear me?

10 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay, you are recognized. I am
11 just going to swear you in real quick.

12 (Whereupon, Frank Neugebauer was sworn by
13 Chairman Fay.)

14 MR. NEUGEBAUER: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. You are recognized.

16 PUBLIC COMMENT

17 MR. NEUGEBAUER: Okay. So I am retired. I am
18 a 71-year-old male, married. Live in Haines City,
19 Florida. My address is 23 Silver Crest Drive. ZIP
20 Code is 33844. I am retired, along with my wife.
21 And I am only calling in because I am concerned. I
22 live on Social Security, I really have no other
23 means of finance.

24 So I know there is people in the state, like
25 Senator Scott, who would love to get rid of Social

1 Security and throw people like me out on the
2 street, and I fight that tooth and nail every time
3 there is an action.

4 So the bottom line is, I am okay with a modest
5 increase, but nothing that will make it hard for me
6 to pay my bills. And that's all I wanted to say.

7 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. Great. Thank you for
8 your comments today. We appreciate you taking the
9 time to call in.

10 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN FAY: Next --

12 MR. NEUGEBAUER: And you guys have a wonderful
13 day.

14 CHAIRMAN FAY: Thank you. You too.

15 Next we will be calling Anthony Bennett.

16 Mr. Bennett, are you on the line?

17 MR. BENNETT: Yes.

18 (Whereupon, Anthony Bennett was sworn by
19 Chairman Fay.)

20 MR. BENNETT: Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. Mr. Bennett, you are
22 recognized.

23 PUBLIC COMMENT

24 MR. BENNETT: Well, thank you very much for
25 having this forum so that we can speak. And

1 overview of going over the letter that was sent to
2 us earlier this month and about the rate -- the
3 proposed rate increases. So there is a little
4 confusion that I -- that I do see in here based
5 upon if you look at your bills and you compare it
6 to the bill to the actual comparison charts,
7 nothing seems to line up with the rate disclosure
8 for the FNRS. I use less than 100 therms, and we
9 use probably, like, five, six therms, seven therms,
10 very modest. So when I see somebody changing
11 things around, it's kind of alarming, but it may be
12 better, it may not be better. But the rates don't
13 match what our rate is on our bill versus the
14 interim rates or the present rates. So I am a
15 little concerned by the fact that this comparison
16 chart of proposed rates is not factual.

17 So at this point, it's very hard for me to
18 determine if there is a substantial increase in
19 rate or if it's a modest difference, because I do
20 know that I think the growth is being absorbed by
21 the customer service charge that is added on. That
22 I kind of figured out, I think, based upon the
23 letter and looking at the chart. But again, I am
24 -- I am -- you know, until the numbers line up with
25 the interim rates or the present rates that are on

1 the bill, it makes it hard to actually discern
2 which way this is going to be properly disclosed.

3 So, you know, with that said, you know, I am
4 not opposed to companies making a profit. I get
5 that. And I am not opposed to that, but, you know,
6 we have a lot of residents, and I kind of speak for
7 myself and a lot of people that I have talked to,
8 especially last night at the Lakeworth Commission.
9 A lot of people are very concerned because the
10 rates have gone up on our electric company for gas,
11 for natural gas, and it is pushed through to our
12 bills there. So when you are looking at overall,
13 if your electric is going up, and then your natural
14 gas bill is going up, and you don't have the two
15 linking with each other, you know, it could be kind
16 of a catastrophic event for a lot of families and a
17 lot of people.

18 So I -- I don't want to speak for anybody else
19 in turn, but I also know from what my experience
20 has been over the past couple of months, just kind
21 of stepping out of my norm, which is be silent and
22 listen. Now I have kind of been more on the
23 proactive side. And I guess if I could get my
24 answers to why the rates and everything don't match
25 up to the bill and stuff in the next, you know,

1 coming days, then maybe I could certainly come back
2 and speak on the 20th at the public forum and be
3 able to give more input.

4 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Bennett,
5 for your comments.

6 What I would like to do, if it's okay with
7 you, we will have somebody from our office reach
8 out to you just to make sure that we provide
9 clarity and the information that the Commission has
10 provided, and then just also would like to check
11 with the utility if they also would like to make
12 contact with you just to make sure it's clear what
13 numbers would be changed.

14 MR. CASSEL: Yes, thank you. We will make
15 sure of that, Chairman, somebody reaches out to Mr.
16 Bennett today.

17 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. Thank you.

18 So, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Cassel is on the line,
19 and he has confirmed with us that somebody will
20 reach out to you today to provide some clarity on
21 that information.

22 MR. BENNETT: Okay. Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN FAY: Great. Thank you for calling
24 in.

25 Next we will have Inez Butler. Inez, are you

1 on the line?

2 MS. BUTLER: Yes. Can you hear me?

3 CHAIRMAN FAY: Yes, we can hear you, Ms.
4 Butler. I have you sworn in already, so you are
5 recognized to provide your comments when you are
6 ready.

7 PUBLIC COMMENT

8 MS. BUTLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

9 My name is Inez Butler. I am at 531 West 28th
10 Street, Riviera Beach, Florida, and I am very
11 concerned with the increase because apparently we
12 didn't get the memo, because my August bill was
13 \$126.89. I called customer service to find out why
14 the increase. Was told to send an email to me. I
15 sent four emails. No one responded. I listed my
16 January to July payments, and then August it comes
17 to 128 -- I am sorry, 126.89. I have been 34, 35,
18 14, 19, but this increase came to me in August.
19 Did not receive a letter telling me about the
20 comparison of current and proposed rates. So
21 apparently you all raised the rates and we were
22 not -- as far as my husband and I, we are also
23 retired senior citizens, and this bill of 129 was
24 really surprising to us that we weren't, you know,
25 contacted. I sent four emails. No one ever

1 responded. I thought -- because we have been
2 customers ever since 1976, and no one even
3 responded to the emails. So I just want to know,
4 you know, how did it jump up to 126.89, and I could
5 go back to 2019 where it has never been that high?

6 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Butler
7 for your comments.

8 What we would like to do, if it's okay with
9 you, Ms. Butler, is Mr. Cassel is on the line for
10 FPUC, if they would be able to reach out to you to
11 give some clarity for you on that bill, and in
12 particular some of the changes. Would that be okay
13 with you?

14 MS. BUTLER: Yes. Okay. So you are not
15 answering any questions today, is that correct?

16 CHAIRMAN FAY: We are taking your comments for
17 the docket itself, but as to clarity as to the
18 numbers that are changed based on the case overview
19 and what's provided to you, we want to make sure
20 you have clarity on that, and so I want to get our
21 technical staff and the utility to provide you with
22 that.

23 MS. BUTLER: Who will be -- who will be
24 calling? What was the name again?

25 CHAIRMAN FAY: I am sorry, Ms. Butler, repeat

1 your question.

2 MS. BUTLER: Well, who -- who is going to be
3 doing -- what's the name of the person that will be
4 calling?

5 CHAIRMAN FAY: Oh, Mr. Cassel, do you know who
6 exactly would be calling from your office?

7 MR. CASSEL: Yes, I believe it will be Todd
8 Kelley, who is with us on the video today, or
9 someone on his staff.

10 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. So, Ms. Butler, it would
11 be Todd Kelley with FPUC.

12 MS. BUTLER: Okay. I thank you very much.

13 CHAIRMAN FAY: Thank you for your time, Ms.
14 Butler, and for your comments today. We appreciate
15 it.

16 MS. BUTLER: Okay.

17 CHAIRMAN FAY: Okay. And with that, next I
18 have Gennaro Finelli. Gennaro Finelli, are you on
19 the line?

20 Okay, Mr. Finelli does not appear to be on the
21 line.

22 Are there any other speakers that are on the
23 call today?

24 All right. Seeing none, with that, I do want
25 to thank the speakers that we did have provide

1 comments today. Please feel free to reach out to
2 our agency or the FPUC if you have any other
3 follow-up questions regarding these changes.

4 And with that, seeing no other comments from
5 the Commission, we stand adjourned.

6 Thank you so much.

7 (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 am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

DATED this 12th day of September, 2022.



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