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BEFORE THE  
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: DOCKET NO. 20250052-WS  
Application for increase in water and  
wastewater rates in Brevard, Citrus, Duval,  
Highlands, Marion, and Volusia Counties by  
CSWR-Florida Utility Operating Company.

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PROCEEDINGS: SERVICE HEARING  
COMMISSIONERS  
PARTICIPATING: CHAIRMAN GABRIELLA PASSIDOMO SMITH  
COMMISSIONER GARY F. CLARK  
COMMISSIONER MIKE LA ROSA  
COMMISSIONER BOBBY PAYNE  
COMMISSIONER ANA ORTEGA

DATE: Tuesday, March 31, 2026  
TIME: Commenced: 6:00 p.m.  
Concluded: 6:25 p.m.

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

REPORTED BY: DEBRA R. KRICK  
Court Reporter and  
Notary Public in and for  
the State of Florida at Large  
Court Reporter

PREMIER REPORTING  
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA  
(850) 894-0828

1 APPEARANCES:

2 TOM A. CRABB, ESQUIRE, Radey Law Firm, 301  
3 South Bronough Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301;  
4 appearing on behalf of CSWR-Florida

5 WALT TRIERWEILER, PUBLIC COUNSEL; AUSTIN  
6 WATROUS, ESQUIRE, OFFICE OF PUBLIC COUNSEL, c/o The  
7 Florida Legislature, 111 West Madison Street, Room 812,  
8 Tallahassee, FL 32399-1400, appearing on behalf of the  
9 Citizens of the State of Florida.

10 DANIEL DOSE and ZACHARY BLOOM, ESQUIRES, FPSC  
11 General Counsel's Office, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard,  
12 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850, appearing on behalf of the  
13 Florida Public Service Commission.

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I N D E X

WITNESS :	PAGE
DAVID ISON PUBLIC COMMENT	11
TERRY WOLFGRAM PUBLIC COMMENT	13
DAN SCHMIDT PUBLIC COMMENT	15

EXHIBITS

NUMBER :	MARKED
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Okay. Good afternoon.

3 Welcome, and thank you for attending this customer  
4 service hearing. This is a part of our review of  
5 CSWR-Florida Utility Operating Company's request  
6 for a rate adjustment. Today's service hearing is  
7 an important part of the process and is dedicated  
8 to hearing from you, the customers.

9 My name is Gabriella Smith, and I am the Chair  
10 of the Public Service Commission, and with me are  
11 my fellow Commissioners, Clark, La Rosa, Payne and  
12 Ortega.

13 Staff, will you please read the notice?

14 MR. DOSE: By notice issued on February 19th,  
15 2026, this time and place has been set for a  
16 customer service hearing in Docket No. 20250052-WS.  
17 The purpose of the service hearing is set forth  
18 more fully in the notice.

19 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you.

20 At this time, I will take appearances of  
21 counsel, starting with CSWR.

22 MR. CRABB: Tom Crabb of the Radey Law Firm  
23 for CSWR-Florida.

24 MR. WATROUS: Austin Watrous on behalf of the  
25 Florida Office of Public Counsel. And I would also

1           like to enter an appearance for Walt Trierweiler,  
2           the Public Counsel.

3           Thank you.

4           CHAIRMAN SMITH: Can you repeat that with the  
5           mic on just --

6           MR. DOSE: Daniel Dose and Zachary Bloom for  
7           Commission legal staff.

8           CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you.

9           Okay. Thank you all for participating today  
10          and sharing your experience of the quality of  
11          service provided by CSWR, and providing any  
12          comments you may have regarding the utility's rate  
13          request.

14          In addition to sharing your comments here, you  
15          can also provide written comments or additional  
16          materials by paper mail or by email. The rate case  
17          overview includes instructions on how to provide  
18          written comments to the Commission.

19          If you have specific service or billing  
20          issues, representatives from CSWR are here, and I  
21          think that they are going to provide you a number  
22          that you can call in after this service hearing or  
23          once you hang up on this line and so that you can  
24          talk to them directly about your specific issue.

25          Before we hear from the customers, I will

1 allow opening statements by the parties, starting  
2 with Mr. Crabb.

3 MR. CRABB: Aaron Silas is the company's  
4 Assistant Vice-President of Customer Experience and  
5 Regulatory Operations, and he will provide a brief  
6 opening statement.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. SILAS: All right. Thanks, everyone.

9 First of all, I wanted to say that Josiah Cox,  
10 who is the CEO, wanted to be here tonight, but due  
11 to scheduling, he couldn't, so he apologies.

12 Just briefly, as the Chair stated, if you do  
13 have service issues that you would like to speak  
14 with me directly as the, you know, VP over the  
15 customer experience department, you can give me a  
16 call at (314)380-8510. I am also going to be  
17 taking notes and I will attempt to give everyone  
18 who speaks a call sometime this week to see if I  
19 can't get any service issues resolved.

20 Just very briefly, I want to say that  
21 CSWR-Florida's mission is to provide safe and  
22 reliable water and sewer services to every  
23 community across the state. Every system that we  
24 have acquired as part of this rate case has been in  
25 some form of noncompliance or insolvency, and we

1           have taken steps towards fixing that. We know that  
2           there are issues outstanding, lingering historical  
3           issues, but we are dedicated to fixing those.

4                   And to the customers who are calling in and  
5           speaking, thank you so much for making your voices  
6           heard today. We really appreciate it, and we hope  
7           that we can get any quality or service issues  
8           resolved for you.

9                   Thank you so much.

10                   CHAIRMAN SMITH: Mr. Watrous, you are  
11           recognized.

12                   MR. WATROUS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

13                   Good evening. My name is Austin Watrous, and  
14           I am an attorney with the Florida Office of Public  
15           Counsel. The Office of Public Counsel, also known  
16           as OPC, was created over 50 years ago by the  
17           Florida Legislature to give customers an effective  
18           advocate in proceedings such as this. The Public  
19           Counsel, Walt Trierweiler, thanks you for taking  
20           the time to be here today.

21                   I want you to know that the Office of Public  
22           Counsel is actively challenging CSWR's proposed  
23           rate increase, the theme for this case is  
24           affordability and customer prosperity. We will  
25           argue with the assistance of our nationally

1           respected experts the proposed rate increases and  
2           the acquisition adjustments will result in unfair,  
3           unjust and unreasonable rates for you.

4           Also, I want to assure you that your voice is  
5           a valuable part of this rate case. The rate  
6           increases have not yet been decided, and these  
7           Commissioners, who are your Commissioners, are  
8           conducting virtual and in-person customer service  
9           hearings are hear to listen to you, so, please,  
10          share your thoughts as clearly and persuasively as  
11          you can, because your sworn testimony will be  
12          considered by the Commission, both now and in the  
13          future, when the Commission examines all the  
14          evidence before them to approve only that portion  
15          of CSWR's rate increases that are reasonable,  
16          prudent and in the public interest.

17          I invite you to share the details of your  
18          experiences as a customer of CSWR, and to share the  
19          personal impacts CSWR's proposed rate increases  
20          will have upon you, your family, your friends, your  
21          business and your community. Do be mindful of time  
22          so that your neighbors here may also have time to  
23          speak.

24          Thank you again for taking the time to  
25          participate in today's customer service hearing.

1 We look forward to hearing from you.

2 Thank you, Madam Chair.

3 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you.

4 All right. We are going to now move to the  
5 customer testimony portion. As Mr. Watrous said,  
6 your comments will become a part of our official  
7 record and, therefore, subject to  
8 cross-examination. That just means that one of the  
9 parties or one of the Commissioners might just ask  
10 you a follow-up question just to get some clarity  
11 on your comments.

12 I think everybody except for one speaker, and  
13 I will make sure he knows, have been sworn in, so I  
14 don't need to do that. So I will go ahead -- and  
15 Mr. Watrous of OPC is going to be helping me out  
16 today. He is going to call two names at a time.  
17 So if you hear your name second, that means you  
18 know you are on deck, so you can, you know, get  
19 your phone ready.

20 I also ask if you could please speak into your  
21 phone versus just using the speaker function. It  
22 helps us in the hearing room hear you better and  
23 have a little bit more clarity.

24 And I do want to make sure that all of your  
25 neighbors have an ample opportunity to speak, so if

1           you could, please limit your comments to three  
2           minutes. I will try not to, you know, cut you off  
3           mid-thought or anything, but just, you know, be  
4           mindful of your neighbor's time.

5           Okay. With that, Mr. Watrous, if you would  
6           call the first two customers.

7           MR. WATROUS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

8           The first customer to speak will be Lozell  
9           Bennett, and on deck we will have Patricia King.  
10          Lozell, are you there?

11          CHAIRMAN SMITH: Lozell Bennett?

12          MR. WATROUS: Patricia King, and then up next  
13          will be Porsha Gathers-Grossett.

14          Patricia, are you there?

15          CHAIRMAN SMITH: Patricia King?

16          MR. WATROUS: Up next will be Porsha  
17          Gathers-Grossett, and following her will be David  
18          Ison.

19          Porsha, are you there?

20          David Ison followed by Terry Wolfgram.

21          MR. ISON: This is David.

22          CHAIRMAN SMITH: Mr. Ison --

23          MR. ISON: This is David.

24          CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yes, you are recognized.

25                                   \* \* \* \* \*

1 PUBLIC COMMENT

2 MR. ISON: Okay. So I sent a letter about  
3 this, and that will come in the mail, but we are  
4 basically on the side of Austin, the attorney.  
5 There is a long list of reasons. How much time --  
6 you know, apart from -- the way this comes across  
7 is, you know, we were never surveyed. We like the  
8 old -- they had an office here and everything, and  
9 we felt like that was part of the community, and  
10 now it's everything is all impersonal.

11 And this comes across -- you know, these are  
12 pretty high percentage for the area that's  
13 affecting us. It's, like, a \$20 increase, so  
14 nobody has to say that's quite a burden on a  
15 monthly basis, and it looks like these are numbers  
16 like a meter fee, where it's not even -- am I  
17 right? Is that -- can somebody answer that? Is  
18 this like a meter fee, it's not even tied to usage,  
19 this proposed \$19 increase?

20 CHAIRMAN SMITH: I think if you have any,  
21 like, specific questions about the rate case, you  
22 can definitely contact the company and they can  
23 help give you some information.

24 MR. ISON: Okay. Well, that's okay. I was  
25 just going to try to be clear.

1           Well, because it's a meter fee, you know,  
2           people that are retired and on fixed income and  
3           stuff, there is no way to mitigate this by reducing  
4           usage. I mean, that's the problem. I am giving  
5           the reason why I am -- on this.

6           Now there is another thing in all these  
7           letters that we got, here's the proposed increase.  
8           There wasn't any kind of accounting statement, you  
9           know, to support this large amount. There was no  
10          contractor estimate. There is no any kind of info  
11          to back this up. It's just kind of a, oh, trust us  
12          situation.

13          And it's also not indicating, like, if there  
14          is something that has to be repaired or, you know,  
15          like I think the word was nonviable utility, or  
16          something, when it's brought to viable, like, when  
17          is that going to be?

18          And then the last comment on this. You got  
19          the people if it is a fixed fee, the people who  
20          live in another state for nine months a year are  
21          paying for something that's not even pertaining to  
22          their lives, their family or actions or whatever  
23          they do, and that's basically what I have.  
24          Respectfully request that this be declined.

25                 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you very much for your

1           comments.

2           MR. WATROUS: Up next is Terry Wolfgram,  
3 followed by Dan Schmidt.

4           Terry Wolfgram, are you there?

5                           PUBLIC COMMENT

6           MR. WOLFGRAM: Yes, sir, I am.

7           First of all, I would like to thank Madam  
8 Chairwoman Smith and the PCS Commissioners for  
9 conducting this virtual session.

10           My wife and I reside at 5017 Casablanca Circle  
11 in Sebring, Florida. We are opposed to the 255  
12 percent increase in our water utility rate by  
13 CSWR-Florida. This rate increase by CSWR is  
14 totally unacceptable to our community at The Bluffs  
15 and would present hardships, especially to the  
16 seniors living on fixed income.

17           It is my understanding that the per unit  
18 increase would be gone from 16.70 -- 16.17 to 59.43  
19 as of October 2025. I cannot think of another  
20 utility nationwide that has increased so  
21 drastically at one time.

22           I could go on to detailed information off-line  
23 that I had put in the docket I submitted earlier  
24 this month, but that would be redundant. I would  
25 rather focus on other municipalities that have

1 experienced to their privatized management of CSWR.

2 Many customers in Mississippi have reported  
3 that their bills have doubled or even tripled in  
4 recent years affecting those in the state of the  
5 lowest median income in the county. CSWR customers  
6 have experienced drastic rates increase from \$16 to  
7 \$67 for sewer service each billing cycle.

8 CSW customers expressed dissatisfaction  
9 labeling the rate hikes as greedy and  
10 unconscionable. The fact is that CSWR is a  
11 monopoly. As such, there is no competition, and,  
12 therefore, our condo association cannot seek other  
13 sources for more reasonable rates.

14 In conclusion, I am asking the PSC  
15 Commissioners to overturn CSWR's rate request of  
16 255 percent and reduce this increase to a fair and  
17 reasonable level.

18 As outlined in Wikipedia about the  
19 commissioners in Florida, Florida water utility  
20 commissioners are responsible for regulating water  
21 and wastewater utilities, ensuring safe and  
22 reliable services at fair prices, and overseeing  
23 the rates of operation of these utilities.

24 Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

25 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you, sir.

1           MR. WATROUS: And this next customer has not  
2           been sworn in. Dan Schmidt, are you there?

3           MR. SCHMIDT: Yes. Yes, can you hear me?

4           CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yes. Mr. Schmidt, do you --

5           MR. SCHMIDT: Can you hear me?

6           CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yes, we can hear you. Do you  
7           mind if you take a quick oath?

8           MR. SCHMIDT: I do not mind.

9           CHAIRMAN SMITH: Okay.

10           (Whereupon, Chairman Smith administered the  
11           oath.)

12           MR. SCHMIDT: I do.

13           CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you.

14           Okay. You are recognized whenever you are  
15           ready.

16                                   PUBLIC COMMENT

17           MR. SCHMIDT: Thank you.

18           It's Dan Schmidt, and I reside at The Bluffs  
19           of Sebring. I thank the previous caller for his  
20           comments. I am the current President of the Board,  
21           and am sort of speaking on behalf of all the  
22           residents here as well.

23           You know, the proposed rate increase, both  
24           high and low, for The Bluffs of Sebring residents  
25           in Highlands County is of great concern. We are a

1           55 and older condo community, with most residents  
2           being 70 plus years and older. Approximately 100  
3           are single, as their spouses, either man or woman,  
4           has passed away. Most or all are on limited  
5           income, and a rate increase of this proportion, 255  
6           percent, is unacceptable.

7                       We have 248 residential units. The sewer  
8           invoice for our nonprofit community has gone from  
9           \$4,000 per month to \$14,000 per month, an increase  
10          of 120,000 per year, \$40 a month, \$500 per year per  
11          resident. It may not seem like a lot to some, but  
12          in our community, that makes, and can make a  
13          catastrophic difference to them.

14                      On the other hand, as previously stated, the  
15          snowbirds who arrive in the fall and return to  
16          Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan in the spring, to  
17          name a few, they are paying a monthly rate all year  
18          round as their bills seem to be kind of percent per  
19          resident's rate.

20                      Our billing seems to have more residences than  
21          our 248, so we are being billed for an unused guard  
22          hatch, the guard shack that has a single sink and  
23          toilet in our manager and receptionist office that  
24          is occupied Monday through Friday 8:30 to 4:00  
25          p.m., a wash room facility and activity center that

1           probably sees three or four elderly users there out  
2           for their walks.

3           From what you can see and find in the purchase  
4           and transfer, you know, CSWR toted how long-term  
5           rate stability, operational cost efficiencies, as  
6           well as other benefits. CSWR also stated cost  
7           efficiencies included a reduction in O&M expenses  
8           and a reduction in the cost capital which would  
9           result in purchase and transfer to them.

10           Per my research, CSWR demonstrated the  
11           technical and financial ability to provide the  
12           service, and so the PSC approved the transfer. So  
13           now CSWR has approved -- has filed for a huge  
14           increase, we don't quite understand why. It was  
15           made to sound like the rate was going to decrease.

16           Just as an aside here. I am getting terrible  
17           feedback. I can hear myself talking everything I  
18           say about three seconds after I speak, but I will  
19           continue if it's okay.

20           CHAIRMAN SMITH: Sorry about that. We can  
21           hear you very clearly, though.

22           MR. SCHMIDT: Okay. Thank you.

23           In the transfer documents, there appears to be  
24           no major operational issues with the existing  
25           plant, and any request by CSWR for changes for a

1 number of reasons was denied.

2 We have heard from elected officials and  
3 others that we complained to in our query that the  
4 rate increase is for constantly infrastructure.  
5 That, from what documents filed, doesn't appear to  
6 be needed. Did CSWR do their due diligence in  
7 their purchase? Are there infrastructure needs and  
8 what are they?

9 The PSC raised the rates on an interim basis,  
10 never should have happened, and we are now -- and  
11 what are we now to see a 100- or 200-percent  
12 increase, and somehow feel lucky with the reduction  
13 from this interim 255 percent increase?

14 CSWR has is, you know, a monopoly as a  
15 business venture, which what appears to be too  
16 little oversight from the PSC if this increase is  
17 to go through.

18 In closing, the PSC should deny any rate  
19 increase for this new ownership, or have a rate  
20 increase based on cost of living.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Schmidt. And  
23 I do want to let you know, I did receive your  
24 neighbor, Mr. Athey's, comments as well, and I have  
25 reviewed them, so you can let him know that if you

1 talk to him.

2 MR. SCHMIDT: I will be calling him probably  
3 in the next half hour.

4 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Okay. Thank you, sir. Thank  
5 you for your testimony.

6 MR. SCHMIDT: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yes, go ahead.

8 MR. WATROUS: Madam Chair, I have no other  
9 customers signed up on this list.

10 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Let's go back through the  
11 first three customers who maybe they are on the  
12 line now.

13 MR. WATROUS: Lozell Bennett, and up next  
14 would be Patricia King.

15 Lozell Bennett, are you there?

16 Patricia King, followed by Porsha  
17 Gathers-Grossett.

18 Patricia King, are you there?

19 Porsha Gathers-Grossett, are you on the line?

20 CHAIRMAN SMITH: All right. I don't think  
21 there is anybody else -- anybody else left on the  
22 line, so -- and we don't have any exhibits, so I  
23 think -- well, thank you -- thank you to those  
24 customers who called in and participated. Your  
25 comments are very important, and we appreciate you

1 taking the time to participate in this customer  
2 service hearing.

3 Any closing remarks, Commissioners?

4 Seeing none, we are adjourned. Thank you very  
5 much.

6 (Proceedings concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

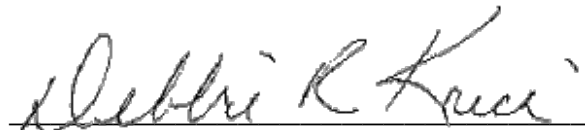
STATE OF FLORIDA )  
COUNTY OF LEON )

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 8th day of April, 2026.



DEBRA R. KRICK  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
COMMISSION #HH575054  
EXPIRES AUGUST 13, 2028