Case no. 81,076

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of

Joint Petition of Florida Power :
Corporation and Sebring Utilities :
Commission for Approval of Certain :
Matters in Connection with Sale of :
Assets by Sebring Utilities :
Commission to Florida Power :
Corporation.

DOCKET NO. 920949-EU

ORIGINAL

PROCEEDINGS:

SEBRING SERVICE HEARING

BEFORE:

CHAIRMAN THOMAS M. BEARD

DATE:

Wednesday, November 4, 1992

TIME:

Commenced at 1:00 p.m. Concluded at 6:15 p.m.

PLACE:

Sebring Civic Center 355 West Center

Sebring, Florida

REPORTED BY:

LOIS M. GILLIAM

Deputy Official Court Reporter

Polk County

Debra B. Coker, RPR

Official Court Reporter

APPEARANCES:

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(904)488-7464, as counsel to the Commissioners.

ALSO PRESENT: JOSEPH JENKINS, BILL BERG, CONNIE KUMMER, LEE COLSON, BEVERLY DEMELLO.

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EXHIBITS

ADMITTED Petition, October 19, 1992 Letter dated November 4, 1992, PSC Petition, Objection to Proposed Transition Rate Letter from Mrs. Ray Senkpiel to CURE Statement of Mr. Pollard November 4, 1992 Statement of Bill Van Baalen 1989, 1990, 1991 tax assessments of home of Donald Darling

PROCEEDINGS

(Hearing commenced at 1:00 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Good afternoon. My name is Tom Beard, and we've come down here today for one primary purpose and that is to hear from you, let me see how you feel about Florida Power Corporation. I think there were some questions from some people as they came in, it was my understanding, about the purchase of a water company, and I don't know anything about that.

So if you're here on that issue I'll be glad to listen to you, but we probably ought to talk about that on the break because that's not what's at issue today.

What we're going to do is I need to get a few formalities out of the way as far as reading the notice. Have you got the notice?

MS. KUMMER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. We may handle that later.

What we're going to want to do for the purposes of the record for this case is have individuals, anybody that wants to talk, come forward to the microphone and I will take you in order. We'll get a list. And we will do this: I will ask everybody that intends to come forward if you will at one time, to stand and I will swear you in. I don't want to intimidate anybody. We try to keep this as informal as possible. But to make it a part of the

official record we need to do that, okay?

Now, a couple of things: One, some people are not real comfortable talking into microphones and standing up in front of a crowd, and we understand that and we will try to make it as easy as possible. So if somebody comes forward and says basically the same thing that you would say, and you're not real comfortable in front of a microphone, if you want to just come forward then when it's your turn and say, I agree with that person, I adopt their testimony, you can do that.

Or if you want to fill out that form, put your comments in writing and sign it, you'd feel more comfortable, you can do that.

Bottom line is we're here to hear from you about this issue of the sale of Sebring Utilities to Florida Powee Corporation.

I guess that's everything we need to do in advance, so let's go ahead and get started. When I call out your name, if I make a mistake I apologize. I will do the best to get it right as I can. Okay.

Al Johnson. While Mr. Johnson is coming up, if everybody else that intends to testify today would stand and we'll swear everybody at one time, if you will.

Go ahead and come up to the microphone right there.

(Witnesses collectively sworn.)

CHAIRMAN BEARD: And as you come forward, if you would, when I call you, for the record, if you would state your name and spell your last name for the court reporter so we can get that correct. Okay?

Go ahead, Mr. Johnson.

AL JOHNSON

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS JOHNSON: My name is Al Johnson. The last is spelled just like any other, J-o-h-n-s-o-n. That's the last of the Johnsons and the first of the Smiths.

I'm here to represent Sebring Village in the matter of discrimination between Sebring Utilities and Florida Power.

Now, Florida Power came into our park over a year ago and changed every transformer, every line, and it was done over a year ago and we are still under Sebring Utility rates, and we think it's very unfair. And I might quote this that I wrote to you, sir. Do you mind if I read the letter I wrote to you?

CHAIRMAN BEARD: No, sir, I don't mind at all.
WITNESS JOHNSON: "I'm writing this letter about

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the flagrant disregard of 366-02 of the Public Utilities Chapter 366, definition of public utilities by SUC.

"We are Florida Power and we pay SUC rates. say it's not fair, and we want relief from these exhorbitant rates so we will be equal to Florida Power rates which is also in the park. We have never been able to get the right answer.

"Enclosed you will find a copy of the order issued by your office. But after over a year the park's residents are one-third Florida Power and two-thirds SUC. Every new home that comes in enjoys Florida Power low rates. We are looking forward to your coming to Sebring around November the 4th.

"We want to apologize for not having an attorney but we are all retired, and to be perfectly honest about it, can't afford one. We will have the appropriate witnesses and we seek openness that will give us a chance to be heard. Thanking you in advance, we are the residents of Sebring Village, 4343 Schumacher Road, Sebring Florida 33872.

"We have between 300 and 400 in our park and we are proud of it. Looking forward to an answer, I am respectfully, Al Johnson, 4343, 200M Schumacher Road."

I want to thank you for your letter and putting us on the docket up there. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Yes, sir.

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WITNESS JOHNSON: We consider you people down here as our safety net or you wouldn't be here. People at Sebring Village look on you as our safety net, and we're going to treat it that way.

We have a letter from Sebring Utilities we got in February 1991.

"We are taking this opportunity to make you aware of an order issued by the Florida Public Service Commission affecting certain customers with Sebring Utilities Commission and Florida Power Corporation. Under the terms of the order both utilities will remove duplicating electrical facilities from the service area of the other utility in certain areas of Highlands County. This will be accomplished with as little inconvenience to you as possible."

Sir, would you like to have a copy of this?

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Yes, if you would.

WITNESS JOHNSON: I brought you a copy.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: We'll have it for the court reporter so we'll have it in the record.

WITNESS JOHNSON: Okay. "You will continue at this time" -- I want to emphasize this -- "You will continue at this time to be a customer of Sebring Utilities, even though the facilities used to provide your service will be owned by Florida Power Corporation. You will continue

one in my office.

receiving monthly billing from Sebring Utilities and should continue to direct all inquiries in service-related problems to Sebring Utilities. Sebring Utilities and Florida Power plan to complete this project within the next few months. If you have any questions or need more information, please call Al Morris."

We think that we're being discriminated and have been for over a year. Under Section 366-02, definitions as used in the chapter. Public utilities means every person, corporation, partnership, association, or other legal entity -- and would you like to have a copy of this, sin?

CHAIRMAN BEARD: It's not necessary. I have

WITNESS JOHNSON: All right. -- and their lessees, trustees, or receivers supplying electricity or gas, natural, manufactured or similar gaseous substance to or for the public.

"Electric utility means any municipal electric utility investor, investor-owned electric utility or rural electric cooperative which owns, maintains, or operates an electric generation, transmission or distributing system within the state.

"366-03. Each public utility shall furnish to each person applying therefor reasonably sufficient, adequate and efficient service upon terms as required by

the Commission. No public utility shall be required to furnish electricity. No public utility shall make or give any undue or unreasonable preference or advantage to any person on locality or subject, the same to any undue or unreasonsable prejudice or disadvantage in any respect."

We rest on that. We think we are being discriminated. To prove it we have been under these rates for a year and no relief in sight. And Florida Power has taken good care of it, and we'd love to get under Florida Power at their going rates of \$72, not at the rate they want.

There is a difference. Do not be misled by the proposed sale of Sebring Utility's electric facilities to Florida Power Corporation. This proposal proposes to change nothing except the letterhead on your bill. Your electric rate will remain basically the same. I have here some letterheads that will just about cover that.

In Sebring Village SUC has no facilities and provides no service but collects electric usage revenue. Is this legal?

In Sebring Village all the electric consumers are served by Florida Power Corporation. Some are billed by SUC and some are by FPC. If you are billed by SUC you pay 55.6 percent more for Florida Power service than those receiving the same service from the same source but billed by FPC.

I'd like to have an answer on that.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Well, I can't tell you off the top of my head the company. I don't know if you all are familiar with Sebring Village specifically. I'm assuming there was some form of territorial disagreement or agreement that was ultimately settled by the Commission. Can you help me with that a little bit?

MR. FAMA: My name is Jim Fama and I'm an attorney for Florida Power Corporation. I believe that the letter you're referring to was sent out by Sebring Utilities Commission referred back to Commissioner Bower approving --

FROM THE AUDIENCE: We can't hear back here.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Talk a little closer to the mike,

if you will.

MR. FAMA: I believe the letter that the gentleman is referring to was sent by Sebring Utility Commission to its customers, and that letter cites an order of the Commission approving a settlement of a territorial dispute between Florida Power and Sebring Utility Commission.

And in that settlement Sebring backed out. I think that your neighborhood, it's facilities that were duplicative of Florida Power Corporation facilities and left just its meters to be served, and to serve the

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customers and this resident. And the idea there was to remove duplicative facilities and have the economic efficiency that the cost savings associated with that removal. But those customers in question still remain Sebring customers and that's why the meters were left there.

Those were the terms of the settlement, and that settlement was approved by the Commission.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: How long was that to continue? Was it indefinite?

MR. FAMA: The terms of that settlement are 15 years. Over the term of the settlement there is some attrition process whereby Florida Power and Sebring exchange customers as Sebring customers leave their I would need the help of one of our people residences. to be able to describe that more specifically.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Mr. Johnson, if memory serves me correct, and you all can check me, I came to the Commission in March of '87. If my memory serves me correct, well before I got there Sebring and Florida Power Corporation were in a territorial dispute. Like I said, if memory serves me correct.

WITNESS JOHNSON: Right.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: And it's been going on for years and years and years.

WITNESS JOHNSON: Right, right. And we've been

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paying.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: And it is my hopes, and I can't tell you what the outcome of this case will be until I've heard the case. But one of the outcomes of this case will be to put a final end to that dispute and put a final end to having two sets of power poles running down the same road.

In this case, I can tell you my memory of the case -- and I've seen a bunch of territorial disputes in the last six years -- was probably one of the worst cases of having service running down the road right across the street from each other. And that's the thing we want to end, because that does cost you more money ultimately.

I can't answer you exactly what will be the outcome for Sebring Village in this case until we look at the specifics of that area and how they would be treated.

WITNESS JOHNSON: Um-hum.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: But I am well aware of the dispute that's gone on, and I didn't think -- I was glad to see that particular case finally end, because I thought it was going to outlive me, quite frankly.

witness Johnson: Well, we think it's going to outlive us unless something is done about it. I haven't any answer yet to the discriminatory tactics that they're using on us. In over a year we've been paying SUC rates. I don't want to bring it up every time, but we're paying

SUC rates with Florida Power service. Now, we're proud of their service. They do fine. But we don't have two lines in there. We have Florida Power.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay.

WITNESS JOHNSON: Why can't we be charged
72 cents in the front of the park the same as it is in the back? We're using the same facilities. I just would like to have an answer to that.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Well, I think the answer, whether it's one you want to hear or not, is that as a part of trying to settle this argument that's been going on for years and years that there was a compromise reached. And obviously it doesn't satisfy you. That some customers, that is, for example, if you were to move out of where you are and somebody else were to come in to that place, as that new customer comes on that customer would become a Florida Power customer.

WITNESS JOHNSON: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: That's not the case?

WITNESS JOHNSON: I'm sorry, sir. That's where the discrimination part comes in. If I move out of my house, the next man that comes in pays SUC rates.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: They do?

WITNESS JOHNSON: Yes, sir, they do.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay.

1	WITNESS JOHNSON: Every one.
2	CHAIRMAN BEARD: Well, I don't
3	WITNESS JOHNSON: Every new home that comes in
4	pays Florida Power rates.
5	CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay.
6	WITNESS JOHNSON: Like I say, I would like to
7	have a good concrete answer to the discrimination part,
8	that's all.
9	CHAIRMAN BEARD: Well, I don't have the details
10	for you today.
11	WITNESS JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah.
12	CHAIRMAN BEARD: I can assure you that we will
13	look at that question.
14	WITNESS JOHNSON: I just want to emphasize that
15	this is what we're under for over a year, and we don't know
16	whether it's going to be two or three more years.
17	CHAIRMAN BEARD: Well, we will certainly look
18	at that as a part of this case.
19	WITNESS JOHNSON: As I say, you came here as a
20	safety net and we're proud to have you.
21	CHAIRMAN BEARD: Yes, sir.
22	WITNESS JOHNSON: We're glad to have you. And
23	I'm sure that you will take care of this. That's what
24	you're for. Because we can see a fine example. The
25	Utilities Commission couldn't sit in with FUC because they

were too busy making money. So if the Florida Utilities

Commission had set with the SUC -- but they're too busy

making money. If Florida Utilities Commission had set with

SUC we would have had the same rates as Florida Power.

And that's what you fellows are, all of you, is our safety

net. And if we didn't have you, and I've known many times

that you're not afraid to rap TEKO and you're damned sure

not afraid to rap Florida Power.

You just keep right on rapping and we'll be with you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. Thank you.

WITNESS JOHNSON: That's about all I've got.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Yes, sir. Thank you.

WITNESS JOHNSON: Do any of you fellows have anything?

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Well, we've got more coming.

I'll call them out.

WITNESS JOHNSON: Okay.

BRUCE WOOD

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS WOOD: My name is Bruce Wood, W-o-o-d.

I'm the district customer service manager for United

Telephone Company.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: You're going to have to get a little closer to the microphone. This crowd wants to hear what we've got to say up here.

WITNESS WOOD: I'm the district customer service manager for United Telephone Company of Florida.

My offices are in Avon Park. Avon Park district includes all of Highlands County and specifically the Sebring area, and we're a customer of Sebring Utilities.

I'm here to speak in behalf of Florida Power and the purchase of the Sebring Utilities' electric system because it would be beneficial to my company in terms of ease of operation in dealing with one utility instead of two, in terms of coordinating restoration following natural disasters. It would also be beneficial to us in a modest way in terms of reduced rates as we understand the proposed rates to be in the short term, and in the long term post-transition fee of being even more savings.

We also believe that it is important to us as a company and to our customers because the current rate structure as it exists is a drag on economic development for this area. We think the lower utility rates initially and in particular the long haul will improve the prospects with regard to that area.

Florida Power has demonstrated in other areas

where we are co-located and served, did get very involved in economic development and community affairs. They do a good job. We believe that if that were the case in Sebring we could expect similar results. Certainly the status quo, in our opinion, is not a good scenario, and we'd like to see that changed and improved. So we're very much in favor of the change.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

WITNESS WOOD: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Harold Seaman.

HAROLD SEAMAN

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS SEAMAN: My name is Harold Seaman,
S-e-a-m-a-n. I am a resident of District 6 Mobile Home
Owners of Florida. We cover four counties and one of them
includes Highlands County. The number of persons in the
residential area where Sebring Commission is supplying
electric current have joined with the mobile home residents.
We call our group The Action Group. I am the chairman of
this group.

Our stand is, No. 1, that we do not want to pay this Sebring Utilities debt. There are nine persons on

our steering committee. Public Service Commission has the names of those people on the steering committee I have filed with the Commission concerning these people.

In addition to the steering committee this stack of petitions that I have signed here represents who I -- these people are all signed petitions and there's several thousand there, believe me. We do not have anything against Florida Power. We just don't want to pay Sebring Utilities' debt in order to get the Florida Power current.

We have been at the mercy of the Sebring Council and Sebring Utilities Commission management. They call the shots. We live out in the county. We have no vote. The City of Sebring does the voting and we have nothing to say about it. And there is somewhere around 60 percent of these customers that are out in the county.

We believe that the State of Florida owes us an electric company that can be assigned to our area that can and will furnish our residents with comparable electric rates to our neighbors of which we have not had.

We believe that it is not the American way for two companies to get together and decide to divide up the customers and say who gets what, which one goes where.

We seem to be second-class citizens as far as the mobile home people are concerned because we have a sizeable number of our group that has been put on Sebring Utilities.

These are some of the things we'd like some answers for. As far as we're concerned, most of these people are senior citizens. We've paid our debts, we've tried to pay them all during our lives up to this time. We came to Florida to retire and not to pay someone else's debts that's been created without our knowledge.

Remember that when we're talking about what has been filed, as I understand it, the sale of this Sebring Utilities to Florida Power, it doesn't make any difference whether you have been on Sebring Utilities one month or ten years, you're going to have to pay that surcharge. To me and to most all of these people that we have on this, this is an unfair situation.

We have, as I said before, nothing against Florida Power. Our thought is this: We don't owe it. And I'm sure that Florida Power's customers, who are present customers do not owe it. But let's face it, Florida Power is an investment company. They have investors. They have their stockholders.

We're going to pay \$38 million plus 8 percent over 15 years. At the end of that 15 years it's turned over to Florida Power. I wish I had stock in a company like that. Somebody else is going to pay that.

This to me and all of our signers is an unfair and discriminating situation. We're asking that this not

happen. We don't want to pay this debt. And as I said before, I think there are certain other situations that can be drawn up as far as the Public Service Commission to give us a company that's comparable to Florida Power, if not Florida Power, without paying this surcharge.

I'm not going to get into any statistics because as I understand today we have no right to talk or challenge anybody else who stands up here and talks. You folks do have that chance. But what I have to present regarding these statistics, I think we can come back and show you in Tallahassee, where I hope to be, that it is a discriminating factor and that we do not want to pay this debt. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Mr. Bucky Kahn.

A. J. "BUCKY" KAHN

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS KAHN: Mr. Beard, I'm A.J. "Bucky" Kahn.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: You're going to have to get

closer to that microphone, sir, so we can hear you.

WITNESS KAHN: I'm A.J. "Bucky" Kahn, K-a-h-n.

I happen to be a citizen of Sebring, which I feel that some of these people that have been complaining for a long time have an opportunity to come into the City of Sebring through

annexation and then they have something to complain about the rates.

I have a few concerns. One is the sale of the water system from the Sebring Utilities Commission to the City of Sebring at four times book value. The city would have to finance that amount, and the present rate of the water and the other facilities that they have would certainly have to go up.

The sale of the utilities as proposed by Florida Power is at net net book value. I don't see any equity in that type of a proposal.

I know I wouldn't sell a business that I owned at net book value if I had an opportunity to sell it for something more than book value. And I think that that is certainly worthy of consideration.

We would have 15 years of paying our debt on Florida Power and then wind up with nothing, plus higher electric and water and sewer, utility rates.

The utilities do belong to the property owners and it does not belong to the rate payers.

I don't believe that the territorial dispute has anything to do with the purchase by Florida Power of the Sebring Utilities Commission. They started that 11 years ago, they're still fussing about it. And if they think they can wait until the sale goes through and then it will

all be settled, I think they have something else to consider there.

I do encourage a no sale and Sebring annexation for the people that are on the outside. One of the problems which we had was created by the legislature when the Southern Company was given permission to provide power at very reduced rates, and reduing the capabilities of our new plant to pay the original debt. And that's what caused our problems to start with.

I certainly thank you for the opportunity to be here and hope you take a lot of things into consideration. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: We'll do that, Mr. Kahn.
Mr. G. C. Parker.

G.C. PARKER

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS PARKER: I'm Gerry Parker, P-a-r-k-e-r. Would you like a copy of what I'm going to say?

CHAIRMAN BEARD: That would be fine. If you'd like, when you get done just put it up here for the court reporter.

WITNESS PARKER: She might not be able to

understand me.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: She's pretty good.

WITNESS PARKER: I'm a county rate payer to

Sebring Utilities for water and electric service. I am

against this proposed sale of Sebring Utilities to Florida

Power.

This proposed \$38 million loan at 8 percent for 15 years means \$3,040,000 a year and \$45,600,000 interest alone in 15 years. This is \$7,600,000 more than the loan. This \$38 million loan plus \$45,600,000 is equal to \$83,600,000. Florida Power gets the interest instead of the bondholders, plus the revenue from the thousands of customers. Instead of a \$38 million debt they have an \$83 million debt.

This transition means two different rates for Florida Power customers which only means trouble. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Ed Blythe.

They must teach handwriting in Sebring better than they do everyplace else because I can read everybody's name.

That's unusual. You all do good.

ED BLYTHE

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the state of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS BLYTHE: We just want to make sure you don't miss anything.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: There you go.

WITNESS BLYTHE: My name is Ed Blythe, B-l-y-t-h-e.

I don't oppose the sale of Sebring Utilities to Florida

Power, I do oppose paying off their debts. As Mr. Johnson

stated in his opening address at the beginning of the

meeting, the Sebring Utilities has been too busy making

money to listen to us. I know they weren't listening then.

I don't know if they're listening now. They should be.

They contend that it's an ultimatim. If we don't sell our power company to Florida Power then we're going to charge you \$1.56 for the same kilowatt hours.

Mr. Wood stated, as other big companies would look after their interest, it's for his benefit. It costs him less.

As Mr. Seaman stated, I don't think we should have to pay the debt for these people. If I was in business and was on the verge of bankruptcy nobody's going to bail me out and I don't think we should bail them out. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Kathleen Lyons.

KATHLEEN LYONS

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

witness Lyons: I'm Kathleen Lyons, and I'm a resident of Sebring. I have been on Sebring Utilities for 42 years now, and since 1987 my utilities seem to be going higher and higher. I'm on a low fixed income and it is hard for me to come up with my utilities bill. Just me alone is all I have.

My husband passed away in '87, and since then my utility bill has been anywhere from \$100, \$135, \$140 a month, and it's only me there and I only have an electric fan and a TV and a refrigerator. Can you think that my electric bill should go that high? I'm for Florida Power all the way. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Mr. and Mrs. Lipinski.

CHET LIPINSKI

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS LIPINSKI: My name is Chet Lipinski and
I am for the sale to Florida Power, but I am not for being
discriminated against. I live in an area that consists of
probably 25 homes. And when I signed for the electricity
I was told I had to sign with Sebring Utilities, therefore,

I did it. But if it had been a little while longer, out of 25 homes I've learned that there was one that was still getting Florida Power.

So I wondered why and if it was true. Well, I learned it was true because I personally talked to the people there. And at that time when they were granted this privilege, we already had been assigned to this district. So while we were assigned a district, had to go to this district, they managed to get on Florida Power.

Now, I called, went through the chain of command, started with Florida Power, talked to somebody there, went higher in Florida Power and talked to them, went higher than that and talked to one of the commissioners, went higher than that and ended up calling the Commission in Tallahassee. I didn't get anywhere.

So what these people told me was that they were told when they bought their lot, or maybe when it was built by the developer, one of them, that they would be given Florida Power.

well, they tried not to give it to them but they got themselves a lawyer and somehow or other ended up on Florida Power. I think that's damned discrimination. And as I say, I was for the sale. That's all I have.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay.

WITNESS LIPINSKI: But I have spoken to other

people too, and this is not uncommon. I don't have any names or anything, but I've been talking to several people for the three years I've been here, that their area has about the same situation every now and then.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Mr. Lipinski, I don't know the specifics of this case, but I know that on every instance that I'm aware of there are assigned territories and if you're in --

WITNESS LIPINSKI: I'm in the same territory.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: And where the assigned

territory is, I don't care how many lawyers you get, if
you're in the assigned territory you will be served by
whomever.

WITNESS LIPINSKI: Okay.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I don't know the situation,

if the line happens to come through there or what, but -
WITNESS LIPINSKI: That's true, and that's what

I expect. But they came in after the territory was assigned

and they are in this territory and they managed to get

favoritism, whatever, they got it.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I'd have to look at the specifics of the case, but --

WITNESS LIPINSKI: If you want to I will get their name and address and I will send it to you and you can talk to the people personally.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay.

WITNESS LIPINSKI: All right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Audrey Simonetti.

AUDREY SIMONETTI

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS SIMONETTI: I'm Audrey Simonetti, and a resident of Sebring. I've been a resident of Sebring --

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Could you spell your last name, ma'am, please?

WITNESS SIMONETTI: S-i-m-o-n-e-t-t-i.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thanks.

WITNESS SIMONETTI: I have been a resident of
Sebring about 12 years. And when I first came here I was
unaware that there was three electric companies and went
to the wrong one first. Then I went to Sebring and put
down my deposit. The first thing I found out I didn't get
any interest on my money that I gave them. So my experience
with the electric around here has been very bad.

And nobody told me about this tremendous debt

we had when I bought my house. Had I known I wouldn't have

bought my house. Now everybody seems to know about it.

If you have a house you can't sell it because nobody wants

to buy Sebring Utilities.

I am not against Florida Power but I am against the transition fee that they're charging. And I keep being told, well, it's going to be less. This is questionable, and it still is not that much less because, as he said, the water rates will go up when they sell that.

So I'm just stuck. I can't move and I have to stay. There's nothing I can do about it. But I don't feel I should pay somebody else's debt. I had nothing to do with incurring this debt.

That's all I have to say.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

WITNESS SIMONETTI: One more thing. By the time the debt is paid 15 years from now I probably won't be on earth so it doesn't matter.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Blaine King.

BLAINE KING

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS KING: I didn't want to speak, I just signed one of those things.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. We're not going to make you come down here if you don't want to.

William Platania. Did I get that right?

WILLIAM PLATANIA

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

witness platania: My name is William Platania and I am a resident of Sebring for the past two-and-a-half years. P-l-a-t-a-n-i-a.

I moved to Sebring because I am seventy and I am retired. I too did not know that Sebring Utilities had such a fantastic debt, with competent planning and competent selling of the utilities as they did come up.

I don't usually get too much involved in politics or in things like this. But being on a fixed income it's increasingly becoming a bad problem trying to keep up.

when I was working I had invested in some bonds and in stocks, and nobody guaranteed me that I was going to make the kind of money that the bondholders for Sebring Utilities are making and will make off of their investments. To guarantee a bondholder that no matter what happens they are going to get their money and that whoever else has to pay for that, is bound by that for the next 15 years, I think is atrocious. I think we are being penalized, I think we are being discriminated against. We were not

here to make the debt, and from what I understand we are not even involved. The community was not even involved in a say as to whether the plant should be made and built. Granted, there was a problem with Southern Utilities that got lower rates.

I'm not opposed to the sale of the company to Florida Power. People I know that are on it are quite pleased with their service and also with their rates. I am dead set against my having to pay a transition fee that's going to outlast me, and that I have to pay that each and every month.

As far as I'm concerned, Sebring Utilities is a business. The bondholders are in a risky area when they put their money up. They've already gotten their money back. As far as I'm concerned, I'm for putting the utilities up for bankruptcy and let the chips fall where they may. And if Florida Power can come in and buy it at a cheaper rate, the bondholders are the ones that have to share the burden of not getting additional monies back, above and beyond the interest that they've gotten for their initial investment then so be it.

I wish that the rest of us had that kind of a guarantee in buying bonds. I like the City of Sebring.

I had my choice when I retired and I scouted the east coast and the west coast and down towards Miami and up

towards Orlando, did quite a thorough investigation of it.

I found that the people of Sebring were very pleasant. It
was a nice laid-back community similar to the town that I
came from in New Jersey, and we decided, my wife and I,
that we wanted to live here and be a part of the community.

We did not feel we were going to be -- when we purchased a home we did not feel that we were also buying into a huge debt that we would have nothing to say about.

I hope that a reasonable solution can come of this so that the bondholders lose and the City of Sebring and their people, the residents, are not burdened by this huge amount of debt that we had nothing to do with.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Before you get away. You had a question? This is Martha Brown, who is one of the attorneys for the Florida Public Service Commission, and she had a question.

MS. BROWN: Mr. Platania, may I ask you a couple of questions on a slightly different subject?

WITNESS PLATANIA: Sure.

MS. BRONW: You're aware, I'm sure, that Sebring customers as a group consume less electric energy than any groups of consumers in the state, is that correct? Are you aware of that?

WITNESS PLATANIA: You mean per house?

MS. BROWN: Yes.

WITNESS PLATANIA: Maybe it's because we're older senior citizens that can't afford to run the fans and the air conditioners and the appliances.

MS. BROWN: Yes, I agree that that may well be the reason. It still shows that as a group you're pretty darn good at managing energy conservation, don't you think?

WITNESS PLATANIA: We certainly try. We have to be. We have no choice.

MS. BROWN: I think so, too. It appears that way to us. And we would like to take a little time to explore this fact as it relates to the Commission's decision in this case.

Would you describe for us what you do to conserve electricity?

WITNESS PLATANIA: When I leave a room I shut
it off. I haven't used my air conditioner for the past
six months, at least six months. There are times -- when
I first came down I thought this is great, lots of sunshine,
get out in the yard, work, enjoy, come in at night. Now
the heat, I don't care in the daytime. In the evening when
I sit down finally at maybe 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock and I'm
watching TV or doing some of the things I may enjoy doing,
then I figure I should be comfortable, crank up the air

conditioner. Well, that was great until I got my third bill. My third bill was \$210. That automatically put me on a conservation program.

MS. BROWN: Any other things you do to conserve?

Do you turn your hot water heater off?

heater down to 120. I couldn't scald myself if I had to.

And I take -- I draw the curtains during the day so the sun does not come in. When it cools off -- I had installed ceiling fans. When it starts to cool off early in the evening I open up the windows and turn on the fans and I circulate from that side. When it comes morning, 8:00 or 9:00 o'clock, I close the house up again and draw the curtains so that we don't have to worry about trying to put air conditioning into the place.

I don't use -- I try and stay out of the refrigerator or opening up the freezer any more than I have to. I don't use my electric drier. I can't even go to the gas company and switch. I was going to go switch all my appliances to gas to try and conserve more.

MS. BROWN: Why can't you do that?

WITNESS PLATANIA: Because they're not there yet.

They've been telling me for eight months, "Don't worry

about it, Mr. Platania, we're going to have gas." They

just ran the pipe up next to me. I checked into it several

times. "Well, we haven't got the other people hitched up yet so we can't turn yours on, or even tell you when we're going to get it."

MS. BROWN: What gas company is this?

WITNESS PLATANIA: The Stoker Fuel. They just put lines -- I think it was last summer -- put lines up Valencia Avenue to the circle and back out to a proposed area. And they assured us that we were going to be able to draw gas off of there. "Don't worry, we will have a representative come over and we will make you a good deal on getting gas to your place." Because I had gone out and asked them about it.

I went out and I inquired about gas stoves, gas driers, gas air conditioner. Well, forget it. It was just an exercise in futility. The gas line is there but we can't draw gas off of it. We are trapped with Sebring Utilities and whoever the people are that made these utterly obnoxious and really uneducated decisions to build a plant on the assumption that they were going to make a large amount of money out of this, should have known better. They certainly did not do their homework. Because they know that there's a lot of other companies. And not just here. All through TEKO and the other pipelines that come down that are going to burn either gas or they're burning coal. They're not sticking with the rest of this.

MS. BROWN: I just have one more question.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Before you do that, Stoker Fuel?

WITNESS PLATANIA: Yes, sir. Coker, excuse me.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Coker?

WITNESS PLATANIA: My hearing is going bad, too.

MS. BROWN: Mr. Platania, you described what

MS. BROWN: Mr. Platania, you described what you do to conserve energy. Are you of the opinion that your actions are similar to the actions of the other people in your community?

WITNESS PLATANIA: Yes, absolutely.

MS. BROWN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Norbert Walz.

NORBERT WALZ

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS WALZ: My name is Norbert Walz, W-a-l-z.

I'm a business person, a developer and resident in this

area. I came here about 14 years ago, built several

restaurants, built a restaurant in Sebring and put it on

SUC. I built one in Avon Park, put it on Florida Power.

The rate disparage between those two restaurants today is

\$18,000 a year.

Now, I'll tell you, \$18,000 a year, you know

that it doesn't cook one thing any better in Sebring than it does in Avon Park. My lights don't burn any brighter, they don't sparkle any more. I simply ended up with an \$18,000 higher bill. And you can't sell the product for more just because you're on SUC.

With the Florida Power proposal at least the Sebring store's rate would drop \$9,600 a year. It would be great to drop the entire \$18,000. It would be great if somebody else would make this problem go away. And of course, many of us feel we didn't do the investing and we shouldn't get stuck with paying somebody else's bill any more than we feel that we should get stuck with the savings and loan mess or many other problems that we as taxpayers and citizens get stuck with.

Short of if bankruptcy isn't an option the Florida Power proposal is certainly an improvement to what we now have. I think it's important that the name SUC be removed from the community. I think it is a detriment to the community. I have a development on the west end of Sebring Utilities. There were several years ago three developments there. Two of them no longer exist. In bankruptcy, out of business.

Where an area used to sell 60, 70 homes a year it is now selling five or six. When people come in one of the first questions they ask is what power company.

Now those people may be coming from Key West, they may be from Miami, they may be from Iowa or New York, but let me tell you they know about SUC. It's amazing but they know. Therefore, I think it's very important now that name cease to exist, that it doesn't become a problem in the development of our community.

I have about 28 apartments. I put gas hot water, gas driers in, because they're on Sebring Utilities. I still charge and have to charge less in rent than that same apartment that built on Florida Power lines. Because again, one of the first questions is what power company. Many times a phone call, after they find out which power company they hang up.

So my rates have to be lower, I have to compensate for the problem with the gas. And that's on bottled gas, so the rate difference is not as great as if we had gas lines or natural gas. But short of making it all go away, I think the Florida Power proposal certainly is an improvement over what we now have. We certainly don't want to continue living with the problem we have, and I think it's important that the name SUC cease to exist. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Marvin Kahn.

MARVIN KAHN

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS KAHN: Mr. Beard, my name is Marvin

Kahn, and one of the main purposes for me coming before you is to personally thank you for this occasion. I think it's a real event and so appropriate that a person as auspicious as you and coming from a board such as the Florida Power Service Commission to come to our little town and take up this problem. I really sincerely appreciate this, and give all of us an opportunity to speak.

And I know that you're sincere in your visit and I really appreciate it.

I'm interested in your pamphlet and that you've got several objectives, but your prime objective and the main one is to protect consumers from unreasonable rates in terms of service. And, Mr. Beard, we do need rate relief. This is a real problem. And that's something everybody in this room agrees with. We don't have any problem agreeing with that.

But I cannot go along with the deal that's trying to be cut here, because I honestly can't see that's going to give us rate relief. And my rationale and logic for not getting rate relief is -- I wish I had brought the full page newspaper, I'm sorry I didn't, that Florida Power

published to tell the citizens what kind of rate relief
we were going to get. But there is a difference in the
arithmetic. Maybe you saw it, if it was available to you.

But the point I'm making, that doesn't tell the whole story. It's no secret that Florida Power, like other power companies, their overhead continually goes up for whatever reason and they go and they get permission to have a rate increase, and recently they got a rate increase.

And I understand there's three phases of that rate increase. Part of it is in the bill now and we've got two more parts to go.

The point is, it's just reasonable, there's no secret in the future we're going to have rate increases based on Florida Power's cost of doing business. That's one thing that's going to affect us.

The next thing is that in order to consummate this deal that we've all talked about, Sebring has to overpay, the City of Sebring has to pay \$21 million for a water system based on business principles and criteria. It's not worth that. It means the city is going to go into excessive debt in order to purchase the water and get into other projects with this debt which is going to cause the rate payers to pay increased water and perhaps increased garbage, and it's not going to give us any significant rate reduction.

I don't understand the exact powers and the exact responsibilites you have to make the right kind of deal that would, you know, would really affect the rate payers. But what really needs to happen is Florida Power or whoever wants to buy this utility system needs to pay a fair price for it.

Now, \$16, \$17, \$18 million is not a fair price. It took them months and months to try to figure out what these poles and wires and trucks and stuff are worth and they finally came up with maybe \$17, \$18 million of depreciated book value. And that's what we're talking about.

But I'm talking about a business this past year that had a \$16.8 million revenue from electricity. And my arithmetic, using a 12 percent return, expecting that on that kind of income, well let's take off \$3 or \$4 million for normal operating expense -- and this is something I want everybody to understand.

termed to be bankrupt, but without the debt it's not bankrupt. Picture this: Without the debt, it's power poles and lines and hooked up to everybody's houses, we never missed a lick getting electricity, the electricity runs, all the lines are hooked up. Whoever buys it doesn't have to do a blessed thing. They don't have to buy anything

more, they don't have to fix anything. All they have to do is just start clicking the money off and getting it. And based on my arithmetic, if you divide 12 percent into what the income is, like if it were \$16.8, but let's take some off of it, this business is worth somewhere over \$100 million for a going operating business that will generate that much income.

Now, that's what we're talking about. How about us getting that? Let's pay all the debt off. Let's get what Florida Power's going to get. But this thing is being stolen.

And I know, Mr. Beard, with your goals and your mission and your fellow commissioners' mission, you don't want to do anything to help Florida Power steal this from us, and that's what they're doing. And maybe steal is too radical. Let's don't say steal, let's just say that since this controversy started several months ago, it's been extremely emotional. It was -- and people just passionately spoke before the city and the Utilities Commission.

we've been full of misunderstanding, personal animosity and just all kind of trouble and going on much worse than the territorial thing that you've been referring to. It's been much more petty and much more personal and much more political.

And one of the political decisions was to hurry

up and in an effort to not make an arbitrary decision they got involved in a procedure to come up with something like 17 -- in the details, they got involved in all the detail so they could come up with \$17 or \$18 million for a business that's worth over \$100 million.

So in a minute I'll be repeating myself and I don't mean to do that, but I do want to make the point that we do need rate relief. And I'm not objecting to selling it to Florida Power. I don't care who we sell it to. At one time I was a proponent for keeping it and refinancing the debt, but I don't need to own a utility company. We don't need one, we just need to be paid for it fairly and equitably.

And I know that you would be interested in that happening so we could really and truly get fair rates.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you, Mr. Kahn. Scott
Campbell.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE: He had to go.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: He did, okay. Rick Fournier.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE: He left with him, too.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Mary Faircloth.

MARY FAIRCLOTH

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the

State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS FAIRCLOTH: I'm Mary Faircloth,

F-a-i-r-c-l-o-t-h, and I'm a consumer of the Sebring

Utilities, between three and 4,000 kilowatt-hours every

month. So it costs me a lot of money. And I cannot tell

you that I'm really happy to be paying the transition rate,

but I'm willing to pay the transition rate if it will

absolve us from getting out from under the Sebring

Utilities Corporation. We'll begin to restore our community,

get our property values back again, and put us under a well
managed company that is regulated by the Public Service

Commission.

I have done some reading in the Bible and I have come up with a verse that is significant for my life. It says, "Let every man bear his own burdens." Now I feel like the burden and the problem that we have today is because those of us that are here complaining did not come into action a lot sooner. Had we gotten this particular group together way back when, we perhaps could have avoided the trauma that we have today.

So the people that are saying that they do not want to be discriminated against in our own community are actually saying in return that they are for reverse discrimination that will make the current members of

Florida Power pay for our mess.

Now we are members of the community, it is our problem, and I believe that we are the ones that need to bear the burden. And thank God we are told that we have a 15-year limitation on it.

And like I said, I don't like it but it is our problem and if we want out that's my rule and contention.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you one thing. We're here to hear from everybody. And the one thing we've got in this world is our God-given right to our opinion and I'm going to hear everybody's opinion, and I would ask you to respect everybody's opinion even if you don't agree with it just as we respect yours. That's only fair.

WITNESS FAIRCLOTH: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Wayne Thomas.

WAYNE THOMAS

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS THOMAS: My name is Wayne Thomas, I live here in Sebring. I've lived here for five years. I've been challenging the Sebring Utilities Commission per se three years this past month. And during that period of time it's

been the same ritual, same practice, talk and talk and talk and no action.

I moved in to Sebring and I was misled. The party
I purchased the property from, the day of closing said,
"We've got good deals." First, the day I purchased the
house the statement was, "We don't need air conditioning,
we enjoy the comfort of the fans." So that was the inception
of my planning.

I love Sebring, I've loved it for ten years. I couldn't retire until five years ago. I looked, I shopped this area for ten, twelve years and finally found just what I thought I wanted. I purchased a house, as I stated, found that the fans were efficient, satisfactory. On the day of closing I went over to the Florida Power and paid their final bill with the previous owner, a bill of \$88. And I thought, my God, that's cheap. I had been paying \$125 or \$135 formerly.

I had lived on the east coast and I was with Florida Power and Light, which is probably a good, efficient company. Not that Florida Power isn't. I've talked with these people, I respect them, I think they're a good company. But that is not solving our problem, ladies and gentlemen. Our problem goes much deeper than that.

To tell us that they're going to save us money, if you take \$108 you subtract \$75 as their approved

allowance the end of the following year, that comes down to \$33. And you pay the surcharge of \$22, that brings it down to \$11 we're saving. Now you go down and if -- I'm not saying this is positive -- but if we come up with the request -- or you come up with the request of letting Florida Power divide that \$6 charge between TEKO and themselves, if you allow that to happen, all well and good, that's the \$6 off. But if you don't allow it to happen that's another \$6 we'll be paying. That's been stated to us, positive. Now we're down to \$5.

Florida Power has stated in an article just three or four weeks back that if the growth plan in Sebring doesn't come up to what their expectations are, that then we will be increased on our surcharge.

Now if we're increased on our surcharge then we're hurting again.

Now we have one other problem. The City of Sebring, to try to negotiate, finalize this deal, agreed to purchase a water plant appraised value of \$4,000 -- excuse me -- \$4 million estimated value, offered to pay \$21.5 million, paying an additional \$3 million or thereabouts to bring it up to good standards.

So we're talking \$24 million. They say they're going to raise our rates approximately .60 a month. But raising our rates does not account for the \$24 million.

You divide that \$24 million with 12,500 customers or users and you come to another approximately \$17 a month that we will be paying for the next 15 years.

One way or the other we're going to be paying for it. They're not going to give it to us free. So now we come up to where we're down to 15, now we're up to 12. So we're going to be paying -- instead of paying \$108 we're going to be paying \$120. Does that make good sense?

Mathematically I can't see it.

Another factor to take into consideration:

Because of this Sebring Utilities thing and the fact that
a question came up with reference to how do I conserve on
electricity. I have a large house admittedly, I'm not
complaining about that. But I have an air conditioner,
three ton or three-and-a-half ton on the one side of the
unit. It's a single family unit, but I have divided air
conditioning. I have a three-and-a-half ton on oen side
and a five ton on the other side. I shut all these doors
and put cloth under the doors so there can't be any air
leakage and I just use the one unit, close up the entire
half of the house. That can be verified by the many
people that have seen it.

My bills run -- I wasn't here for three weeks last month and my bill run \$204. I wasn't in the house for three weeks. True, I had the air conditioning on at a

very high -- just to control the mildew, et cetera. Now this is absolutely ridiculous.

And certainly I think you can consider, there are other methods of making a deal on this utility and you can come out fairly reasonable.

I don't think -- not that I don't like Florida

Power. I'd have loved to be able to have them three years

ago. I asked Mr. Marz if I could get him to run a line,

I would pay to have the line run across the street. Because
they are on Florida Power over here, we're on Sebring

Utilities here. He said, "Tough. I'm sorry. I would
love to do it." He said, "I wouldn't even charge you.

You get it so it's possible." And obviously I called the
Public Service Commission and asked if it was possible and
I was told by one of your representatives no, because I

was in the wrong territory.

So under the circumstances we're all hurting.

When it comes to selling real estate we've got the same situation. You have a copy of two of my prospective customers or buyers, and in both instances -- and I can get much more confirmation than that. In both instances the comment was, "I love the house. The house is georgeous. But we can't see Sebring Utility bills."

So this is the kind of thing that we're going to contend with. That is not going to change. The minute

SUC isn't down there anymore or Sebring Utilities, that's not going to change. It's that what are you paying, are you paying a surcharge or are you on Florida Power where you don't pay the surcharge? So we're going to have the same problem not in the past, but still in the future for another 15 years. And I personally cannot see that it's conceivable.

I didn't want to go into this dissertation. I wanted to visit you in Tallahassee when the time is opportune. And certainly believe me, I'll be up there too.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Good.

WITNESS THOMAS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Let me ask you a question.

WITNESS THOMAS: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: You know, I don't meddle in the city's business and that kind of thing, but you say the assessed value is roughly \$4 million and they're paying \$21 million for the plant as is?

witness Thomas: That's what the bid was,
yes, sir. The bid was approximately \$4 million for the
plant the way it stood as an offer. A new plant, and this
was in records, too, they could build a brand new plant,
brand new lines, brand new everything, for \$20 million
maximum. They're paying \$24 million for this with all the
repair they're going to do.

25

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I don't understand why. 1 WITNESS THOMAS: I don't either. They said they 2 were doing it to help the sale of the utilities to Florida 3 That's black and white in the media, news media. Power. 4 CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. Do you have some questions? 5 WITNESS THOMAS: Any more questions? 6 MS. BROWN: Mr. Thomas, I have a couple more 7 conservation type questions to ask you. 8 WITNESS THOMAS: Certainly. 9 MS. BROWN: Does the Sebring Utilities Commission 10 have any energy conservation programs? 11 WITNESS THOMAS: Pardon? 12 MS. BROWN: Does the Sebring Utilities Commission 13 have any energy conservation programs? 14 WITNESS THOMAS: No, they do not, not that I 15 know of. 16 MS. BROWN: But many electric utilities in the 17 state, including Florida Power Corporation, do. 18 WITNESS THOMAS: I fully agree with that. 19 MS. BROWN: Have you investigated any of Florida 20 Power energy conservation programs? 21 WITNESS THOMAS: Well, I've been told by Mr. 22 Marz, who I respect, and he has told me that in my own 23

instance I would probably conserve as much as \$17 a month.

So that is over 3,000 kilowatts, that's only \$3 per thousand

kilowatts. So it doesn't make much difference. I mean, you know, you're going from one extreme to the other when you're talking efficiency here.

MS. BROWN: Well, you are aware that Florida

Power Corporation offers a variety of energy conservation -
WITNESS THOMAS: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

I was told from \$4 to \$17. I could only save \$4.

MS. BROWN: Overall?

WITNESS THOMAS: Yes, ma'am. So I mean that's no saving. It isn't a saving. I didn't go into detail about what my property was also. I just received in today's mail -- I have it in the car. I would be happy to bring it in to you -- my increase in coverage, insurance coverage on my home. To replace just the lived-in building is \$140,000 as the increase as of today. And I put it on the market for \$99,000 and I didn't get a suspect. I put it down to \$99,000 and I still haven't had a suspect. I'm down to \$88,000 now. And the real value on the property should be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$150,000.

It's 2,878 square feet. There's 4500 square feet under the roof.

MS. BROWN: So I gather it's your feeling that the energy conservation programs that Florida Power Corporation would offer you would not help you in any meaningful way?

WITNESS THOMAS: It would help a reasonable amount, but when you evaluate it --

MS. BROWN: Would you be willing --

WITNESS THOMAS: They do it by a thousand kilowatt hours. So you've got to evaluate that over 30,000 kilowatt hours.

MS. BROWN: If -- and I emphasize this as a big if -- if the Commission approves the Florida Power Corporation's acquisition would you be interested in investigating these conservation programs more, learning more about them?

WITNESS THOMAS: No.

MS. BROWN: No?

witness thomas: I'm convinced I am going to sell, come hell or high water, for only one reason. I cannot afford any more loss than I have taken already on my real estate. I put a new roof on, I've done everything else. It's an acre-and-a-half, it's a real well-built home. And this isn't only myself, please believe me. There are hundreds of people. And if the realtors would be realistic -- this gentleman just gave you some clear statements, this gentleman behind me, on what he is having to do for his rental clients, what he has had to do with purchasing appliances, et cetera. And everyone that is going to come here and tell you the truth has to come up

with the same thing. And you have a court reporter here taking our testimony, and I hope to tell you I am telling you the truth as I see it.

MS. BROWN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thanks.

WITNESS THOMAS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: John Jovich.

JOHN JOVICH

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS JOVICH: Mr. Chairman, members of the

Commission, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. My name

is John Jovich and I serve as the general manager of Lakeshore

Mall here in Sebring.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Spell your last name, please.

WITNESS JOVICH: My last name is spelled

J-o-v-i-c-h.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thanks. They want you to get a little bit closer to the mike so they can hear you better.

WITNESS JOVICH: Is that better?

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Yes, great.

WITNESS JOVICH: Good afternoon. I have served

during the past year as general manager of Lakeshore Mall. When I arrived here a year ago my first impression of Sebring was a very quaint promising community with much potential. And yet one of the things that I saw throughout the town both in business and residential areas were those signs up all over that read, "Sell SUC now."

I remembered that first impression. I think everyone here agrees with me that they won't forget that.

My company supplied me with the demographics for the Lakeshore Mall site, and I must be quite frank with you that they were very glowing with respect to the surrounding communities. The quality medical centers, the fine schools, the overall quality of life was very impressive, and it was that very reason why we chose to build a regional shopping center here.

But one of the few negatives of that confidential report did have to do with the high rates charged by Sebring Utilities at the time and now. And despite that we went ahead with our project. We're very proud of the shopping center. We hope it's contributing to the positive needs of the community and in its business future.

That's why I come here today, to let you know that I recently did some research with the assistance of both Sebring Utilities and Florida Power Company, and determined that based on the kilowatt information supplied

by both parties, the savings of this joint venture to the mall would be between some 35- and \$45,000. Now that may not sound like a whole lot of money to most businesses in this area, but much of those monies are spread out over back charges to our individual tenants. And of course to those tenants the savings will be greatly appreciated, and I believe will contribute further to our negotiations with more tenants for that site and more business and commerce for this area in the future.

So I come here to make this brief statement that on behalf of Lakeshore Mall and my company, C.B. Owen Associates, that we fully endorse and will assist in any way possible in this venture which we believe in the long run will greatly benefit not only Sebring and Avon Park and Lake Placid, but this whole central Florida region real estate, commercial, residential and so forth.

Again, I just came here to thank you for your fine efforts in that regard. I wish you much success, wish you well.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Let me ask you one real important question. We've got some time we may have to kill this afternoon.

Have you got any really good sales at the mall?
WITNESS JOVICH: Do you want a peeker?
CHAIRMAN BEARD: Just kidding.

witness jovich: I'm speaking very positively
here, though. I think very seriously we're excited about
this, what's happening here between SUC and Florida Power.
It stands for growth, it stands for the best of what we as
a community can do together to promote the best of commerce
and further industry and so forth.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

WITNESS JOVICH: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Mr. Stoecker, S-t-o-e-c-k-e-r.

MARSHALL STOECKER

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS STOECKER: Thank you very much. My name is Marshall Stoecker. I've been a resident of Sebring for over 21 years, and I am a member of the concerned citizens group of Sebring. As concerned citizens we are interested in the improvement and expansion of all facilities that will make Sebring a better place to live now and in the future.

As concerned citizens we are not against the sale of Sebring Utilities to Florida Power, but we do object with thousands of others to the purchase plan with this surcharge as proposed by Florida Power.

The plan is not only discriminatory but places a

financial burden on all of the 12,500 Sebring Utilities rate payers. The majority are retirees living on a fixed income and can ill afford the added expense which will be placed upon them by the surcharge or transitional charge which Florida Power calls it.

This transitional rate or surcharge is a discriminatory rate and is not in the best interests of Sebring Utilities rate payers. It does not give the Sebring Utilities consumers any substantial rate relief, and places them in bondage for a period of 15 years.

Utilities' assets at a depreciated book value, and no consideration for the 12,500 consumers as the purchase price. It's only for the facilities. The post-transitional rate or surcharge will be detrimental to existing and future rate payers in the Sebring area and will impact growth and property values in the area.

assets possible and to help Florida Power Corporation, our city council proposes to sell 30-year bonds in order to purchase the water system which we already own for the sum of \$21,500,000, which is three times its book value. This water system purchase will result in a 25-percent rate increase for water customers each year for the next several years. Frankly, between the Florida Power proposals and

our city council the rate payers will be taxed to the breaking point.

When the Florida legislature amended the Sebring Utilities Commission charter in 1991 it provided for a referendum to be held relative to any surcharge, thus permitting the consumer to vote on it. To date no mention has been made of a referendum.

Calling the surcharge a transitional rate is a subterfuge of the first order. There are other options available which would eliminate the need for a surcharge and give the rate payers immediate relief.

Option 1: Florida Power is proposing to the Public Service Commission a plan whereby they, FPC, will be permitted to spread the \$6 cost differential between TEKOs contract and their FPC production cost for 1,000 kilowatt hours over their entire customer base. If this thinking is good for the spread of power cost differential, why would it not be feasible for Florida Power Corporation to purchase all of Sebring Utilitits' assets, pay off the present bond indebtedness and spread the cost over their entire customer base?

This plan would accomplish the following: No. 1, it would eliminate the \$21.80 surcharge. No. 2, all Florida Power customers would be on a more equitable basis by paying identical rates. Item 3, the City of Sebring would not

purchase the water system for \$21,500,000, but could purchase it for possibly a book value of approximately \$7 million.

Option 2, the City of Sebring could take over the transmission and distribution system assets of the Sebring Utilities and negotiate for the sale of 30-year municipal bonds to pay off the present outstanding bonds.

This action would accomplish the following: 1, it would eliminate the \$21.80 monthly surcharge. 2, it would eliminate the purchase of the water system. 3, a lower interest rate on nontaxable municipal bonds. 4, the utilities rates comparable to other rates in Florida. Item 5, the retention of the present system of a single billing for power, water, trash pickup, taxes and so on. Item 6, the phasing out of the Sebring Utilities as we now know it.

As the city does not have the expertise to operate a utilities company, a contract could be negotiated and formalized with some electric power company to operate the utility system for the city on a contract basis. The city would still own the system and have a very valuable asset as the real profits are in the T and D system where you buy at wholesale and sell at retail to a captive number of customers which are always expanding as growth takes place.

Item 3, bankruptcy. This would not be simple and could hurt the rate payers and the city.

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Option 4, all of the Sebring Utilities' rate payers band together as a unit and refuse to pay the surcharge to Florida Power.

In view of the facts presented here today and the things that you've heard here today and the unexplored options available, we respectfully request that the petition designated as Docket 920949-EU of Florida Power and the Sebring Utilities Commission be denied. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

WITNESS STOECKER: I have one other thing. I also have a petition here with hundreds of verified names all objecting to the surcharge. With your permission I would like this entered in the file.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Good deal. We'll do it. Irene Van Dyke.

IRENE VAN DYKE

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS VAN DYKE: My name is Irene Van Dyke. didn't come prepared to speak today but I would like to have a question asked.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I'll try.

WITNESS VAN DYKE: What Florida Power is really

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buying is customers for their product, and I don't understand why they're not paying anything for those customers. It seems to me that that should be the main basis for the valuation of what they're buying.

I don't know whether this is the proper forum for that or not, but I would like to have the question asked.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Well, it's a proper question, but it's not one that I can answer yet. And that will be the purpose of the hearings that we're going to hold to find out exactly what the details of this contract are, are they good, are they bad, should this be approved or not.

A concern, and I'll tell you now, that runs through my mind, and some people spoke to it and some haven't, quite often with contracts, and like I said, I have not seen the details of the case yet. We will do that when we have the hearing. But to the extent that a contract is brought to us by two parties sometimes, I'm not saying that's the case here because I don't know the answer, we are limited to saying yes the contract is approved or no the contract is not. We may not be in a position of saying no, this contract is not approved and you will change it in such and such a way. We may be, and sometimes we have ways of saying this contract as it exists will not be approved.

However, if you brought us a contract that looked like this we'd be more apt to approve it. And then it's a

decision that those parties have to make if they want to do that or not. So my concern is, and I guess I'm hearing some of the answeers to my question, is to the extent that we only have two choices, yes or no. I think I'm hearing some people say that if you have to choose between approving this contract or going on with business as usual, I think I'm hearing those people say they would at least rather have that contract approved.

The last gentleman said I think no, and here are some alternatives that he would like to see happpen. So I'm hearing a mixed bag. But it's a question of concern that I have in looking at this. I don't have an answer for you yet. That will be the subject of the hearing. And I think you're going to have some people that are here today that intend to be in Tallahassee for that hearing as well.

WITNESS VAN DYKE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Yes, ma'am.

FROM THE AUDIENCE: I think what people have said is no.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. Don Darling.

DON DARLING

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

witness DARLING: Mr. Chairman, fellow staff members, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Don Darling, D-a-r-l-i-n-g, and I let all the girls call me Darling because that's my name.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: You lucky person.
WITNESS DARLING: Thank you.

I am a Sebring Utilities Commission rate payer living at 1520 Tenth Avenue, Sebring, Florida.

I am the co-chairman of Citizens for Utility
Rate Equity. CURE was formed in the summer of 1989 by our
chairman, Jim Flynn, and by Nancy Hawk, Pat Wilk, Kathy
Main, and the James Sacco family. All of these people are
Sebring area citizens and Sebring Utility rate payers.

Within the first month or so CURE attracted about 1,300 members, many of whom were present at four major public meetings hosted by CURE.

It is important for you PSC representatives to be aware that CURE asked at each of our public meetings if anyone was in favor of SUC rates or the continuation of SUC. Not one person ever spoke in favor of either.

Our organization is composed of private citizens and business people joined together to find a solution to what we believe is Sebring's No. 1 problem: SUC's exorbitantly high utility rates. CURE's single objective, as stated in its original position paper, was and is to

obtain electric rates comparable to Florida Power rates.

While CURE will be represented at the formal hearing in Tallahassee, I would like to share with you now some of our concerns as Sebring utility rate payers. While the problem of high electric rates in Sebring has been an ongoing problem since the early to mid eighties, it wasn't until CURE was formed that SUC rate payers banded together to solve the rate problem. It is CURE's opinion as stated in already written and submitted testimony, that all previous efforts to solve the Sebring Utilities' financial problems resulted only in raising rates.

Repeated refinancing benefitted only the consultants and the bond holders; and as a result, the SUC rate payers unwillingly assumed these costs plus the huge commissions paid to the bond brokers.

CURE cannot find any record of where any substantial effort was made to sell SUC until a continually angry customer base plus an absolutely disastrous financial future faced the SUC commissioners.

We believe that a sale to FPC is in the best interest of SUC rate payers and the surrounding area for various reasons.

We believe improper and uninformed financial management decisions have led to the situation where SUC rate payers have the highest electric rates in the state.

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If these rates go from the current \$107 per thousand kilowatt hours to the rate of \$151 as outlined in the testimony of Mr. Calhoun, these rates might well skyrocket the cost of our electricity to be the highest in the United States. These projected rates will make electric service unaffordable to the majority of SUC rate payers.

I'm sure the Public Service Commission is aware that Highlands County demographics show this is a rather low income area with many retirees on fixed incomes.

Another reason for the sale: Historically municipal utilities have only been brought into play when they would be useful to the public by providing better rates or service than the private sector. SUC fails the rate test miserably. It cannot begin to provide rates anywhere near as low as those of Florida Power. Remember, we have single working mothers trying to conserve on electric consumption who still have utility bills that require more than a week's pay so they can purchase SUC electricity, a basic necessity of life.

SUC rate payers should not have to make the choice between buying groceries or paying the electric bill. Elderly people dependent on medication should not have to cut back on their electric consumption because they can't afford both of these necessities of life.

SUC is not providing electric service at a fair

price. As it is shown in Ms. Holloway's testimony, SUC is taking about \$14,000 per day from the reserve fund to keep rates low during the pending sale.

I would like to quote a letter CURE received when CURE was formed. It is a perfect example of the many letters and hundreds of phone calls we have received calling for lower rates. This letter was sent in by Mrs. Ray Senkpiel, 1025 Happy Lane, Sebring, Florida 33870. And I quote, "My husband died March 1st. I am eighty years old. I would like to see electric bill lower, and not have to see our small pension go just for electricity." And that's signed "Mrs. Ray Senkpiel."

CURE knows there is no question FPC would immediately offer SUC rate payers an immediate rate reduction as well as an increase in customer service options. For example, SUC, desperate for income, retains customer deposits until the customer moves from the area or dies. FPC returns deposits to customers in good standing.

While SUC offers brochures on energy conservation, it does not conduct personal energy audits. FPC offers this needed service, another reason to sell to Florida Power.

Still another reason for a sale to Florida Power is that SUC commissioners are a self-perpetuating group of people who do not seem to be held accountable to the

taxpayers. SUC commissioners nominate their successors and therefore the rate payers have no voice in commission appointments or any other utility decisions. If bad decisions are made, the customer has no one to turn to for help. FPC is regulated by the PSC which will provide an outlet for customer complaints, and can force Florida Power to provide rates which are fair and equitable to all concerned.

As I stated a few minutes ago, SUC rates are fair only to SUC bond holders.

We need a professionally managed utility. SUC commissioners have not had the necessary expertise in the managing of large businesses. For example, in Mr. Calhoun's testimony he states that the engineers and consultants to the Phillips plant stated the plant would be a financial success. CURE has repeatedly expressed the opinion that where the plant was concerned, only those who had a financial reward coming from the building of the Phillips plant were the ones who said the plant made marketing sense. We believe a properly conducted independent marketing study would have shown that the dream of building the Phillips plant was just that -- a dream. No such study was ever conducted as far as CURE can find out.

In reality, the plant turned out to be a liability for the rate payers. A sale to Florida Power would eliminate

this sort of poor management. The guaranteed PSC oversight would make a business decision such as the Phillips plant virtually impossible.

If the PSC allows the sale to Florida Power,
Sebring area customers would be assured of professional
utility management. For example, past SUC management
received bonuses for good management. Yes, even when the
Sebring Utility was losing money, even at a time when CURE
believed the utility was technically bankrupt, management
bonuses were awarded. This indicates that the managers
of SUC did not have stated job objectives they had to meet
in order to receive extra monetary compensation.

And what if a hurricane hit this area? Let's think about that just a moment. And you all know how it affected south Florida and Louisiana. With an already existing \$91 million debt, we question that our local small utility would ever have the manpower or be able to obtain the necessary financial resources to rebuild.

If you allow the sale to Florida Power, Florida Power would be far better able to recover from tragedy such as the recent hurricane in south Florida.

The whole community has to pay SUC rates in various ways. Businesses have to recover this extra cost of doing business. A recent study has shown that county taxes could show a reduction as a result of a sale to FPC.

Even with the transition rate, the Highlands County School Board could save an estimated \$94,000 per year and the county could realize a \$47,000 per year savings on its electric bills. These county electric costs are paid by all county taxpayers and are but one confirmed example of the magnitude of savings available to Sebring area residents if FPC is allowed to purchase SUC.

This community needs to be rid of the stigma of living in SUC territory. Today even realtors advertise property in FPC territory as a plus to prospective buyers. Rates will drop immediately if you allow the sale to Florida Power, even including the transition fee. At the end of 15 years everyone will be out of this miserable situation.

Since SUC has a history of refinancing and dragging out our indebtedness, we see the 15-year period as a positive end to this debt. We concur with the testimony of Mr. Nixon from Florida Power which states this transition rate should not be contested as being discriminatory as he cites examples of 17 similar rate structures throughout the state.

We also agree with the testimony of Mr. Calhoun which states that a sale to FPC is in the best interest of the SUC rate payers.

Admittedly SUC is in financial trouble as it attempts to keep rates down even though its customers pay

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the highest rates in the state and among the highest in the nation. According to Ms. Holloway's testimony, as I said before, while the sale is pending, it is costing us \$14,000 per day from the reserve fund to supplement the consumer rates. If the sale is not consummated, Mr. Calhoun, the SUC general manager, says in his testimony that SUC will be forced to raise rates to \$151 per 1,000 kilowatt hours.

The bottom line is the SUC rate payers need the services of FPC (services such as load management discounts, energy audits, et cetera), and we need our rates to be regulated by a state agency rather than five local business people. We believe that at this time a sale to FPC is indeed in the best interest of all SUC rate payers and all Highlands County taxpayers.

If you do not allow the sale to Florida Power, and that idea frightens us, any other option eliminates PSC control, the only protection we as rate payers have. We believe it is a safe assumption to say that current and former SUC commissioners and managers have a far less than wholesome financial management record with that utility.

Please allow SUC to become Florida Power. Please do not allow the rate payers here to be held hostage to the costs of refinancing and/or continued financial mismanagement. We believe the majority of SUC rate payers want to see SUC sold to FPC.

And I want to thank you for this opportunity to listen to our comments and our concerns.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

WITNESS DARLING: I will give you a copy of these opinions.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. Robert Pollard.

ROBERT POLLARD

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS POLLARD: Good afternoon, Florida Public Service Commissioner Beard, staff, SUC attorneys, Florida Power attorneys.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Get a little closer.

WITNESS POLLARD: I'm too short to talk into
this mike. Okay. I'm Bob Pollard, long-time Sebring
resident and a Sebring Utilities rate payer. I'm speaking
today as an individual consumer and as chairman of the
Concerned Citizens of Sebring. We are a registered
committee under Florida law and have been focusing our
attention on Sebring Utilities' financial situation since
April 1991.

We oppose the sale of Sebring Utilities' assets to Florida Power Corporation and ask that you not approve

this joint petition as it now stands for the following reasons: No. 1, there is no substantial rate relief in the total package. SUC customers now pay the highest electric rates in the state and will continue to do so even if this sale is consummated.

In order for this sale contract to work out the City of Sebring must go to the bond market and float 30-year bonds to purchase the water system for the bid price of \$21.5 million, admittedly about three times the depreciated book value.

Mr. William R. Hough, former consultant for SUC, in responding to a question in open meeting voiced the opinion that the system could possibly be bonded for about \$23.5 million. That figure was seized upon as the number and used in FPC's initial bid figures. City Council then cut it back \$2 million in its actual bid. To make this work council has already called for water increases of 25 percent over a period of four years.

and City Council are willing to sell the electric distribution system at depreciated book value to Florida Power Corporation and are eager to pay three times depreciated book value for a water system that Sebring already owns, thus giving the rate payer the short end of the deal on both transactions.

Rates will reflect these shortcomings.

Utility rates are made up of four items: electricity, water, sewer and garbage collection. If this sale goes, the cost of the four plus the transition fee will take more money from rate payer pockets, not less.

No. 2, the transition fee or Sebring rider as it is identified in this docket, is discriminatory. It creates one more class of consumer for Florida Power Corporation and requires them to pay more for the same service as their neighbors do. It will add a burden on SUC rate payers. It will lower property values and restrict growth for the next 15 years.

This transition fee is crafted to pay off the balance of the bonds after applying the selling price of the electric system (\$17.8 million) and the purchase price of the water system (\$21.5 million); and other monies and the bond reserve account (approximately \$13 million), thus leaving \$38,134,631 to pay off. The interest cost of this \$38 million is figured to be \$29,303,749 over 15 years and expenses for issuance of medium-term notes is listed at \$42,901. As you can see, this is not cheap. We are being asked to divest assets and retain and pay debts to the benefit of Florida Power Corporation.

No. 3. The purchase price in this contract is The original bid price was \$10.2 million and has been worked laboriously up to \$17.8 million. It is still

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with the understanding that Florida Power Corporation could work it into the rate base and pass it on to the rate payers.

No risk for Florida Power Corporation.

I am told that rules and regulations will not allow an investor-owned utility to pay more than depreciated book value to a municipality for its system.

In the issue of "going concern" value the figure of \$4.8 million is being kicked around with both SUC and Florida Power Corporation feeling positive about it and Florida Public Service Commission having no position at this time.

Mr. Gerry Warren's pretrial testimony says that this is a measureable commodity and should fall between \$5 million and \$14 million. Whatever this amount is when agreed upon will reduce the unpaid \$38 million figure.

We urge you to rule favorably on this issue and set it in the \$10 million range. This will reduce the transition fee and give relief to the SUC rate payer.

the "going concern" amount figured in its rate base. Great. Where then is the Florida Power Corporation's participation in this since their rate payers will be paying all of the tab? No doubt Sebring's electric system is worth having because Florida Power has pursued this purchase with much

too low but obviously much better. All of this was done with the understanding that Florida Power Corporation could work it into the rate base and pass it on to the rate payers. No risk for Florida Power Corporation.

I am told that rules and regulations will not allow an investor-owned utility to pay more than depreciated book value to a municipality for its system.

In the issue of "going concern" value the figure of \$4.8 million is being kicked around with both SUC and Florida Power Corporation feeling positive about it and Florida Public Service Commission having no position at this time.

Mr. Gerry Warren's pretrial testimony says that this is a measureable commodity and should fall between \$5 million and \$14 million. Whatever this amount is when agreed upon will reduce the unpaid \$38 million figure.

We urge you to rule favorably on this issue and set it in the \$10 million range. This will reduce the transition fee and give relief to the SUC rate payer.

Florida Power wants both the purchase price and the "going concern" amount figured in its rate base. Great where then is the Florida Power Corporation's participation in this since their rate payers will be paying all of the tab? No doubt Sebring's electric system is worth having because Florida Power has pursued this purchase with much

zeal. They have dedicated many manhours of research, thought, preparation and strategies to this project. Why then would it not be proper for Florida Power Corporation's board and stockholders to have some investment and risk in this venture?

If they felt secure in investing about \$5 million more of their money thus cutting down on the \$38 million shortfall even more, they would wipe away most if not all of the opposition to this deal. We could all go forward hand in hand for the next foreseeable future feeling like we had a fair deal.

Finally, and I know you are glad to hear that,

I ask that you do not approve the joint petition as it

now stands unless a substantial figure for "going concern"

value can be justified. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Okay. That is the last one I had signed up to speak.

MS. DEMELLO: We've got one more.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Well, I stand corrected.

Let me tell you while she's bringing that up what we'll do once everyone has had an opportunity this afternoon. We will be back here at 5:00 o'clock and we will hear then from anybody who hasn't had a chance to speak today, those people that don't get off at this time of day and wanted to come. We'll stay and listen to them as well, and we'll

listen until we're done. My kids hope it's before midnight, but we'll listen until we're done. Will Randall.

WILL RANDALL

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

witness RANDALL: I'm Will Randall, I'm a member of the Sebring Airport Authority. I wasn't planning on speaking today. Mike Willingham, our director, was going to be here but couldn't make it.

Yesterday we passed a resolution supporting the sale of the Sebring Utilities to Florida Power.

We have an industrial park here that employs 455 people, and the board felt it was in the best interests of us to support this sale. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: And we appreciate you letting us land. Okay. Is there anybody else that hasn't had a chance to speak? Come on forward. If you would identify yourself and give us your name, please, for the record and spell your last name, please.

JIM FLYNN

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified

as follows:

WITNESS FLYNN: My name is Jim Flynn, Mr. Beard.

I'm the chairman of CURE, Citizens for Utility Rate

Equity. I merely have a question, and maybe you can't

answer it, but I'll ask it anyhow.

Would it be of any interest to the Commission and could it have any affect on your decision either way if we prepared testimony later on which would show how the citizens of Sebring lost their right through some very deceptively --

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Excuse me one moment. Please hold it down so I can hear and so everybody else can hear. Thank you. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

witness flynn: If we prepared testimony showing how the citizens of Sebring lost their right through some very deceptively worded ballot language to control spending by the Sebring Utilities Commission, that is the thing that led to a lot of this financial problem back in the early sixties. Now if this is moot from the standpoint of fraud we won't do it, but if it could have any bearing either way we'd like to have that opportunity.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I'm hesitant to say that it wouldn't, my initial reaction though is that if there were deceptions associated with the ballot and those kind of things it is certainly not something that the Commission

deals with. But not having seen the details of it I'm -I try to be cautious because I'd rather hear stuff than not.

WITNESS FLYNN: Sure.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: But typically something along those lines would be more of a court matter as opposed to a Commission matter.

WITNESS FLYNN: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Flynn. Yes, sir? Come up.

DICK SHANNON

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS SHANNON: My name is Dick Shannon, S-h-a-n-n-o-n, like the river.

I have a couple of questions. How official is the map in the front of the room? I ask because I am a resident of Sebring Village, and we are well beyond the lines.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I'm not even sure what the maps are, to be perfectly honest with you. Who owns the maps up here? How about somebody helping me out? What are those maps?

MR. JACKSON: Those maps represent the boundary

of the Sebring Utilities service area that were approved by the Service Commission back in 1987. That is the boundary of service area. That agreement was a statehood agreement, and the Sebring Utility has a number of foreign customers that are still in Florida Power Corp's territory as does Florida Power Corp have a number of customers in the Sebring territory that existed at that time. The territory agreement did not change that. This is a boundary starting at that point, that anyone in the future, that a new account within that boundary would be a Sebring Utility account. Any outside of that would be a Florida Power Corp account. It did not change any existing accounts.

witness shannon: Did you use the phrase foreign rate payer? I don't feel that way. I feel deprived. How much premium, if any, has been paid to an insurance company to guarantee the bonds?

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I have no idea.

WITNESS SHANNON: Can anyone answer that?

CHAIRMAN BEARD: An insurance premium pay --

WITNESS SHANNON: To guarantee the bonds.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Which bonds are you talking --

WITNESS SHANNON: The bonds that were quoted --

the \$38 million represents.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: All right. I do not know the answer.

WITNESS SHANNON: I've been corrected, \$91 million. 1 CHAIRMAN BEARD: I don't know the answer to that 2 question. 3 WITNESS SHANNON: Is there any way that we can 4 find out? 5 MR. JACKSON: It would be a matter of public 6 record. I don't have the number either. 7 CHAIRMAN BEARD: That would be something that 8 Sebring Utility Commission would have, that information 9 at their offices? 10 MR. JACKSON: Yes. 11 CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. 12 WITNESS SHANNON: All right. And the interest 13 that is paid on these bonds, that's part of our debt too? 14 CHAIRMAN BEARD: I'm sure, yes. 15 WITNESS SHANNON: My next question is, are the 16 owners of the bonds present or previous commissioners? 17 And if so is there a conflict of interest? 18 CHAIRMAN BEARD: I can tell you that the 19 present commissioners are not owners. 20 WITNESS SHANNON: I'm not talking about the 21 Public Service Commission. 22 CHAIRMAN BEARD: Oh, you're talking about 23 the Sebring Utility Commission? 24

WITNESS SHANNON: That's correct.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I really couldn't tell you. I don't regulate Sebring Utility Commission. Florida Power Corporation is all I regulate. That, I would assume, would have to be a matter of public record as well.

witness shannon: We have never been able to find out. It's not a public record.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. I don't know.

WITNESS SHANNON: My feeling is that if it is
the former or present commissioners and there is a conflict
of interest, that is one of the reasons that they don't
want the insurance company to pay the bonds, because then
the insurance company could hold them personally liable.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: You mean if they forfeited on the bonds?

WITNESS SHANNON: That's right.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: I see what you're saying.

WITNESS SHANNON: That's all.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Shannon.

JANICE DOUSE

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS DOUSE: Good afternoon. My name is Janice Douse and my husband and I --

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Would you spell your last name, please?

WITNESS DOUSE: D-o-u-s-e. My husband and I,
Russell T. Douse, own a subdivision called Lake Jackson
Heights. It's in the Sebring Utility territory. In 1974
when we purchased the property we made a large investment
and have invested our entire lives in this subdivision.
We were in the Sebring Utility territory and agreed to go
with Sebring Utilities, and it was very lucrative for us
because at that point they were providing a much needed
service at a reduced rate which promised growth in our
community.

But as a result of some unfortunate business agreements we have now been discriminated against.

I'd have to say since 1986 when they refinanced the bond issue we began to see a decline in our community, where one big topic for every prospective buyer was "What utility do you have?" And as soon as we would mention SUC they would roll up their windows and drive away.

And I'm even talking of people that had only
been in town for one hour. And we would question them and
say, "How are you aware of this?" and they would say,
"Oh, every realtor you go to or every person that you speak
to in any restaurant they say, 'Well, if you're a newcomer,
watch out for SUC. Don't get on their territory.'"

But the bottom line is we, as business people, have always been under the understanding that the way you get yourself out of debt is to pay it off.

We as a community are unable to sell homes to put new rate payers on this base to help pay it off. So if we can't add people to the base to help pay the debt off, and because of the comprehensive land planning that would exclude certain SUC territory, how on earth are they going to have people to pay off this debt?

We have had to install natural gas as an alternative energy measure so that we can market our homes where we can provide them with a low cost energy source. And we, as business people, have seen the impact of SUC on our community, and we are in favor of the sale to FPC.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

GEORGE COPELAND

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS COPELAND: My name is George Copeland,
C-o-p-e-l-a-n-d. I'm the manager of Bealls Department
Store in Lakeshore Mall. My company has two operations in
this community. We have got the mall store and we have an
outlet store at the Southgate Shopping Center.

I'm looking at the proposed rates, my company could save approximately 17 percent cheaper. On an annual basis at the mall we would save about \$15,000, and the outlet about \$7,500. So as far as Bealls Department Store is concerned and this measure is concerned, we would be in favor of the sale.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. Thank you.

I'm keeping an eye out. Some of you are raising your hand, I see you.

NORMA GREENWALD

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS GREENWALD: I'm Norma Greenwald.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Would you spell your last
name, please.

WITNES GREENWALD: G-r-e-e-n-w-a-1-d.
CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay.

WITNESS GREENWALD: I only have two statements to make. One is that it's my understanding that if SUC is taken over by Florida Power that only the people who live in the City of Sebring and have Sebring Utilities will have to pay on this debt, that others will not have to pay on the debt if they don't live in the City of Sebring.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: No, ma'am, I think -- rorrect me if I'm wrong, because I haven't seen all the details of it yet -- it is any person who currently is being served by Sebring Utilities Commission, whether they're inside the city or not.

WITNESS GREENWALD: That's good. Thank you.

The other one is that I was at a council meeting one time when the sale was being discussed or something was being discussed and they did not want the bond holders' names to be admitted to the public. I don't blame them, I'd be ashamed too.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay.

GORDON GASTER

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS GASTER: My name is Gordon Gaster.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Please spell your last name.

WITNESS GASTER: G-a-s-t-e-r.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

WITNESS GASTER: I came over here today from

Palm Beach County because I own Douglas Place Apartments

here in Sebring. During the time that I've owned these

apartments, people coming in to the community to inquire if

we have a vacancy the question, "Are you on Sebring Utilities," has become the predominant question at the beginning of a phone conversation. And many times they hang up without even allowing us to say yes, but we will pay part of the utilities expense.

So I recommend very strongly that the consummation of the sale be effected. And I don't -- as the lady spoke earlier, I don't understand how people learn so fast that there is this huge difference between the rates of people living outside and people living inside the utility area.

I think that the newspaper has not explained this adequately. And secondly, I think even if it's going to take 15 years to pay this off, it becomes a fixed expense and one that is definable. As it is now, there is so much confusion that it is leading to the demise of this community. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

Okay, with you all's permission now we're going to take a break. I think the court reporter's fingers can use it. We'll come back at 5:00 o'clock and hear from the people who have not had a chance to speak this afternoon. Thank you.

(Thereupon, a recess was had at 3:15 p.m., returned at 5:00 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Let's go ahead and get started

if we can. A lot of the faces I see from the afternoon.

My name is Tom Beard, and I'm president of the Florida

Public Service Commission. We began at, I guess, 1:00

o'clock and are reconvening now at 5:00 to hear from anybody

in addition to those we heard this afternoon, your thoughts

and comments on the Sebring Utilities Corporation and

Florida Power Corporation. And we have heard from a

number of people this afternoon, and we will take this time

to hear from others. We will work until we're finished.

If it's early, it's early, and if it's late, it's late. We will try to get to any of you trying to make it to prayer meeting or whatever on Wednesday night sometime earlier than midnight we hope.

If you'll bear with me for just a moment, I have got to do a few things that my lawyer wants.

MS. BROWN: By notice issued October 7, 1992, this place was set for docket No. 920949-EU, Joint Petition of Florida Power Corporation and Sebring Utilities Commission for Approval of Certain Matters in Connection with Sale of Assets by Sebring Utilities Commission to Florida Power Corporation. The purpose of the hearing is more fully set out in your notice.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Okay. Let's take appearances.

MR. FAMA: For Florida Power Corporation,

James Fama.

MR. JACKSON: Andrew Jackson for Sebring Utilities.

MR. MAY: Bruce May, and I'm also representing Sebring Utilities Commission.

MS. BROWN: Martha Carter Brown, representing the Public Service Commission staff.

that out of the way let's get to the business at hand.

I'm going to, and again, for those of you who were not here this afternoon, Bev Demello works for the Florida Public Service Commission, and if anyone would so desire, we try to make this as easy as we can. Some people like to talk in microphones. If somebody says something you basically agree with but you're not all that comfortable standing up there talking, you can say you adopt their testimony and agree with what they said.

If you just can't stand microphones you can fill one of these out, because we want to hear from you any way we can get it.

The first person up is Bill Van Baalen.

If you would let me swear you all in at this time and we will get that out of the way.

(Witnesses collectively sworn.)

BEN VAN BAALEN

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

have been a resident of the City of Sebring since 1973, and of course have been a rate payer of SUC all this time. I can remember the good old days before they ran up this horrendous debt in the early '80's. Although I have virtually no chance of outliving this 15-year transition rate, I am 10 percent in favor of having the Florida Power proposal approved by the PSC. I am a fairly average user and would benefit by about \$20 a thousand kilowatts immediately. The transition rate is based on a 3 percent groth rate. There are predictions that this area will have a groth rate of 6 to 7 percent. That would allow the transition rate to be paid off in 7 or 8 years.

I think that some of the people opposing this deal are not aware of the immediate benefits, such as: Florida Power's base rate plus a \$22 transition rate would result in a saving of \$15 immediately for someone averaging 1.000 kilowatts per month. In addition he would have available a load management option averaging \$10.75, making a saving of \$25 total per month. It is understood that the \$22 transition fee us per 1,000, and that the customer who used 2,00 would pay only an \$11 transition fee.

If you were a 1.000 kilowatt user and dropped to B51 in a winter month so that your transition cost would be

\$18.72, you would still get \$13.50 load management credit.

In a summer month if you used as little as 662 your transition fee would be only \$14.56 and you would still get a load management credit of \$10.50. If you used less than those figures you would lose only a proportion of the load management credit. For instance only 200 a month winter or summer would still get a \$3.17 credit. Sounds pretty good to me compared to any alternatives that I've heard about.

I respectively ask the Public Service Commission to approve the deal with Florida Power. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you, sir. Chris Vines.

CHRIS VINES

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens for the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS VINES: My name is Chris Vines, V-i-n-e-s.

I'm not a professional speaker, so if you guys will bear
with me.

I am a Sebring rate payer. I'm definitely for the sale. We have the highest rates in the State of Florida. But there is one thing that I am not for, and that is for paying somebody else's debt. I have enough of my own as a lot of people do. I do not feel it's right to have to pay for the misuse of funds by an organization

that improperly ran up those debts.

A lot of people have said, sure, we could bring these costs down by going with the bonds, but I don't think it's right to have to settle for this. There's a lot of people that -- sure, I could settle and pay an extra dollar at the pumps for gas, but I don't want to do it and I don't think it's right for us to pay this excess usage fee.

We have a business we're starting up here. Both of them pay a high electric bill, and I don't think it's fair whatsoever.

In addition to bills, we also have real estate values. When people come to Sebring they ask you if you're on Sebring Utilities or not, and I know for a fact that's a big decision. I know people have asked me and they have just shuddered like that and say, "I can't believe you're paying these bills."

But I think we should get equivalent services. We have Florida Power on one side and Sebring Utilities on the other, and here we are paying exorbitant fees. I don't think that's fair.

The economy today, I guess all of you are aware of what is going on. In addition, I use up about 2,000 kilowatts, so it will cost me close to \$50 a month. You know, that would buy groceries, some medical. There's a

lot of people out there who are in a worse situation than I am financially, but I know that will hurt me and everyone else. We have a lot more uses for the \$50.

I guess that's closing for me.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you very much.

Mr. Parker.

WALDO PARKER

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS PARKER: My name is Waldo Parker,

P-a-r-k-e-r. I'm for the sale of Sebring Utilities to

Florida Power, but I'm not for the transition fee. I own

property that's in the county and it used to be Florida

Power, and then several years ago they did some swapping

and now it's Sebring Utilities.

My daughter also owns a house in the same area.

We had no vote whatsoever on the Sebring Utilities

Commission. They were selected by the City Council, and so we had no say so in borrowing the money or whatever.

Although I am for the sale, but I do not believe the people in the county should have to pay the transition fee. The City of Sebring elected the City Council and elected the Sebring Utilities Commission. The county has

no say so and I don't feel we should have to pay the bill. CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you very much.

JIM FLYNN

was recalled as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been previously duly sworn, testified as follows:

I agree with Mr. Van Baalen's WITNESS FLYNN: testimony. He covered what I would say.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Did you have something different?

DON DARLING

was recalled as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been previously duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS DARLING: My name is Don Darling, I live at 1520 Tenth Avenue, Sebring. The new information that I brought with me tonight is my own personal home. We had this house built in 1985. It's really a three-bedroom plan, however, we left off two walls and made a two-bedroom out of it. But anyway, at the time I had spent quite a little time researching insulation factors and so forth and set up the house to be built as energy efficient as I could.

Some of the subcontractors thought I was off my

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rocker. Well, maybe I was, but it was my money I was spending. I sort of looked down the road a little. However, I didn't know about the ferocious rates that we have now.

The other day I went down to the tax assessor's office and noticed that my assessed valuation had gone down, which was \$75,940. 1989 it had dropped to \$74,790. 1991 it dropped to \$73,020. I subtracted that from '89 through '91. It amounted to \$2,900.90 assessed valuation.

Of course, I'm not ready to sell my house, but I've heard an awful lot of statistics and problems with depreciation. Naturally all of us want our property to appreciate, not depreciate.

I asked about the market value. The appraiser told us our particular home was assessed on approximately 85 percent of the market value. So I added that other 15 percent on there, and I found out our market value had dropped \$2,900.64.

In the code that they show they have about four different categories for a house. They have average, below average, above average, and premium. On my tax assessment bill it says our house is above average in each case. Well, the reason for that is we spent about \$6,000 more when the house was built making it energy efficient and comfortable to live in. I think we have probably one of the most efficient houses in Highlands County. Even though I was

crazy when I had the house built, my bills reflect the same. I'm not crazy.

I just wanted to bring that out this afternoon.

I'll give you copies of these assessment bills so it's positive proof. Thank you again.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

CHARLES KEMPTON

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS KEMPTON: There's something that I would like to say concerning this assessment. I work for Cooper Industries, which is the largest municipal light plant engine builders in the world. I make a very comfortable living delivering parts. These things don't run seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Now, what protection do we have against the thing breaking down, parts and repairs. The thing has to run pretty efficiently. You're talking about iron on iron. I had trucks and I made a good living delivering parts all over. And Peter Vesper, originally I think they spent a lot of money surveying it and said absolutely it was intolerable. They didn't want to bid on it, and that's been a long time ago. But I was just wondering.

I know what is happening to many, many gas
pipelines in cities. They get in a bind, the thing blows
up, and money is hard to come by. But are we protected if
we are assessed this \$22 for anything from Florida Power?

You say no. Here this engine blows up, we're not going to repair it. All that stuff shipped in here, this is ridiculous. This is where we live. This is where it should have been bought in the first place. The result of it, things have been bothering me. We want protection.

I'm not a bit ashamed to say you people from Tallahassee, you're supposed to protect us.

Don't let us get into anything more. I'm sixty-eight. I have gone about as far as I can. I shuffle more every year. Thank you for listening. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Judd Berkey.

JUDD BERKEY

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS BERKEY: First I'd like to say -CHAIRMAN BEARD: Would you spell your last
name, please.

WITNESS BERKEY: Judd Berkey, B-e-r-k-e-y.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Go ahead.

WITNESS BERKEY: Just briefly. My wife and myself are in favor of the sale to Florida Power Corporation. I am not in favor of the transition rate. I have read it. The rate is discriminatory.

We do have rental houses here. We have five homes in Lakewood Terrace. I can tell you when we are renting these properties it is extremely tough. Eight out of ten folks who call, as soon as you say Sebring Utilities they hang up. They still know. The service may be improved, but this transition fee, their rates are still going to be very similar. They have great concern. I think if this transition fee was eliminated certainly our rents would be better, businesses would be moving along, but it's not right now.

If you come up to our property you will see a lot of vacancies and a lot for sale. That's all I have to say. I think this has a lot to do with it.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Is there anyone else who has not signed up that wishes to speak at this time?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN BEARD: We will take a break here for a few minutes and come back at 6:00 just to make sure we hear everybody. So if you want to stick around please feel free, and we will wait around until 6:00 o'clock to make

sure everyone who want to speak can speak.

(Thereupon, a recess was had.)

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Folks, if we could get everybody's attention again. Okay. We've got two more people that came in and signed up while we were taking a break, and one more person wanted to make another comment. Chris, if you would come up.

CHRIS VINES

was recalled as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been previously duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS VINES: Like I said before, I'm not a public speaker, and a lot of things slipped my mind when I was up here before. There were a couple of things I wanted to bring out.

First of all, the bonds. When somebody purchases a bond they assume an amount of risk, and there's also insurance for those bonds. I can't imagine why I'm having to pay off somebody else's risk that they were assuming. That's the part I wanted to say.

Also, as we're paying this transition fee, we're paying 20, 50, \$75, some of us. Thirty-something million dollars debt, what are we getting in return for that?

I know Florida Power has stockholders. It seems to me that

we're benefitting the stockholders. They're looking pretty good. If I got a share of the stock every time I paid off \$10 that would be a benefit for me and it wouldn't be so bad, but since I'm getting nothing and the Florida Power shareholders are, that's why I'm against the transition fee.

Another thing was the water. I guess the city is taking care of the water. I want to make sure everybody understands that even though we're going to settle for this transition fee, hopefully not, but the water rates are going to be going up. And it will probably offset the electric rates.

I just can't see how this is a good decision.

I know we have a professional team here who hopefully will cover all those ideas.

Basically, I know that this decision has been on the Sebring Utilities Commission -- we've read about it in the paper a lot and I know it's a big issue here. I don't want these people to make a rash decision but they've been painted in the corner. I know they say let's go with it.

And again, talking about those bond holders. You know, the government has FDIC insurance to cover your money in a bank. That's all I have to say. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Somebody mentioned on the break my giving you an idea of who was up here. I introduced myself. Over at this table are attorneys for both Florida

Power and Sebring Utilities.

These are working with us, and we'll be working on the case as far as going through this contract detail by detail. We have economists and we have attorneys, so we will get plenty of attorneys to look at this contract in great detail and try to understand the questions that you all raised both this afternoon and this evening. Okay.

Fred Fields.

FRED FIELDS

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS FIELDS: My name is Fred Fields,

F-i-e-l-d-s. I do believe the appreciated book value with

no value based on a going business on a customer basis is

wrong.

A couple of questions. During the early afternoon there were questions asked concerning conservation of your electric consumption. If a great many rate payers practiced measures reducing their consumption and consequently reduced the number of kilowatt hours used that would reduce the amount of the transition fee going to Florida Power. Would Florida Power then have a right to assess a bigger transition fee to cover their shortfall?

And also the issue of hurricanes was brought up. In the event of a hurricane Florida Power would be in better shape to come over and make repairs. Along those same lines, even though the central part of the state is subject to hurricanes we don't usually get one full blown this far from the coast. If the Florida Power area was severely damaged in a hurricane, and since we would not be necessarily involved or were not involved, would we also be assessed part of that cost even though we're being charged a transition fee because of things that happened in the past?

That's all. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Mr. Reinbolt.

LESTER REINBOLT

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

wITNESS REINBOLT: I didn't really expect to be called on this quick. Lester Reinbolt, R-e-i-n-b-o-l-t. I have been following this case since I wrote a letter to the Public Service Commission in 1982. I have been going to a lot of Commission meetings, and I see a lot of people here who I don't think I have ever seen at a Commission meeting.

We have worked hard in the last two years to get

this deal worked out. I think it's the best thing that we can go with right now. If we don't accept this, from my experience what happened to me up north before I moved south, if we don't accept this it will end up costing us twice as much as it will cost in a few years.

A lot of people say this \$22 fee here, but they don't quite understand everything. This \$22 fee could be a lot lower by the end of 15 years. It's based on a three percent increase of electric usage.

This man who's seated before me stated people saved electric and did not use as much. But experience is saving electric so they didn't have to pay \$108 rate, and right now in anticipation that this deal will go through.

If this deal does not go through, the day after it's refused, our electric rates will go to \$151. If these people think that their water will cover that much difference in the company, I think they've got another thing to look at.

And also I think the people should take a pencil and paper and really work out what this comes to. You'll find this is the best deal that they can really get. If this goes under bankruptcy in the future no one knows what will happen. It would be in bankruptcy court in ten years. And in that ten years we would be paying \$151 to \$161 for a thousand kilowatts.

I think that's all I've got.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you.

IVY EVANS

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida and, having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

WITNESS EVANS: My name is Ivy Evans, E-v-a-n-s. This situation means quite a bit to my husband and I. And just due to the fact that we came out at night, which we never do. Of course, my husband can't see at night and I have difficulty driving.

We live in the Thunderbird Hill Homes. And a year ago January there was a transition where in that particular area some pepole that had been serviced by Sebring Utilities were just automatically switched over to Florida Power. And in our little community, which is approximately 200 homes, they're called the Thunderbird Hill Homes, there are three villages. And we are the only one in the surrounding area that is being serviced by Sebring Utilities. Everybody else is on Florida Power.

They had a meeting in our clubhouse -- and if you look to your map you will find that we were not supposed to be serviced by Sebring Utilities in the first place. But the builder who built the homes applied for water when he

started to build and Sebring Utilities told him if he didn't take the electric he couldn't have the water.

So we were forced in. When I purchased my home -and the builder, I might add, is Lee Woods, who is in
bankruptcy at the time. When I purchased my home I
particularly asked who will service me with my electricity.
Not that I claim to be that smart, but it was just a
question that I happened to ask. And I was told that
Florida Power would service us.

It wasn't until the day after we had had the settlement that I applied for service that I found out that I have Sebring Utilities. I was very much disappointed in that. But due to the fact that everything was cut and dried I didn't have much to argue with. Okay.

Now, we were pacified a year ago last January.

And if you notice, I don't know if any of you people have ridden around and seen for sale signs of houses and all of them state Florida Power. Sebring Utilities has been a great drawback to people who own property because of their extensive rates.

We were pacified and thought if we put our homes up for sale that the new owner could apply and would automatically be switched over to Florida Power.

Now, my question is this: This assessment that's going to be put on us monthly, how is that going to affect

us if we want to sell our home? Is that going to be put on even though -- or has this Florida Power determined that the new buyer would be switched over? Has that been abolished or will it be abolished?

I tend to agree with the young fellow that we are being held responsible for something that we had nothing to do with in the beginning. And I repeat his statement by saying when you make an investment you are taking a chance. And these people that bought these bonds, there was no quarantee made to them any more than there is a guarantee made when I take out a building loan, although the government will cover that.

But I really don't think it's fair to the people that are under Sebring Utilities to have the heavy burden with this expense. Just our service charges per month for coming and reading the meters is \$19. And if we're going to have to pay this \$22 in addition to this, people that are living on Social Security, this is really a hardship.

And I really would appreciate if you folks would take these things into consideration. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you, ma'am.

EDGAR WEBSTER

was called as a witness on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Flroida and, having been duly sworn, testified

as follows:

I'm here representing J.C. Penney in Lakeshore Mall. We have been reviewing this sale. Part of it based on the worksheets that were supplied to us by Florida Power. We would support the sale of Sebring Utilities to Florida Power. We are still in the process of reviewing it and plan to send it to our district office for further review, which hopefully we will get some feedback to Florida Power at the time.

We also have some questions about the worksheet that I am trying to get answered by Florida Power, but based on all the information we have at this time we are supporting this sale. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BEARD: Thank you. Is there anybody else? We thank you, the people that didn't stay for the evening session this afternoon and those of you who have been here this afternoon and tonight. We appreciate your input. This is what this is all about.

You have raised some interesting questions for me when we go back and take a look at this contract. We will take a hard look at those as we go through and review the process. Again, thank you so much. Good night.

(Thereupon, the hearing was concluded at 6:15 p.m.)

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1	FLORIDA) CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER
2	COUNTY OF POLK)
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4	I, LOIS M. GILLIAM, Deputy Official Court
5	Reporter, and Notary Public in and for the State of Florida
6	at Large.
7	DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the hearing in this cause,
8	Docket No. 920949-EU, was heard by the Florida Public
9	Services Commission at the time and place herein stated;
10	it is further
11	CERTIFIED that I reported in shorthand the said
12	proceedings; that the same has been transcribed under my
13	direct supervision, and that this transcript, consisting of
14	110 pages, constitute a true and accurate transcription of
15	my notes of said proceedings; it is further
16	CERTIFIED that I am neither of counsel nor
17	related to the parties in said cause and have no interest,
18	financial or otherwise, in the outcome of this docket.
19	IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
20	at Bartow, Polk County, Florida, this 16th day of November,
21	A.D., 1992.

LOIS M. GILLIAM

Deputy Official Court Reporter Tenth Judicial Circuit of Florida (813) 533-1170

PI 108

ME, THE CUSTOMERS & RATEPAYERS OF SEBRIC UTILITIES CORP., HEREBY MSK AND PETITION THE STATE OF FLORIDA PUBLIC SERV. DE COMMISSION NOT TO APPROVE ANY REQUEST FROM THE FLORIDA POWER CORP. TO PLACE ANY SURCHARGE ON THE S. U. C. RATEPAYERS IN THEIR EFFORT TO PURCHASE THE SEBRING UTILITY CORP. THE SURCHARGE WOULD BE FORCING THE RATEPAYERS TO PAY THE DEBT OF S. U. C.

WE FURTHER PETITION THAT WE BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO PURCHASE OUR ELECTRIC CURRENT FROM THE COMPANY OF OUR CHOICE, AS LONG AS THE COMPANY WE SELECT HAS LINES AVAILABLE OR THE COMPANY SELECTED DESIRES TO MAKE THEIR LINES AVAILABLE. IF THIS REQUEST REQUIRES LEGISLATIVE ACTION, WE THEN DESIRE TO FURTHER OUR PETITION TO EXTEND TO THE LEGISLATORS OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

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WE, THE CUSTOMERS & RATEPAYERS OF SEBRING UTILITIES CORP., HEREBY ASK AND PETITION THE STATE OF FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION NOT TO APPROVE ANY REQUEST FROM THE FLORIDA POWER CORP. TO PLACE ANY SURCHARGE ON THE S. U. C. RATEPAYERS IN THEIR EFFORT TO PURCHASE THE SEBRING UTILITY CORP. THE SURCHARGE WOULD BE FORCING THE RATEPAYERS TO PAY THE DEBT OF S. U. C.

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Florida Public Service Commissioner & Staff SUC & FPC Attorneys

Good afternoon.

I am Bob Pollard, long time Sebring resident and Sebring Utilities ratepayer. I am speaking today as an individual consumer and as Chairman of the Concerned Citizens of Sebring We are a registered political committee under Florida law and have been focusing our attention on the Sebring Utilities financal situation since April, 1991.

We oppose the sale of Sebring Utilities assets to Florida Power Corporation and ask that you not approve this joint petition as it now stands for the following reasons:

 There is no substantial rate relief in the total package. SUC customers now pay the highest electric rates in the state and will continue to do so even if this sale is consumated. In order for this sale contract to work out the City of Sebring must go to the bond market and float thirty (30) year bonds to purchase the water system for the bid price of \$21.5 M, admittedly about three (3) times the depreciated book value. Mr. William R. Hough, former consultant for SUC, in responding to a question in open meeting voiced the opinion that the system could possibly be bonded for about \$23.5M. That figure was seized upon as the number and used in FPC'S initial bid figures. City council then cut it back \$2.0M in its actual bid. To make this work Council has already called for water increases of 25% over a period of four years. Point of all of this is that on one hand SUC an Council are willing to sell the electric distribution system at depreciated book value to FPC and are eager to pay three times depreciated book value for a water system that SEBRING already owns thus giving the ratepayer the short end of the deal on both transactions. Rates will reflect these shortcommings.

Utility rates are made up of four items: Electricity, Water,

four plus the transition fee will take more money from rate payer pockets, not less.

2. The TRANSITION FEE or SEBRING RIDER as it is identified in this Docket is discriminatory. It creates one more class of consumer for FPC and requires them to pay more for the same service as their neighbors. It will add a burden on SUC ratepayers. It will lower property values and restrict growth for the next fifteen years. This transition fee is crafted to pay off the balance of the bonds after applying the selling price of the system (\$17.8M) the purchase price of the water system (\$21.5M); other monies and the bond reserve account (\$13M approximately) thus leaving \$38,134,631.00 to pay off. The interest cost of this \$38 M is figured to be \$29,303,749 over fifteen years and expenses for issuance of medium term notes is listed at \$42,901.00. As you can see this is not cheap. We are being asked to divest assets and retain and pay debts to the benefit of FPC.

3. Purchase price in this contract is too low.

Original bis price was \$10.2M and has been worked laborously up to \$17.8M. Still too low but obviously much better. All of this was done with the understanding that FPC could work it into the ratebase and pass it on to other ratepayers. No

risk for FPC. I am told that rules and regulations will not allow an investor owned utility to pay more than depreciated book value to a municipality for its system.

In the issue of "Going Concern" value the figure of \$4.8M is being kicked around with both SUC and FPC feeling positive

about it and Public Service Commission having no position at this time. Mr. Gerry Warren's pretrial testimoney says that this is a measurable commodity and should fall between \$5.M and \$14.M. Whatever this amount is when agreed upon will reduce the unpaid \$38.M figure. We urge you to rule favorably on this issue and set it in the \$10.M range. This will reduce the transition fee and give relief to the SUC ratepayer. FPC wants both the purchase price and the "Going Concern" amount figured in its rate base. Great. Where then is the Florida Power Corporation's participation in this since their rate payers will be paying all of the tab? No doubt Sebring's electric system is worth having because FPC has pursued this purchase with much zeal. They have dedicated many man hours of research, thought, preparation and stratagies to this project. Why then would it not be proper for FPC's board and stockholders to have some investment and risk in this venture. If they felt secure

in investing about five million dollars (\$5.0M) of their money thus cutting down on the \$38.M shortfall even more they could wipe away most if not all of the opposition to this deal. We could all go forward hand in hand for the next foreseable future feeling like we had a fair deal. Finally, and I know you are glad to here that, I ask that you do not approve the Joint Petition as it now stands

unless a substantial figure for "Going Concern" value can be justified.

Thank you very much.

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BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Petition of Florida Power Corporation for approval of transition rate applicable to Sebring area customers.

DOCKET NO. 920949-EU

OBJECTION TO PROPOSED TRANSITIONAL RATE

We, the undersigned Sebring Utilities' ratepayers, object to Florida Power Corporation's Petition for authority to charge Sebring Utilities' consumers a Transitional Rate on electric power and respectfully request that the Florida Public Service Commission deny the Petition for the following reasons:

- The proposed Transitional Rate is a discriminatory rate and not in the best interest of the Sebring Utilities' ratepayers;
- 2. The proposed Transitional Rate does not give the Sebring Utilities' consumers any substantial rate relief in that they will be required to pay in the form of a Transitional Rate, substantially all of the outstanding debt at an interest rate which is substantially higher than the present bond indebtedness.
- 3. Florida Fower Corporation has proposed to purchase Sebring Utilities Commission's electrical system at the depreciated book value of the facilities. The electrical system currently has in excess of 12,000 consumers and the proposed purchase price is for facilities only with no consideration for

revenue. If the transaction is to be consumated, Florida Power Corporation should be required to pay more for the system thereby reducing the amount of the outstanding debt to be paid by the ratepayers.

- 4. The proposed Transition Rate will be detremental to existing and future rate payers in the Sebring area, and will definitely impact growth and property values in the area.
- 5. The Florida Legislature amended the Sebring
 Utilities Commission's Charter in 1991 giving SUC authority
 to levy a surcharge to pay the outstanding indebtedness. The
 amendment provided for a referendum. The proposed Transition
 Rate is a form of surcharge and should not be allowed without
 a referendum of the consumers of Sebring Utilities.
- 6. There are other options available which would eliminate the need for a Transition Rate, give rate relief and be better for Sebring Utilities consumers in the long run We request the Petition be denied. Please keep the undersigned advised of all future proceedings in this docket at the following address: Robert G. Pollard, Chairman of wood Concerned Citizens of Sebring, 810 N. Ridgewood Dr., Sebring, Florida 33870.

Ratepayers:

M. R. Stacker

Respectfully Submitted,

Address:

414 H.W. Sakenew dls.

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My name is Don Darling and I am a Sebring Utilities Commission ratepayer living at 1520 Tenth Avenue, Sebring, Florida. I am the co-chairman of Citizens for Utility Rate Equity. CURE was formed in the summer of 1989 by our chairman, Jim Flynn, and by Nancy Hawk, Pat Wilk, Kathy Main, and the James Sacco family. All of these people are Sebring area citizens and Sebring Utility ratepayers. Within the first month CURE attracted about 1300 members, many of whom were present at four major public meetings hosted by CURE. It is important for you PSC representatives to be aware that CURE asked at each of our public meetings if anyone was in favor of SUC rates or the continuation of SUC. Not one person ever spoke in favor of either. Our organization is composed of private citizens and business people joined together to find a solution to what we believe is Sebring's number one problem: SUC's exorbitantly high utility rates. CURE's single objective, as stated in its original position paper, was and is to obtain electric rates comparable to Florida Power rates. While CURE will be represented at the formal hearing in Tallahassee, I would like to share with you now some of our concerns as Sebring Utility ratepayers. While the problem of high electric rates in Sebring has been an ongoing problem since the early to mid eighties, it wasn't until CURE was formed that SUC ratepayers banded together to solve the rate problem. It is CURE's opinion as stated in already written and submitted testimony, that all previous efforts, to solve the Sebring Utilities financial problems resulted only in raising rates. Repeated refinancing benefited only the consultants, the bondholders; and as a result, the

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SUC ratepayers unwillingly assumed these costs plus the huge commissions paid

the bond brokers. CURE cannot find any record of where any substantial effort

was made to sell SUC until both continually an angry customer base plus an absolutely disastrous financial future faced the SUC commissioners, e rlier this VOOP. We believe that a sale to FPC is in the best interest of SUC ratepayers and the surrounding area for various reasons. We believe improper and uninformed financial management decisions have led to the situation where SUC ratepayers have the highest electric rates in the state. If these rates go from the current \$107 per thousand kilowatt hours, to the rate of \$151 as outlined in the testimony of Mr. Calhoun, those rates might well skyrocket The cost of electricity to be the highest in the United States. These projected rates will make electric service unaffordable to the majority of SUC ratepayers. I'm sure the Public Service Commission is aware that Highlands County demographics show this is a rather low income area with many retirees on fixed incomes. Another reason for the sale...historically municipal utilities have only been brought into play when they would be useful to the public by providing better rates or service than the private sector. SUC fails the rate test miserably. It cannot begin to provide rates anywhere near as low as those of Florida Power. Remember, we have single, working mothers trying to conserve on electric consumption who still have utility bills that require more than a week's pay so they can purchase SUC electricity, a basic necessity of life. SUC ratepayers should not have to make the choice between buying groceries or paying the electric bill. Elderly people dependent on medication should not have to cut back on their electric consumption because they can't afford both of these

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necessities of life.

SUC is not providing electric service at a fair price. As is shown in Ms. Holloway's testimony, SUC is taking \$14,000 per day from the Reserve Fund to 'reep rates "low" during the pending sale. I would like to give you now a copy of a letter CURE received when CURE was formed. It is a perfect example of the many letters and hundreds of phone calls we have received calling for lower rates. CURE knows there is no question FPC would immediately offer SUC ratepayers an immediate rate reduction as well as an increase in customer service options. For example, SUC, desperate for income, retains customer deposits until the customer moves from the area or dies. FPC returns deposits to customers in good standing. While SUC offers brochures on energy conservation, it does not conduct personal energy audits. FPC offers this needed service, another reason to sell to Florida Power. Still another reason for a sale to Florida Power is that SUC commissioners are a self-perpetuating group of people who do not seem to be held accountable to the ratepayers. SUC commissioners nominate their successors and therefore the ratepayers have no voice in commission appointments or any other utility decisions. If bad decisions are made, the customer has no one to turn to for help. FPC is regulated by the PSC which will provide an outlet for customer complaints, and can force Florida Power to provide rates which are fair and equitable to all concerned. As I stated a few minutes ago, SUC rates are fair only to SUC bondholders. We need a professionally managed utility. SUC commissioners have not had the necessary expertise in the managing of large businesses. For example, in Mr.

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Calhoun's testimony he states that the engineers and consultants to the Phillips Plant stated the plant would be a financial success. CURE has repeatedly expressed the opinion that where the plant was concerned, only those who had a financial reward coming from the building of the Phillips Plant were the ones who said the plant made marketing sense. We believe a properly conducted independent marketing study would have shown that the dream of building the Phillips plant was just that -- a dream. No such study was ever conducted as far as CURE can find out. In reality, the plant turned out to be a liability for the ratepayers. A sale to Florida Power would eliminate this sort of poor management. The guaranteed PSC oversight would make a business decision such as the Phillips Plant virtually impossible. If the PSC allows the sale to Florida Power, Sebring area customers would be assured of professional utility management. For example, past SUC management received bonuses for "good management". Yes, even when the Sebring Utility was losing money, even at a time when CURE believes the utility was "technically bankrupt", management bonuses were awarded. This indicates that the managers of SUC did not have stated job objectives they had to meet in order to receive extra monetary compensation. And what if a hurricane ever hit this area? With an already existing \$91,000,000 debt, we question that our local, small utility would ever have the manpower or be able to obtain the necessary financial resources to rebuild. If you allow the sale

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The whole community has to pay SUC rates in various ways. Businesses have to

such as the recent hurricane in south Florida.

to Florida Power, Florida Power would be far better able to recover from tragedies

recover this extra cost of doing business. A recent study has shown that County taxes could show a reduction as a result of a sale to FPC. Even with the transition rate, the Highlands County School Board could save an estimated \$94,000 per year and the County could realize a \$47,000 per year savings on its electric bills. These County electric costs are paid by all taxpayers and are but one confirmed example of the magnitude of savings available to Sebring area residents if FPC is allowed to purchase SUC. This community needs to be rid of the stigma of living in SUC territory. Today even realtors advertise property in FPC territory as a plus to prospective buyers.. Rates will drop immediately if you allow the sale to Florida Power, even including the transition fee. At the end of 15 years everyone will be out of this miserable Since SUC has a history of refinancing and dragging out our situation. indebtedness, we see the 15 year period as a positive end to this debt. We concur with the testimony of Mr. Nixon, from Florida Power, which states this transition rate should not be contested as being discriminatory as he cites examples of 17 similar rate structures throughout the state. We also agree with the testimony of Mr. Calhoun which states that a sale to FPC is in the best interest of the SUC ratepayers. Admittedly SUC is in financial trouble as it attempts to keep rates down even though its customers pay the highest rates in the state and among the highest in the nation. According to Ms, Holloway's testimony, as I said before, while the sale is pending, it is costing us \$14,000 per day from the Reserve Fund to supplement the consumer rates. If the sale is not consummated, Mr. Calhoun, the SUC

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General Manger, says in his testimony that SUC will be forced to raise rates to

1 \$151 per 1000kwh.

Thank you.

The bottom line is the SUC ratepayers need the services of FPC (services such as load management discounts, energy audits, etc.) and we need our rates to be regulated by a state agency rather than five local business people. We believe that at this time a sale to FPC is indeed in the best interest of all SUC ratepayers and all Highlands County taxpayers.

If you do not allow the sale to Florida Power, and that idea frightens us, any other option eliminates PSC control, the only protection we as ratepayers have. We believe it is a safe assumption to say that current and former SUC commissioners and managers have a far-less-than-wholesome financial management record that utility.

Please allow SUC to become Florida Power. Please do not allow the ratepayers here to be held hostage to the costs of refinancing and/or continued financial mismanagement. We believe the majority of SUC ratepayers want to see SUC sold to FPC. Now.

My name is Bill Van Baalen. I have been a resident of the city of Sebring since 1973 and of course have been a ratepayer of SUC all this time.

I can remember the good old days before they ran up this horrendous debt in the early 80's. Although I have virtually no chance of outliving this 15 year transition rate, I am 100 per cent in favor of having the Florida Power proposal approved by the PSC.

I am a fairly average user and would benefit by about \$20 a thousand kilowatts immediately. The transition rate is based on a 3% growth rate. There are predictions that this area will have a growth rate of 6 to 7 percent. That would allow the transition rate to be paid off in 7-8 years.

I think that some of the people opposing this deal are not aware of the immediate benefits, such as:

Florida Power's base rate plus a \$22 transition rate would result in a saving of \$15 immediately for someone averaging 1,000 kwh per month.

In addition he would have available a load management option averaging \$10.75, making a saving of \$25 total per month.

It is understood that the \$22 transition fee is per 1,000, and that the customer who used 2,000 would pay \$44.

However by the same token, the fellow who used only 500 kwh would pay only an \$11 transition fee.

If you were a 1,000 kwh user and dropped to 851 in a winter month (so that your transition cost would be \$18.72) you would still get a \$13.50 load management credit. In a summer month if you used as little as 662 your transition fee would be only \$14.56 and you would still get a load management credit of \$10.50. If you used less than those figures you would lose only a proportion of the load management credit. For instance only 200 a month winter or summer would still get a \$3.17 credit.

Sounds pretty good to me compared to any alternatives I have heard about. I respectfully ask the Public Service Commission to approve the deal with Florida Power.

Thank you.

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