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BEFORE THE
ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION
PUBLIC UTILITY SPECIAL OPEN MEETING
Friday, April 24, 2020
Chicago, Illinois

Met pursuant to notice via teleconference at
10:30 a.m. at 160 North LaSalle Street, Chicago,
Illinois.

PRESENT:

- CARRIE ZALEWSKI, Chairman
- SADZI M. OLIVA, Commissioner
- MARIA S. BOCANEGRA, Commissioner
- D. ETHAN KIMBREL, Commissioner
- MICHAEL T. CARRIGAN

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BY: JO ANN KROLICKI, CSR (Via teleconference)
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1 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Before we begin, can I
2 confirm that the Court Reporter is on?

3 THE REPORTER: Yes.

4 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Commissioner Bocanegra?

5 COMMISSIONER BOCANEGRA: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Commissioner Oliva?

7 COMMISSIONER OLIVA: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Good morning. Are we
9 ready to proceed.

10 Under the Open Meetings Act and in
11 accordance with the Governor's Executive Orders, I
12 call the April 24, 2020, Special Open Meeting to
13 order.

14 Before we proceed, for clarity of the
15 record and since the court reporter is participating
16 remotely, I would ask everyone to state their name
17 before speaking and to speak slowly and clearly so
18 that she can capture everything that is said.

19 Commissioner Kimbrel is with me in
20 Chicago, Commission Carrigan is joining us from the
21 Springfield office, and as you heard, Commissioners
22 Bocanegra and Oliva are calling in, and so with that,

1 we have a quorum.

2 We have two requests to speak.

3 First, from Emily Creahan representing Community
4 Organizing and Family Issues and POWER-PAC IL; and
5 second, from Donna Carpenter.

6 Under 2 Illinois Administrative Code
7 1700.10, any person desiring to address the
8 Commission shall be allowed up to three minutes.
9 Only one person may speak on behalf of any
10 organization. Please note that the Commission will
11 not respond directly to your comments.

12 Miss Creahan, are you there?

13 MS. CREAMAN: Yes, I'm here.

14 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: You will have three
15 minutes. I am going to set my timer on my phone, and
16 I will indicate when your time is up.

17 You may begin, but if you could
18 please state and spell your name for the
19 court reporter, and then you can go ahead, and I'll
20 start the timer.

21 MS. CREAMAN: Thank you. My name is Emily
22 Creahan. That's E-m-i-l-y, C-r-e-a-h-a-n. I'm a

1 community organizer with Community Organizing and
2 Family Issues.

3 Our organization is the staff support
4 structure for a larger statewide parent web
5 membership group called POWER-PAC IL. We organize
6 with families across the state centering the voices
7 of predominantly low-income parents of color to
8 ensure the decisionmakers such as the Illinois
9 Commerce Commission are hearing the stories of those
10 most impacted by policy decisions being made.

11 In the case of utilities, low-income
12 communities have struggled with the unaffordability
13 of these basic and necessary services before the
14 COVID-19 crisis hit. These communities in Illinois
15 are being hit the hardest by the virus, itself, and
16 they will also feel the economic repercussions as
17 well.

18 We hope that the Commission will
19 listen to the voices of low-income and working
20 families, people living paycheck to paycheck before
21 the pandemic and are now no longer getting a paycheck
22 at all.

1 Families are forced to focus on the
2 uncertainty of the present moment, many with no
3 income going in, and it's hard to prepare for what
4 the economic landscape will look like after the COVID
5 crisis ends, after emergency protections end, and
6 after moratoriums are lifted.

7 We want to know that there will be
8 consumer protections in place to support communities
9 in economic crisis that will persist long after the
10 public health crisis passes.

11 Even before COVID, we have understood
12 and experienced how hard it is to keep up with
13 payment plans, and as an organization, we want to
14 make sure that as we anticipate repayment after
15 similar moratoriums, we are doing everything we can
16 to create a situation in which people can accurately
17 pay back what they owe with the understanding that
18 the definition of affordability is drastically
19 revised in the shadow of this national crisis.

20 Communities of color have been
21 disproportionately testing positive for the virus and
22 dying from the virus. The new rules for Commission

1 Staff should keep in mind the structural inequities
2 in our society that have allowed this reality.
3 Low-income working families across the state are at
4 the most risk of losing utility service, and we are
5 counting on the Commission to understand this and to
6 move forward with a plan that centers those most in
7 need during this extraordinary time.

8 The utilities have an obligation to
9 provide safe, reliable, and affordable services under
10 Illinois law, and the definition of affordable has
11 changed overnight.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Thank you,
14 Miss Creahan.

15 Next, you will hear from Donna
16 Carpenter.

17 Miss Carpenter, you will also have
18 three minutes, and I will time you on my phone.
19 Could you also please state your name and spell your
20 name for the court reporter? And then you may
21 proceed.

22 MS. CARPENTER: Okay. Good morning. My

1 name is Donna Carpenter, D-o-n-n-a,
2 C-a-r-p-e-n-t-e-r, and I'm also a part of POWER-PAC
3 IL.

4 I'm one of those struggling parents
5 of the Englewood community that has been struggling
6 before the crisis started, and now I'm struggling
7 even more harder now, because I don't work. I'm
8 on a fixed income. I only get that one income, and
9 it's very hard. But by the grace of God, I'm making
10 it.

11 But I just want to make sure that
12 after the crisis is over that they still have
13 something in place, you know, to help just not only
14 my family, but the families in Englewood that's
15 struggling as well.

16 And I just want to say it's hard, and
17 I have a disability son. I'm struggling with his
18 issues, his mental health. They need to put
19 something in place for him as well.

20 And I have a senior that's been
21 stripped of her graduation and prom and all her
22 activities for the year, and, you know, I'm dealing

1 with her, you know, trying to keep her calm and be
2 calm for her and let her know that it's going to be
3 okay. But right now, it's a struggle.

4 And I just wanted to make sure that
5 after everything is over -- because we gonna get
6 through it. We gonna get past this. And I just want
7 to make sure when we do that it's still something in
8 place to also help the other parents in these
9 communities as well as myself.

10 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Thank you,
11 Miss Carpenter. Thank you for taking the time to
12 address the Commission today. We appreciate it.

13 MS. CARPENTER: You're welcome.

14 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: This concludes our
15 requests to speak. So we'll move on to our agenda.
16 We only have three items on our agenda.

17 Item 1 is the Complaint against
18 Illinois-American Water as to billing and faulty
19 water meter readings in Granite City, Illinois.
20 Illinois-American Water moved to dismiss the case for
21 want of prosecution. The complainant did not make
22 specific allegations, failed to file direct and

1 supplemental testimony by the deadlines, and did not
2 appear at the hearings. The Order dismisses the
3 proceeding without prejudice.

4 Any there any objections to approving
5 the Order?

6 (No response.)

7 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Hearing none, the Order
8 is approved.

9 Item 2 concerns the April 2020
10 Solicitation of Bids to sell Standard Energy Products
11 to electric utilities.

12 Are there any objections to approving
13 the Program Administrator's Recommendations on
14 Selection of Winning Bids?

15 (No response.)

16 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Hearing none, the
17 Recommendations are approved.

18 Item 3 concerns a settlement in the
19 Illinois PIRG Education Fund, Inc., et al., versus
20 ICC, that relates to the Next Grid Report and
21 resulting litigation.

22 This settlement will resolve

1 litigation that has been ongoing for two years
2 regarding the Next Grid Report. Per the settlement,
3 the parties agree that the Report does not represent
4 a consensus among the stakeholders and is not
5 intended to advise or guide legislators, regulators,
6 or other policymakers.

7 Are there any objections to approving
8 the Settlement?

9 (No response.)

10 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Hearing none, the
11 Settlement is approved.

12 This concludes our Public Utilities
13 Agenda.

14 Judge Teague Kingsley, do we have any
15 other matters to come before the Commission?

16 JUDGE TEAGUE KINGLSEY: No, Madam Chairman.

17 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Thank you.

18 Before we conclude, I have two items
19 I want to mention. First, I want to thank our staff
20 again for adjusting to these new and different times.
21 The circumstances have changed, but your work ethic
22 and dedication to the Commission have not.

1 And a special thanks again to Jim
2 Zolniererek for taking on additional duties during this
3 critical time to ensure the transition was as smooth
4 as possible. So thank you, Jim.

5 Second, it's with a very heavy heart
6 the Commission is saddened to note the loss of a
7 cherished employee, Alice Johnson, who worked at the
8 Commission for over 20 years.

9 On behalf of the Office of General
10 Counsel, the Bureau where Alice worked, Matt Harvey
11 would like to say a few words.

12 Matt, are you there?

13 MR. HARVEY: I am, Madam Chairman.

14 Thank you, Madam Chairman and
15 Commissioners. My name is Matt Harvey, H-a-r-v-e-y.
16 I'm very honored to speak kind words about Alice
17 Johnson today; although, frankly, I would have given
18 anything to do it at her retirement party instead of
19 under these circumstances.

20 I will try to be brief as Alice
21 didn't like making a fuss.

22 I've known her since -- and we've all

1 known her since she joined the Office of General
2 Counsel in the year 2000. It would probably be more
3 fair to say that she took over the Office of General
4 Counsel in the year 2000. She really ran the office
5 and did it with efficiency and good grace.

6 Mary Stephenson Schroeder, who was
7 our general counsel for many years, put it, I think,
8 very well when she said, I may be over you in had the
9 org chart, but in reality, we all work for Alice.

10 Everybody in the Office of General
11 Counsel from the General Counsel on down knew that if
12 Alice told you to do something, it needed to be done.
13 If she gave you advice, which she did rarely and very
14 discretely, you took it, and if she gave you
15 something to sign, you signed it, making sure to sign
16 next to the little posty note that she put on there
17 to make sure you didn't screw it up.

18 Alice was efficient and professional
19 and businesslike, but she was also well-loved for
20 very good reasons. She smiled often, and it was
21 genuine. She said good things about people, and
22 whenever she was asked, she helped people with the

1 paperwork with understanding, kindness, and a
2 sympathetic ear, and her office was where you went
3 to -- you know, with problems. In many cases, not
4 hers.

5 And frankly, her office was kind of
6 the center of the universe for us. It was the first
7 stop for Springfield staff. It was the first stop
8 for OGC and Commission alumni who wanted to see Alice
9 more than any of the rest of us. And frankly, if you
10 couldn't find somebody, you looked in Alice's office
11 where that person and probably a couple of others
12 were shooting the breeze with Alice, and Alice liked
13 that because it allowed her to talk to people while
14 getting through the formidable amount of work she did
15 every day.

16 She was devoted to her family. Her
17 husband, Kelly; her daughter, Sherry; and son-in-law,
18 Sebastian, have really suffered a grievous loss, and
19 our hearts and thoughts and sympathy have to be with
20 them.

21 Many people might have said that
22 Alice walked in beauty. She went through life

1 cheerfully, and she harmoniously spread her own
2 unique blend of good nature and commonsense and
3 orderliness, kindness, and decency among the people
4 that she met with every day.

5 Of course, at this point, Alice would
6 probably say if she were here, well, Matt, that's
7 nice of you, but you owe me two time sheets and an
8 employment evaluation that I have been after you
9 since February about, so if you can stop talking and
10 get to those, I'd appreciate it.

11 So I will close by saying that Alice
12 Johnson was one of the finest people ever to come on
13 board in the Commission, and we were lucky to have
14 her in our lives for 20 years.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Thank you, Matt. We
17 appreciate it. Our thoughts and prayers remain with
18 her family, and we honor her memory by remembering
19 all the ways she made the Commission a better place
20 to work.

21 Do any of the Commissioners have
22 anything else to discuss?

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(No response.)

CHAIRMAN ZALEWSKI: Hearing none and
without objection, the meeting is adjourned. Thank
you.

(WHEREUPON, the above-entitled
matter was adjourned.)