

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
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BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
TRENTON, NJ

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IN THE MATTER OF
THE UTILITIES' RESPONSE
TO TROPICAL STORM ISAIAS

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COMPUTERIZED TRANSCRIPT of the stenographic notes of the proceedings in the above entitled matter as taken by DENISE L. SWEET, a Certified Court Reporter and Registered Professional Reporter, with all parties appearing via ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE, on Friday, January 29, 2021, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon.

JH BUEHRER & ASSOCIATES
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1 A P P E A R A N C E S

2

3 Board of Public Utilities:

4 Joseph L. Fiordaliso, President

5 Mary-Anna Holden, Commissioner

6 Dianne Solomon, Commissioner

7 Upendra Chivukula, Commissioner

8 Bob Gordon, Commissioner

9 Aida Camacho, Secretary

10

11 Public Participation:

12 Richard Wolfe, Mayor, East Amwell

13 Al Ferro, Committeeman, Millstone Township

14 Stefanie Brand, Esq., Division of Rate Counsel

15 Klaus Brinkrode

16 Jim Fakult, President JCP&L

17 Jeff Tittel

18 Leon Petelle

19 Rozella Clyde

20 Ed Minall

21 Mike Strano

22

23

24

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1 first of all, want to thank everyone for joining us

2 this morning in what is our first quarterly public

3 comment meeting and we're very excited about it. We

4 really feel that it affords an opportunity to

5 increase the level of transparency between the Board

6 and the public on important issues of public

7 interest and to give members of the public an

8 opportunity to speak directly to Board

9 Commissioners.

10 As you know, the Board of Public

11 Utilities is a quasi judicial entity and which is

12 run really by very strict ethical rules and so it's

13 almost like a court of law in many instances and

14 sometimes we're legislative bodies. Like in the

15 judicial area, we're limited in what we can do and

16 limited in what we can make public until the Board

17 actually acts on it. So, these quarterly meetings

18 will hopefully give folks an opportunity, since they

19 do not have the opportunity at a regular Board

20 meeting, to discuss certain issues and we'll have

21 topics, as we have today, that folks can speak to

22 and then give us information, because we always want

23 to hear what is happening on the ground. We always

24 want to hear what you are experiencing, because we

25 learn from it, just as the utilities learn from

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1 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: It is 10

2 o'clock and I do want to call this meeting to order.

3 Aida, would you please read the public notice.

4 MS. CAMACHO: Thank you, Mr.

5 President, and good morning, Commissioners.

6 Adequate public notice has been given pursuant to

7 the Open Public's Meeting Act. Notice has been

8 posted at the Board's office and website, e-mailed

9 to the Department of State and to newspapers of

10 broad circulation within the State.

11 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,

12 Aida. And before you take roll call, I just want to

13 mention the fact that I heard through the grapevine

14 that Commissioner Gordon will be joining us late.

15 So, if you would take roll call,

16 please?

17 MS. CAMACHO: Commissioner Holden?

18 COMMISSIONER HOLDEN: Yes.

19 MS. CAMACHO: Commissioner Solomon?

20 COMMISSIONER SOLOMON: Here.

21 MS. CAMACHO: Commissioner

22 Chivukula?

23 COMMISSIONER CHIVUKULA: Here.

24 MS. CAMACHO: President Fiordaliso?

25 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Here. I,

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1 that. So, it's important for your participation.

2 Today we will be hearing from you

3 on our State utilities' recovery from the tropical

4 storm in August where 1.4 million people lost power.

5 We provided our assessments of the utilities'

6 recovery in a November report in which we identified

7 certain issues that should be addressed and

8 potential areas for improvement. And we want to

9 hear from you if you agree with those assessments,

10 if you have additional recommendations.

11 These include advanced metering

12 infrastructure or smart meters, taking care of

13 overgrown vegetation, and improving communications

14 with customers and locally elected officials. I

15 know how it feels as a former mayor when a

16 constituent calls and you kind of throw up your

17 hands, because you don't know the answer to a

18 question. No elected official really wants to be

19 put in a position where they don't know. So, that

20 kind of communication is necessary, that kind of

21 communication is warranted, particularly in

22 situations where we have so many outages.

23 Also included in the report were

24 recommendations for utilities to further refine

25 their preparation and response protocols for the

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1 next storm. And you can rest assured we're going to
2 have a next storm and a next storm and a next storm.
3 Tracking and valuing infrastructure hardening and
4 resilience projects, which we have been working to
5 and enhancing ever since Super Storm Sandy.
6 The Board has already taken action
7 on recommendations, for example, on smart meters.
8 We recently approved a proposal from PSE&G to
9 install smart meters for all of its customers. We
10 also continue to engage with all of our utilities on
11 the issue of vegetation management. If that tree
12 comes down or that branch comes down and hits a
13 wire, we have a lot of people out.
14 We have heard from the utilities
15 and from local officials and we are here today to
16 hear directly from residents and other stakeholders
17 and local officials who are effected by the storm.
18 I look forward to your suggestions to help us make
19 your lives just a little bit better. Let me revise
20 that by saying to make all of our lives a little bit
21 better, because we wind up in the same situation
22 that you do and your constituents do without power
23 and so on. I look forward to your suggestions to
24 help all of our lives look better.
25 Do any other Commissioners wish to

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1 make any opening remarks? I am joined here today
2 with my colleagues, Commissioner Holden,
3 Commissioner Solomon, Commissioner Chivukula and as
4 I indicated Commissioner Gordon will join us later
5 on.
6 Some logistical information, so you
7 are all aware, only the preregistered speakers will
8 have the ability to speak and ask questions and the
9 registration ended a week ago today. We will not
10 have chat feature enabled and cannot accommodate
11 anyone who didn't register or speak before the
12 deadline.
13 That doesn't necessarily mean
14 you're shut out. Any member of the public who did
15 not register will be able to watch via the live
16 stream on You Tube, just like we have for our
17 regular Board agenda meetings. If anyone who did
18 not register wishes to submit comments after the
19 meeting, they may do so via the Board secretary at
20 Board.Secretary@BPU.NJ.gov. I would suggest that
21 you do it via e-mail as opposed to sending something
22 through the postal service. As you know, like many,
23 many businesses, we're primarily working remotely,
24 so in order to assess your comments in written form,
25 timely, on a timely basis, please use the e-mail

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1 venue and, again, it's Board.Secretary@BPU.NJ.gov.
2 And that's going to bring us to the
3 public comment period.
4 COMMISSIONER CHIVUKULA: Mr.
5 President, I'm sorry. I missed my turn. I wanted
6 to concur your comments and to mention comments
7 about the public portion and having this type of
8 interaction with the public is going to be quite
9 fruitful and we have restrictions, as you said,
10 being a quasi judicial body and we cannot discuss
11 the docketed matters because of ex-parte
12 communications, but we can talk about policy issues
13 and we can take the feedback and suggestions from
14 the public. I think it's a great start for 2021. I
15 want to thank you for your leadership.
16 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,
17 Commissioner. I appreciate that.
18 Our Board secretary, Aida Camacho
19 Welch, will be reading off the list of speakers as
20 we go down and when she reads your name, please
21 start your dissertation. And this is being
22 recorded, so we do have a court reporter who is
23 taking minutes of this meeting, so it would be
24 helpful for the court reporter if you would also
25 spell your name and indicate the affiliation you

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1 have, if any.
2 Aida, I'm going to pass it to you
3 now.
4 COMMISSIONER SOLOMON: And speak
5 slowly.
6 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: But carry a
7 big stick.
8 MS. CAMACHO: Thank you, Mr.
9 President. I would like to call upon Franklin
10 Township Environmental Commission Member Robin
11 Suydam. I don't see their name on the list here.
12 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Mr. Suydam,
13 are you with us yet?
14 MS. CAMACHO: Shall I move on?
15 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Yes, please.
16 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
17 upon East Amwell Mayor Richard Wolfe. Please state
18 your full name for the record.
19 MAYOR WOLFE: My full name is
20 Richard, R-I-C-H-A-R-D, Wolfe, W-O-L-F-E. As you
21 noted, I am the Mayor of East Amwell Township, about
22 to start my third term as Mayor. I'm also a member
23 of our Township Committee, Planning Board, Farmland
24 and Open Space Preservation Committee and Recycling
25 Committee.

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1 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Mayor?
2 MAYOR WOLFE: Yes.
3 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: I just, I
4 don't mean to interrupt you, I don't want to forget
5 to mention the fact that you did send us a letter
6 and we appreciate that. And I think we're all on
7 the same page with what you wrote in your letter. I
8 wanted to thank you for communicating with us.
9 MAYOR WOLFE: Well, I'd like to
10 thank you for actually paying attention to my
11 letter, because as I reviewed your November report,
12 it became very clear to me that I did not waste my
13 time writing the nine page letter and I greatly
14 appreciate that you did pay attention to the letter.
15 I'm going to follow the advice that
16 I give to others when I say that the best
17 presentations tend to have one thing in common,
18 they're short. And while I can talk about a host of
19 things today, I'm really going to limit my
20 discussion to two items. My discussion today is
21 going to focus solely on East Amwell and solely on
22 the major power outage that was caused by the August
23 tropical storm. And I'm also going to focus solely
24 on JCP&L, because they are the primary provider of
25 electricity in East Amwell and when I say primary,

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1 virtually all of our residents are JCP&L customers.
2 And I'm looking to address two
3 issues today. The first being JCP&L's poor
4 communications both with its customers and with the
5 elected officials. And, second, I'd like to talk
6 about the JCP&L's poor management of the August
7 power outage. I'm going to give you a brief
8 summary, background summary, and then I'm going to
9 ask the Board two questions.
10 The November BPU report states,
11 and, I quote, "Staff heard the greatest number of
12 complaints about communication issues from JCP&L
13 customers and elected officials." The report then
14 goes on to cite a number of examples. The report
15 then makes three recommendations that are relevant
16 to this issue, at least from East Amwell's
17 perspective.
18 The first, which is your
19 recommendation number one, is that, "The staff
20 recommends the Board direct the EDCs improve the
21 ETRs automatically generated by their outage
22 management system and, in particular, to test the
23 OMS under stressed conditions. Staff recommends
24 that each utility file a plan to improve the
25 accuracy of the ETRs in order to provide more

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1 reliable information for elected officials and
2 customers."
3 Recommendation number five, "Staff
4 recommends the Board direct the EDCs to develop a
5 plan that proactively educates customers and elected
6 officials on the restoration process. The plan
7 should be completed within 90 days and address how
8 customers and elected officials will be informed
9 while restoration is ongoing."
10 And then, finally, recommendation
11 number six, which is directed solely at JCP&L,
12 "Staff recommends the Board direct JCP&L to
13 establish a process of communicating with elected
14 officials and providing situational awareness about
15 realtime restoration activities in their community.
16 This process should include and not be limited to
17 major restoration work, any staging area activity,
18 concerns regarding critical community needs and road
19 closure issues."
20 Next I'd like to give a little bit
21 of background about poor management. And, by the
22 way, I agree with the three recommendations. I
23 strongly agree with the three recommendations I just
24 read.
25 Poor management, in my letter to

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1 the BPU I stated the following, "JCP&L was very
2 disorganized in its handling of virtually all
3 aspects of the restoration of power in East Amwell
4 in the days following Isaias. This disorganization
5 invariably led to significant delays in restoring
6 power to the residents of East Amwell." I gave
7 several examples. "One, JCP&L did a poor job in
8 identifying the location of outages. Neighborhoods
9 that had power were shown on JCP&L's outage map and
10 on our representative's list as not having power,
11 conversely, neighborhoods that were without power
12 were shown as having no problems. In fact, with
13 respect to two neighborhoods, I called our JCP&L
14 representative, the representative that is available
15 to the mayors, to tell him that we have two
16 neighborhoods that were without power and were not
17 shown as such on their outage map and he is
18 insisting that they have power. And in one case I
19 ran past the neighborhood about an hour before I
20 called him and there were multiple generators
21 running. So, not only was I getting e-mails from
22 the residents, but I physically saw the generator or
23 heard the generators running and he's telling me,
24 no, there's no problems in these neighborhoods.
25 Second, the repair crews and tree

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1 cutting crews were sitting idle in their trucks for
2 hours waiting to be dispatched by JCP&L. How do we
3 know they were waiting to be dispatched? Because
4 the residents would ask them, why are you sitting
5 here? And the crews would say, we're waiting to be
6 dispatched. This wasn't one or two isolated
7 incidents. I received numerous e-mails from
8 residents telling me such.
9 Three, the repair crews were
10 wandering East Amwell aimlessly trying to find
11 particular roads for the location of damage. I
12 recognize that JCP&L brought into East Amwell repair
13 crews from outside the area. But, with the
14 technology that we have today, I can't for the life
15 of me understand why repair crews are driving around
16 trying to find roads. On our cars we can punch in
17 an address, on our phones we can punch in an address
18 and it will show you, it will take you to where you
19 need to go.
20 Finally, and perhaps most
21 disturbingly from a public safety perspective, live
22 downed power lines were not deactivated for days.
23 In one case, four days. The crew that came out to
24 deal with that downed power line told a resident
25 that they were amazed that a live line was left down

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1 not deactivated for four days.
2 So, with that bit of background,
3 I'm going to pose two questions and after I pose
4 them, if you choose to answer them in this Zoom
5 meeting, I defer to you. I don't know what
6 constraints you have in responding to these
7 questions, but I'd like to pose them.
8 First, we all know that for years
9 JCP&L has had communications problems. This is not
10 something unique to the tropical storm in August.
11 My wife and I have been JCP&L customers since 1999
12 and every time there's a major storm or a major
13 outage, I should say, and even when there are not
14 major outages, but material outages, there are
15 significant communications problems. And every time
16 this has been raised with JCP&L, the response is
17 always the same, it's a glitch in our technology.
18 Well, when are they going to fix that glitch? I
19 haven't seen any improvement at all since August.
20 We continue to have the same problems when we have
21 power outages.
22 So, what I'd like to know is what
23 the BPU is going to do to force JCP&L to address
24 this issue? They're not addressing it voluntarily
25 and something needs to be done, both from the

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1 perspective of the customers and the elected
2 officials.
3 Second, the BPU report, the
4 November report, did not address at all the poor
5 management exhibited by JCP&L during Isaias and I
6 would like to know does that mean that the BPU
7 believes that JCP&L is handling these major power
8 outages efficiently? Now, the report does note that
9 in Isaias JCP&L restored all of its customers within
10 seven days in New Jersey, whereas in Sandy it took
11 JCP&L 14 days to restore all its customers and
12 perhaps the implication was that JCP&L has become
13 more efficient since Sandy. That, to me, is not a
14 good comparison or a basis for concluding that JCP&L
15 has become more efficient, because I can tell you in
16 East Amwell, the damage that was done by Sandy was
17 many, many times worse than what was done by Isaias.
18 And I know that, because I run six days a week
19 anywhere from an hour to three hours. I went out
20 running the day after Sandy. I saw the damage. I
21 went out running after Isaias. I saw the damage.
22 There was no comparison.
23 I also discussed it with our DPW
24 supervisor, who agreed that there was no comparison
25 between the two, so the fact that JCP&L completed

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1 its restoration efforts in seven days in Isaias,
2 whereas it was 14 days in Sandy, in my view, does
3 not mean that they operated more efficiently.
4 So, just to repeat my two
5 questions, first I'd like to know what the BPU is
6 going to do to force JCP&L to address the
7 communication issue. And, second, does the BPU
8 believe that there are meaningful management
9 inefficiencies in the way JCP&L is handling these
10 major power outages?
11 And, with that, I am finished with
12 my presentation and my questions. Thank you.
13 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,
14 Mayor. The president of JCP&L will be speaking
15 later on and I'm going to allow him to answer those
16 questions, but I do want you to know that many
17 meetings have been put in orders and approved by the
18 Board to improve resiliency and to improve the time
19 period in which power is restored. We have
20 conducted and continue to conduct management audits
21 of the utilities generally and then we order them to
22 do certain things and we stay on top of that. And
23 it is an ongoing process.
24 We are not at the point where our
25 system is universally resilient to the point we

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1 would like it to be, but we are working with the
2 utilities and we hope that that will continue to
3 improve, but I'll let Mr. Fakult answer that
4 question when it's his turn to speak.
5 MAYOR WOLFE: Thank you.
6 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,
7 Mayor. Aida?
8 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to
9 please note for the record that Commissioner Gordon
10 has joined the meeting. Commissioner Gordon? I see
11 him disappear on the --
12 COMMISSIONER HOLDEN: He's muted.
13 COMMISSIONER SOLOMON: He's muted.
14 MS. CAMACHO: He is on the --
15 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Okay. Why
16 don't you continue?
17 MS. CAMACHO: Okay. I would like
18 to call upon Millstone Township Committee Member Al
19 Ferro. Please state your full name for the record.
20 COMMITTEEMAN FERRO: Good morning
21 everybody. Al Ferro, F, as in Frank, E-R-R-O,
22 Committeeman, Millstone Township.
23 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Welcome,
24 Committeeman.
25 COMMITTEEMAN FERRO: Thank you for

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1 having me and good morning to everybody. I was
2 going to make a statement and Mayor Wolfe had
3 already said a lot of things I was going to say, so
4 I will shorten my statement.
5 I would like to let the Board know
6 that because of Hurricane Isaias, all of Millstone
7 was out, without power, and the statement made that
8 all residents in New Jersey were back with power
9 within seven days isn't correct. Millstone
10 residents were, in fact myself were out, I was out
11 for nine days and our surrounding neighborhood was
12 out for nine days and other parts of Millstone were
13 out for as long as 13 days.
14 Now, I don't know if you guys know
15 Millstone. We're very rural and we are entirely on
16 well and septic and to not have power is a major,
17 major health and safety issue for us. We have no
18 water, no sewerage, no cooking, no heat. I mean,
19 there would be zero habitable living conditions
20 without power. That's how dependent we are on
21 power. And to wait, you know, nine to 13 days for
22 JCP&L to restore power is just not acceptable in
23 this in this day in age, as Mayor Wolfe had stated,
24 with the technology that we have.
25 Like Mayor Wolfe said, I was called

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1 and I have numerous photos of residents taking
2 pictures of crews just sitting there and not for 30
3 minutes or an hour, again, as Mayor Wolfe said, for
4 hours, five, six, seven hours, waiting and the
5 residents got frustrated, like, why aren't you guys
6 doing anything they said we need to get our work
7 release or work order in order to start the job.
8 And unless they get that work order from JCP&L, they
9 cannot commence work.
10 That's a problem. You know, you're
11 paying crews to sit there and you have people who
12 are in dire need of the electrical power and to
13 waste five, six, seven hours, because they didn't
14 get the go-ahead is just a failure in the system.
15 With that said, we have a lot of
16 elderly and single parent homes that are more prone
17 during the winter months, as opposed to the summer
18 months, that is a heat issue. And when the weather
19 outside is extremely cold, the home gets cold very
20 quickly and that's a concern for us. So, we would
21 have to open up our community center and deploy, you
22 know, our DPW and try to reach out to these people
23 to make sure that they're safe and if they're not
24 then, you know, we have to do what we have to do to
25 protect our residents and we bring whoever we need

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1 to bring to safety by bringing them to our community
2 center or bringing them water or provide, you know,
3 if residents have generators or an extra generator,
4 we try to, you know, help out each other and provide
5 those services that JCP&L should be providing to
6 begin with.
7 Now, every month everybody gets a
8 bill in the mail and every month we're required to
9 pay it. And as such, you know, Millstone residents
10 in particular, as well as every other municipality,
11 if you don't pay it because of services not being
12 performed, then eventually that service will be cut
13 off, even if that service is not being provided.
14 So, there's got to be a give and take here with, you
15 know, the contractual issues. And I know it's
16 regulated by, you know, State mandates and statutes
17 and stuff, but there's got to be, again, like Mayor
18 Wolfe said, a better form of communication.
19 I've reached out to roughly 20
20 municipalities and I'm getting them together and
21 I've spoken to a lot of different mayors,
22 councilmen, assemblymen and women and they're all on
23 the same page, that there is a breakdown of
24 communication. There's a breakdown of response,
25 especially with municipalities. You know, people

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1 are calling us with the phones off the hook, because
2 residents want to know what they should do. If
3 they're going to be out for a few hours, they can
4 endure that. If they're going to be out for a few
5 days, they know how to prepare for that. If they're
6 going to be out for an excessive period of time,
7 that changes the entire game plan of what a family
8 is going to be required to do to protect themselves.
9 And if we, as elected officials,
10 don't have that information or that's not being
11 communicated to us properly or, you know, again,
12 like Mayor Wolfe said, you know, they have in their
13 grid people that have power and on other portions of
14 their grid they have people that don't have power,
15 but it's the opposite, that's really not acceptable,
16 because it further causes issues for their response.
17 So, you know, moving forward what I
18 would like and I had a whole list of questions to
19 ask and I don't think it would be proper at this
20 time, because I'd be wasting your time as Mayor
21 Wolfe has already asked several of those questions.
22 I've spoken to Upper Freehold, Manalapan Township,
23 Atlantic Highlands, Hazlet, Holmdel, Aberdeen,
24 Keyport, Robbinsville, Plumsted, New Providence and
25 I will reach out to Mayor Wolfe personally to speak

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1 to him as well and bring together a consortium of
2 municipalities that we can collaborate and bring a
3 directed response, a directed action plan from our
4 point of view as elected officials hearing all of
5 the complaints that we have from our residents and
6 ratepayers to this Board and recommend, you know,
7 viable milestones that should be implemented moving
8 forward.
9 And, again, echoing the last ten
10 years of how JCP&L has been handling things is in
11 the past. I would like to sit down with a power
12 group, you know, I'll volunteer my services if you'd
13 like, and sit down with a member of your Board, a
14 member of JCP&L, a member of maybe the committee on
15 law and safety, and sit down and come up with an
16 action plan that have the members that can make
17 decisions and enact change moving forward. Not
18 pointing fingers at anybody. It's just, this is the
19 state of affairs that we're in and there are flaws
20 in the system that effect lives and effect the
21 safety and health of residents and it's not good
22 that in 2021 we're even discussing this. We should
23 be collaborating together and moving forward with
24 not pointing fingers, again, at JCP&L, but working
25 with them to come up with a better plan that will

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1 work and be mutually beneficial for both people.
2 One of the plans that I've come up
3 with and I've spoken to other mayors and councilmen,
4 is when we're responsible to redo our roads and the
5 county's responsible to repave their roads in our
6 towns, why not have a plan with JCP&L, Verizon,
7 Comcast and any other company out there that has
8 wiring that's exposed and when we dig up our roads
9 we have a coordinated plan with JCP&L and Verizon
10 and everybody else to come in and maybe start an
11 infrastructure improvement plan where they can put
12 those wires and conduits underground and saving the
13 cost of the repaving and the relining of the road,
14 because we're already going to pay for that.
15 And when you take 20 municipalities
16 that have to do hundreds of miles of roads, that can
17 be hundreds of millions of dollars that JCP&L can
18 save and use that money to improve their
19 infrastructure. So, that could be a cost savings to
20 them, but a major improvement to all of the
21 municipalities and the residents of New Jersey.
22 And I have a whole bunch of other
23 ideas that I'd like to sit down with key people and
24 come up with a good action plan and move forward in
25 a cohesive way so we all benefit from it.

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1 So, with that said, I would like
2 feedback from your Board to a power group that
3 contains members that have positions of power and
4 decisionmaking, you know, abilities so when we do
5 come up with a plan that is financially viable and
6 feasible and it works for both, then would I like to
7 enact that, you know, with timelines, of course,
8 that are realistic for both JCP&L and New Jersey
9 residents as well. So, I would like to hear, you
10 know, from you on how to move forward with this,
11 what the timeline would be if you guys are
12 acceptable to creating a power group and I'm just
13 here to help and voice the concerns of many people,
14 you know, especially Millstone Township residents
15 and a lot of other people in New Jersey. So, it
16 transcends just Monmouth County. It's New Jersey
17 and it seems to be anybody who has JCP&L is effected
18 by this in a negative way.
19 Other utilities, when there's a
20 power outage, they offer reimbursements to the
21 residents. JCP&L does not. You know, a lot of
22 people have extra refrigerators and if they store
23 food outside or inside and there's power out, you
24 know, for several days, that goes bad, that's a
25 direct loss to these people, to the ratepayers, with

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1 no reimbursement.
2 So, again, it would be a lot of
3 questions that I have to ask, you know, both the
4 Board and I would rather do that in a power group
5 setting so we can actually achieve goals and make
6 this better moving forward. So, thank you for the
7 time and I appreciate you allowing me to be here.
8 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,
9 Committeeman, and I'm going to have a fellow by the
10 name Chance Likings reach out to you and let's get
11 this, quote, power group organized and see where it
12 goes. I think you will find many of your questions
13 are being addressed as we speak, but I think your
14 idea of power group is extremely important and one
15 that we'd like to know more about.
16 COMMITTEEMAN FERRO: I'm here to
17 help. I'll volunteer my time. You let me know when
18 and where.
19 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Okay. Very
20 good. Thank you.
21 COMMITTEEMAN FERRO: Thank you.
22 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: All right.
23 Aida?
24 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
25 upon Atlantic Highlands Councilman Jon Crowley.

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1 Please state your full name for the record.
2 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Councilman,
3 are you a muted, sir? I don't see the councilman.
4 All right. Let's go to the next person, please.
5 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
6 upon Stefanie Brand, Director of the New Jersey
7 Division of Rate Counsel. Please state your full
8 name for the record.
9 MS. BRAND: Good morning. I'm
10 Stefanie Brand and that's Stefanie with an F and
11 it's B-R-A-N-D. And, as the secretary mentioned, I
12 am the Director of the New Jersey Division of Rate
13 Counsel. And for those of you who don't know about
14 our office, we are charged by statute with
15 representing all of the ratepayers of this State and
16 so we are involved in just about every case in front
17 of the Board of Public Utilities and we have been
18 involved in a lot of these issues for a very long
19 time. We very much appreciate that the Board is
20 having this hearing and it's very much appreciate
21 the involvement of the public officials here today.
22 I did submit my testimony this morning to the
23 secretary's office. I hope that she will distribute
24 it to the Commissioners, so I'm not going to read it
25 today. I'm going to spare you that.

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1 But, I do want to give you the
2 highlights, because I'm coming here today with some
3 very concrete recommendations of things that I think
4 we can do to try to make things a little bit better.
5 I understand that we are never going to really be
6 able to prevent all outages or ensure that all
7 outages are resolved quickly from a fiscal
8 standpoint. It's just not feasible to underground
9 all of our wires or hire enough workers to do that.
10 But, we do have to do better. There's just no
11 question about it and we've been talking about this
12 for a very long time and I do share the view of the
13 elected officials that have spoken already today
14 that it doesn't seem to be getting better, even
15 though we are absolutely getting more reliant on
16 electricity and we are going to be facing more
17 storms. There's just no question that with climate
18 change we are going to be facing this issue over and
19 over again and we are getting more reliant on
20 electricity.
21 Look at the forum that we're in
22 today. You know, we're just now getting used to the
23 fact that when electricity goes out, our phones go
24 out, but imagine what it's going to be like when
25 once electricity goes out we don't, not only are we

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1 go to go lose our phones and our TV, but we're also
2 not going to be able to charge our cars and we're
3 not going to be able to use public transportation or
4 turn on the heat. So, we really do have to find a
5 way to address these issues.
6 And so I'm coming here today with
7 to try to offer some concrete suggestions that I
8 think might be help. And I think it begins with
9 some basic ideas about accountability and
10 transparency and a focus on reliability that I think
11 we need to increase.
12 Now, I'll start with
13 accountability, because as I know the Commissioners
14 know, these are not -- the customers of these
15 utilities are captive. They cannot simply leave
16 when they don't like the service that they're
17 getting from their utility. They are stuck with
18 them. And the consequences for providing bad
19 service are really hearings like this or maybe even
20 in the legislature or some bad press, but it's not
21 like the customers have the ability to say, I don't
22 like the service you're giving me, so I'm going to
23 go to somebody else.
24 After Hurricane Irene and Super
25 Storm Sandy, the Board did issue a series of orders

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1 that were designed to kind of replace that ability
2 and make the utilities do some things that were
3 supposed to improve their performance. And the
4 Board also invited the utilities to propose some
5 programs, some infrastructure programs, that were
6 supposed to help our resilience. And they did that
7 and but, as far as I can understand, there has not
8 really been a systematic review of whether or not
9 the things that were done after Sandy and Irene,
10 whether or not they where, in fact, what we needed
11 to do and whether or not those were the measures
12 that we needed to do in order to improve our
13 resilience.
14 We know, what we do know is that
15 altogether ratepayers have spent over \$6 billion
16 since Irene and Sandy to try to improve our
17 resilience. It's 1.7 billion on the electric side
18 and 4.5 billion on the gas side. And, you know, we
19 check very carefully, both Board staff and rate
20 counsel, to make sure that the utilities are, in
21 fact, spending the money on what they said they were
22 going to spend the money and most of that has been
23 to raise substations and replace gas mains. And
24 they have spent it and they have spent it on what
25 they said they were going to spend it. But, what we

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1 haven't seen is that review to say is that what we
2 should have been doing to bring about better results
3 when the storm comes.
4 In the staff report, the staff
5 noted that it's difficult to measure whether or not
6 these programs have brought benefits without
7 sufficient evaluation time, but that it appears the
8 post-Sandy completed projects experience less damage
9 than the older, more vulnerable overhead
10 infrastructure. And that may be true, but I submit
11 that we need a better analysis. We urge the Board
12 to undertake an independent, don't just ask the
13 utilities to do the analysis, but undertake an
14 independent and comprehensive and systematic
15 analysis of the storm resilience programs that have
16 been undertaken to date and determine whether we are
17 implementing the right approach or whether or not we
18 need to do some other things or do something
19 different in order to achieve better results.
20 We also believe that the Board
21 should look at some accountability issues that are
22 inherent in the Board's regulations, the Board's
23 reliability regulations at NJAC 14:5-8.10. Those
24 regulations basically rely on two metrics to measure
25 reliability. It's the customer average interruption

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1 duration index, known as CAIDI, and then safety
2 system average interruption frequency index. One's
3 duration, one's frequency. And so under those the
4 Board looks at a five-year period and compares the
5 utilities' performance to its performance during
6 that five-year period. It was recently updated to
7 2010 to 2014. And if the performance compared to
8 that five-year period is at least as good with a
9 very standard deviation of 1.5, then they're deemed
10 to be in compliance.
11 Now, but this is actually a really
12 easy standard to meet for a few reasons. First of
13 all, major storms are excluded from that data. And
14 that actually does make sense on a certain level,
15 because if you include major storms, it's going to
16 skew the data and you're not really going to be able
17 to tell whether their normal reliability is good or
18 not. And I understand that that makes some sense,
19 but then we need to have another standard to look at
20 for actual storm performance and we don't have that.
21 And I think that it would be great if the Board
22 would either, would establish just a storm
23 reliability metric that we'd look at.
24 Also, the way the regulation is set
25 up, if you were not good between 2010 and 2014, you

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1 kind of get a pass. Right? The companies that had
2 good reliability in 2010 to 2014 are held to a
3 higher standard than the ones that weren't good.
4 So, it did, in some ways, it rewards mediocrity and
5 that's something that I think we should deal with.
6 And then, finally, the
7 consequences, if you don't meet the standards of the
8 regulation are pretty weak. That's no penalties in
9 the reg, there's no time deadlines to achieve
10 compliance and there are no specific corrective
11 actions mentioned. I think the regs would allow the
12 Board to set a higher standard or bring in
13 enforcement action, but, to my knowledge, that
14 hasn't been done.
15 So, we would also urge the Board to
16 look at that regulation and see whether or not it
17 can be strengthened and we would most certainly urge
18 the Board to establish within that regulation a
19 specific storm metric that these utilities would be
20 held to and actually have a, you know, an
21 enforcement mechanism that you can hold them to.
22 And another area where we think the
23 Board could take action is on transparency. The
24 Board has really required a significant number of
25 measures that the utilities have been required to

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1 take, as the President mentioned, since Sandy and
2 Irene and a lot of those have required a variety of
3 recordkeeping and reporting requirements that
4 provide very valuable information. All of those
5 records are reported to the Board, we get some of
6 them, but not all of them, and it's filed with the
7 Board, some of it could be confidential, but most of
8 it is not, but most of it is never posted. And the
9 Board has done tremendous work in the last few years
10 to increase the amount of information that's posted
11 on its website. We would urge the Board to include
12 this information among that and include that
13 information. I personally believe that when
14 regulated entities know that the information they
15 are reporting will be made public that they strive
16 to make it look as good as possible. And it's a
17 motivator for compliance and improvement. And so we
18 would also urge the Board to post that information
19 on their website. I think that would be very
20 helpful.

21 Another area that I think the Board
22 could look at, the President mentioned this in his
23 opening remarks, is AMI. The staff report noted
24 that AMI should assist with storm response, but then
25 also noted that Rockland Electric, which was the one

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1 utility that had AMI at the time of Tropical Storm
2 Isaias came through, was slow to respond. And now
3 we have other utilities who will be installing AMI
4 over the next several years and they have cited
5 storm response as one of the benefits of AMI, but
6 what I have heard from many of my counterparts and
7 consultants who work in other states that have AMI
8 is that even though AMI has many useful
9 functionalities, if you don't use them for those
10 purposes, then those benefits don't accrue.

11 So, we urge the Board to be very
12 diligent and steadfast in making sure that these use
13 cases that the utilities are touting in promoting
14 the benefits of AMI do actually come to pass,
15 because we've heard in other states that they were
16 told that these benefits would come to pass and then
17 they don't. So, this should be a benefit of AMI.
18 Let's make sure that it actually is and that the
19 utilities do take advantage of these use cases and
20 that if there are storm benefits that we can get
21 from AMI that we do, in fact, get them.

22 And then, finally, I think, you
23 know, the most important issue is focus. We are in
24 a tremendous period of transformation in the energy
25 sector and it's not surprising that the utilities

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1 and their investors want to be part of it, but we
2 can't forget that the most important things that the
3 utilities do is keep the lights on. And every time
4 we look at this issue, every single time, including
5 the staff report, it's clear that falling trees are
6 the biggest source of outages in storms. Trees
7 account for one quarter to one third of outages in a
8 storm and equipment failure is accounting for about
9 another 20 percent. So, why is it, why is it
10 enhanced tree trimming or equipment maintenance the
11 first order of post-storm business? Well, because,
12 for the most part, those costs are considered
13 operations and maintenance expenses, rather than
14 capital costs. And that means that while the
15 utilities get paid for tree trimming, they do not
16 earn the same level of profit that they do for a
17 capital expense. So, the focus is on Wall Street
18 and for maximizing their profits rather than on Main
19 Street and produce reducing the outages.

20 Now, to the Board's credit, you did
21 very much enhance the tree trimming requirements
22 after Super Storm Sandy and I have no reason to
23 believe that the utilities aren't complying with
24 those requirements, but they do complain about
25 various obstacles to doing better, like off right of

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1 way trees and things like that. But, what we have
2 found is that once you start proposing ways to get
3 around those obstacles, such as knocking on the door
4 of a house and saying, hey, would you mind if we
5 trim that tree that's on your property, because it
6 could knock down this power line, they're getting
7 tremendous cooperation from the homeowners. And,
8 so, a lot of these comments and fixes are things
9 that will bring substantial improvement.

10 Working with the Board's energy
11 division we have begun to ask in the context of rate
12 cases and mergers for what we call either
13 reliability or tree trimming improvement plans. In
14 the last, you'll be happy to hear, mayors, that in
15 the last JCP&L rate case, we asked for a trim
16 trimming improvement plan from JCP&L and it is now
17 in place and hopefully will bring about some
18 benefits. We did this a while back with Atlantic
19 City Electric we did a reliability improvement plan
20 and what we found is that when utilities embrace
21 these plans, we actually do see improvement. They
22 have been very successful and we just believe that
23 once the utilities focus on the bread and butter,
24 that there is improvement and it can be done. And
25 we understand that tree trimming is not exotic or

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1 cutting edge, but it is central and it needs to be
 2 central and we hope that the Board will send that
 3 message to the utilities that, yes, we want you to
 4 be part of the transformation of this industry, but
 5 we also want you to do the job that we really need
 6 to you do, which is to keep the lights on.
 7 Thank you.
 8 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,
 9 Director, and there's just a couple things that you
 10 mentioned that I feel obligated to mention.
 11 Number one, that message has been
 12 sent many times and the utilities know well that one
 13 of the things that we do monitor closely is tree
 14 trimming. And one of the things that raises the
 15 most problem among many residents, and I'd like to
 16 see your report regarding that, is trying to cut
 17 trees on private property off the right of way.
 18 Number two, one of the basic things
 19 that government has as a tool to help keep, I hate
 20 to use this term, folks in line, is to fine them.
 21 You know, hit them in the pocketbook. And we have
 22 been working with the State legislature for years to
 23 try to increase the fine levels and it has gone no
 24 where. And I think you're aware of the maximum
 25 amount that we can fine multimillion dollar

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1 corporations, and it is a fine, ladies and
 2 gentlemen, that everyone on this call would probably
 3 be able to pay with very little effort. That's how
 4 inexpensive it is. And we continue to work with the
 5 legislature to try to increase those fines, to make
 6 it a little bit more apparent that we desire certain
 7 types of behavior and so on. So, if we can work
 8 together on that, as we always do, Stefanie, I think
 9 that would be great.
 10 MS. BRAND: That's why it was so
 11 effective when we did it in the context of a merger
 12 case or rate case, where they're coming in and they
 13 want something from the Board, to say, okay, but we
 14 want to see your liability.
 15 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: And that is
 16 one of the criteria, certainly. Thank you very
 17 much. Aida, go on.
 18 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
 19 upon Andrew Sykes. Please state your full name for
 20 the record.
 21 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Mr. Sykes,
 22 are you on mute, sir? Go to the next one, please.
 23 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
 24 upon Klaus Brinkrode. Please state your full name
 25 for the record.

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1 MR. BRINKRODE: Good morning,
 2 Commissioners. My name is Klaus Brinkrode,
 3 K-L-A-U-S, last name, Brinkrode, B-R-I-N-K-R-O-D-E.
 4 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Welcome,
 5 sir.
 6 MR. BRINKRODE: Thank you. Good
 7 morning. Thank you for giving me the time and the
 8 opportunity to speak. I'm a resident in Bergen
 9 County. I live in Washington Township and I just
 10 want to share some of the experiences me and my
 11 family have went through after Isaias and the
 12 aftermath.
 13 And so my opening statement or I
 14 think we can all agree that no response necessary to
 15 this storm would have been probably the best case.
 16 Now, but as many others speakers have said before,
 17 this is an ongoing problem and we're doing the same
 18 thing over and over again. So, this meeting sounds
 19 like, to me, like we are evaluating surgery on a
 20 dead patient here.
 21 So, from my personal experience
 22 here, we lost power for about four days. It was on
 23 and off and was increasing anxiety at this point
 24 until the power was fully restored. Loud, noisy
 25 generators from the neighborhoods were running well

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1 into the early morning hours and they're extra loud
 2 when they're not yours. So, spoiled food was
 3 mentioned, which we experienced here. So, my
 4 estimated cost of loss was about \$500.00 just in
 5 this storm.
 6 So, economic impact, we're not able
 7 to work from home. My business, the business I work
 8 for in Allendale, New Jersey was actually heavier
 9 effected than I was and brought all the service
 10 down. We had no access to any kind of information
 11 we needed to work from. So, we were out of work for
 12 about five days. It was limited access to e-mail
 13 and internet so we could communicate with our
 14 customers.
 15 The cellular networks now are being
 16 powered by standby generators, but while the main
 17 infrastructure is down onto the cable you can see
 18 that the cell phone networks are totally overloaded
 19 and cannot provide reliable services for the demand
 20 there is during a power outages.
 21 So, Isaias, for us and my family,
 22 was really the last straw which triggered the
 23 purchase of a portable generator and the upgrade of
 24 our electrical box, which is summed up to about
 25 \$2,000.00. I would have happily given the \$2,000.00

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1 to PSE&G or any other service provider if they can
2 provide me with reliable service.
3 The utilities, in general, in our
4 area is PSE&G. They seem to be overwhelmed with
5 communication and restoration efforts due to the
6 extensive and widespread damage the storm left
7 behind, but we also wanted to say that in my area I
8 have seen work crews out of state which were truly
9 working 24 hours in a very hard environment. So,
10 kudos to the hard line workers who actually were on
11 the street and did the hard work bringing us the
12 power back.
13 So, the PSE&G website and Twitter
14 accounts went down, as this is not the first time
15 this actually happened during a major storm event,
16 so I personally do not understand how this website
17 goes down actually during the worst time. It seems
18 to be an ongoing problem PSE&G has. Also, the
19 information provided, I mentioned with JC Power, we
20 had a very similar experience that the maps were not
21 appropriately updated, but we had limited access to
22 it anyway. Customer service representatives we
23 reached over the phone had only limited information
24 for us and always stated that the restoration times
25 are worse case scenarios.

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1 So, in my personal opinion, what
2 I've seen here over the years, I personally believe
3 utility companies are not the only one to blame
4 here. In today's world, utilities are forced to
5 spend more and more time and do crisis management
6 instead of focusing on the, focusing on giving us
7 reliable power. The unreliable and old
8 infrastructure which crumbles and fails after every
9 small weather event. I've seen after many times the
10 storm shows up on the weather radar, utilities'
11 crisis managers run to Twitter and announce to
12 customers that service might be disrupted and we
13 should charge all our portable devices. It sounds
14 like bracing for impact, but we don't know how hard
15 we are going to get hit. I don't know if this is
16 still an adequate response in the 21st Century. I
17 do not expect my roofer to call me when it starts
18 raining to tell me that I need to have a bucket and
19 a mop ready. So, this is a very similar experience
20 here.
21 So, and, also, considering the
22 financial destruction on the government, our
23 businesses and as private citizens. As I mentioned,
24 I was four days out of work. So, this is a major
25 economic impact. The Biden administration actually

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1 just this week announced that climate emergencies
2 are predicting an increasing number of storms,
3 increasing number of growing intensity of weather
4 systems are inevitable and I wanted to see what the
5 BPU actually is planning to do for this. As Mrs.
6 Brand had mentioned, we're going into the next
7 century here with electrification of our
8 automobiles. So, our electrical lines become the
9 gas stations of the 21st Century.
10 So, we need to have a reliable
11 service and infrastructure available to feed all
12 these communication devices and our automobiles.
13 So, the BPU or our government has promised
14 infrastructure improvements after Sandy, but I
15 personally believe it's more frail than ever. I've
16 seen some small infrastructure improvements, as was
17 mentioned 1.8 billion was invested into electrical
18 improvements infrastructure, but the majority went
19 into the gas lines, which I personally experience in
20 the neighboring town where, basically, every street
21 was dug up and new gas lines were put in. And what
22 Mr. Ferro said, why isn't there a coordinated
23 response. We have high technology. We have
24 trenchless technology available to put utilities
25 underground and we can do it together. It doesn't,

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1 it doesn't, it's not necessary that the gas
2 companies digging up the street, closing it up and
3 two months later the water company comes after it
4 and we're doing the same thing again. So, I think
5 there's a lot of taxpayer's money wasted by having
6 not a unified approach.
7 The only feasible way to increase
8 reliability, in my personal opinion, is to bring the
9 electric grid underground and I've seen it in many
10 cities in the United States. I think San Diego
11 started around 20 years ago. So, it is a huge task
12 and probably cannot be done within the next five to
13 ten years, but we have to start at one point. This
14 cannot go on.
15 Also, I wanted to bring to the
16 attention to the Board, if we are talking about
17 infrastructure improvement programs, how many lives
18 are being lost due to electrocution, electrical
19 fires, accidents involving utility poles, not to
20 mention the victims who get killed from carbon
21 monoxide poisoning while being forced to operate
22 portable generators due to power outages. These are
23 important facts, in my opinion, which must be
24 considered for improvement programs. It is no
25 longer a cosmetic fix to bring power underground. I

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1 think it's a necessity.
2 So, these are, basically, my
3 statements and my experience what I had from the
4 aftermaths of Isaias and I wanted to reiterate here
5 the \$2,000.00 I had to spend for a portable
6 generator, which I also need to maintain now, I
7 would have happily given to PSE&G if they could
8 provide me with reliable service. Thank you for
9 giving me the time to speak.
10 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you
11 for participating, sir. We appreciate it very much.
12 Aida?
13 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
14 upon Jim Fakult. Please state your full name for
15 the record.
16 MR. FAKULT: Yeah, hi. This is Jim
17 Fakult and I am president of Jersey Central Power
18 and Light, F-A-K-U-L-T. Let me start out by saying
19 good morning to President Fiordaliso, as well as all
20 the Commissioners and all of the elected officials
21 and customers that are on today. Like you, we are
22 here to listen and my company stands ready to
23 follow-up on any and all issues or questions raised
24 today. I have already heard a few that I've taken
25 notes that I'll be following up on.

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1 So, first of all, regarding
2 Tropical Storm Isaias, we do appreciate the Board's
3 report and that they did find the restoration to be
4 reasonable and in compliance with the previous or
5 existing storm orders to be, you know, fulfilled.
6 But, having said that, we do know that we need to
7 continue to make enhancements to our system,
8 particularly in the areas of communications and
9 providing accurate ETRs and I heard that today. So,
10 on behalf of our customers, we look forward to
11 continuing to work with all of you. We continue to
12 look forward to working with the Board and with the
13 staff to, you know, to find ways to make these
14 enhancements in the areas of restoration,
15 communications and all of that, because as President
16 Fiordaliso said, we will have additional severe
17 weather events. So, we are in the process of
18 responding to all of the Board orders that came out
19 of this event and we'll be, of course, submitting
20 those as we think have already submitted one or two
21 of the responses, but over the next couple of
22 months.
23 And, you know, just a couple other
24 quick things. The questions that came up from the
25 Mayor of East Amwell, I think there was a couple of,

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1 you know, items that he had asked and, you know,
2 President Fiordaliso, what I would say is that, you
3 know, even literally days after the storm in August
4 my team pulled together and we started to do a
5 self-assessment. And the areas that we started to
6 work on is our focus on improving the accuracy and
7 the timeliness of getting ETRs or those estimated
8 time of restorations out into the system and into
9 the field and that's a process that we are working
10 through and I believe we're making good progress
11 there.
12 The second thing is how we
13 communicate with our local officials, where we're
14 changing some processes there to provide, you know,
15 better, more accurate and timely information as
16 well, because we heard that loud and clear.
17 And then the third thing is just,
18 in general, improving communications through
19 multiple channels, whether it's through our website
20 or text messaging or other mediums that we used.
21 So, I think to the question of the mayor, those are
22 just a couple of the things and they do dovetail in
23 my mind well with what the Board's, you know, orders
24 that came out as we work through those. So, you
25 know, again, that's an ongoing piece of work there.

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1 The Committeeman Millstone
2 Township, two things. I like the idea of a group.
3 My team, my leadership team, we're absolutely
4 willing right now at any time to sit down with you
5 or to sit down with any and all of the communities
6 to talk about the response and what maybe, you know,
7 what worked well and what didn't and what we can do
8 to get better. And we have met with many, many,
9 many, many towns already and, you know, if we
10 haven't yet with you in your town we absolutely
11 stand ready to meet with you and, quite frankly,
12 look forward to it. So, I think that's a good idea.
13 You know, I also, in these meetings, would like to
14 get some of that specific information about
15 customers that were out nine, ten, 11 days, because
16 that's just, you know, not consistent with what I
17 had heard and what we believe happened. So, if
18 there's an anomaly or if there's a customer that
19 somehow fell through the cracks, I want to know
20 specifically about the address and who it was. We
21 can go back, look at our records and we can
22 certainly, you know, understand what happened there.
23 So, more than anything, I do
24 appreciate the opportunity to talk. You know, one
25 last comment I would just like to make. You know,

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1 we just completed on December 31 of last year a
2 reliability improvement plan. It's the IIP, we
3 called it Reliability Plus. It was an investment of
4 just a little bit under a hundred million dollars
5 that we spent over the last 18 months to improve the
6 reliability and the resiliency of our electric
7 distribution system here and this topic came up
8 quite a bit, but about 42 or 43 million of those
9 dollars were spent directly in vegetation
10 management. And we agree that that's an area that
11 needs to continue to get focused and continue to
12 work on to improve reliability. So, as always, we
13 appreciate the opportunity to participate in a
14 conversation like this and to, you know, just
15 continue to have dialog, again, you know, President
16 Fiordaliso, with you and the other Commissioners,
17 your staff and all of our communities stakeholders.
18 So, thank you for the opportunity
19 to speak.
20 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you
21 for your input. Certainly appreciate it. Aida?
22 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
23 upon Jeff Tittel. Please state your full name for
24 the record.
25 MR. TITTEL: Jeff Tittel, director

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1 of New Jersey Sierra Club. I want to thank you for
2 reopening the dialog between those that are
3 involved, whether they're ratepayers or interested
4 parties, and the Board, I think it's something that,
5 you know, is long overdo and I want to thank you,
6 President Fiordaliso, and the Board for doing that.
7 I think it's important that you get feedback from
8 different stakeholders on important issues. So, I'm
9 glad this is happening and hopefully there will be
10 more.
11 I just wanted to start off and say
12 that, you know, we've been and I've been going to
13 these types of meetings for a very long time and,
14 you know, as we're moving into the 21st Century, we
15 still have a 19th Century grid and it's still a
16 problem and there's so many different pieces of it
17 that we really need to look at, but I wanted to
18 really first at least concentrate on what I think is
19 the opportunity moving forward. You know, I think
20 the report had many good things in there about smart
21 metering, but what we really need to do is develop a
22 more smart grid technology like they have in Europe
23 and we need to also not only have AMI as part of it,
24 but tie it to DAR and distribution generation and
25 demand side, developing more micro grids, increasing

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1 efficiency to our grid and, you know, and connecting
2 our grid with battery storage and other storage
3 facilities, ways of storing, as well as, you know,
4 renewable energy that's, as I said, like, you know,
5 solar farms and other things to connect in. And I
6 think that would help with the overall reliability
7 and resilience to the grid. And as, you know,
8 people have said, you know, things are going to get
9 worse or potentially if we have other storms.
10 The other thing I wanted to mention
11 is we should be putting lines underground. I was
12 literally at a meeting 35 years ago where they said
13 it would take too long to put these wires
14 underground. Well, 35 years later, maybe we could
15 have made some progress and, you know, New Jersey
16 actually has a law on the books on new developments
17 requiring underground utilities, but we've waived it
18 every time. We really need to take a better look at
19 that and also looking at, you know, changing, even
20 changing our grid to extend for moving things over
21 distances to various DC cables versus the large
22 overhead cables. We really need to reinvent our
23 grid moving forward.
24 I would also say that now there are
25 certain areas that we do know where we have the

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1 problem, it happens all the time, with trees or, you
2 know, with the storm damage, maybe that we should
3 target certain areas where we see things happen on a
4 pretty regular basis. I mean, I'm in Lambertville
5 and, you know, we've got problems with Route 29 and
6 trees along it. Well, maybe that's an area to bury
7 the cables where it comes up.
8 I also think that we need to sort
9 of change the system that we have so we have
10 perverse incentive program where you can make,
11 utilities can make a lot of money off of the
12 ratepayers by putting the same line back up six,
13 seven times in a ten-year period. You know, we had
14 an incident in, here in Lambertville years ago where
15 the substation which was built next to a creek
16 flooded three times in three years before they
17 finally raised it. Each time they're making a very
18 good rate of return for fixing that substation that
19 was put in the wrong place. And so maybe we need to
20 change how we, you know, pay for storms, because,
21 basically, they can bring in crews from out of
22 state, they can charge double overtime and the more
23 it costs, the more money they get in a rate of
24 return. Maybe we should think about not allowing
25 them to have such a high rate of return. In fact,

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1 they make more money putting the same line up over
2 and over again than they get for burying the line or
3 making the grid more resilient. So, I think we
4 really need to change what we do.
5 And as someone who has JCP&L in two
6 places, I can tell you that up in Ringwood we were
7 out of power up there, you know, I'm not there all
8 the time, it's a summer place, but 17 days without
9 power during one of the storms. I do know people in
10 East Amwell who were out eight or nine days during
11 Isaias. You know, my line is that JCP&L stands for
12 Jesus Christ Pray For Life. Every time the wind
13 blows, you get nervous. I think we need to change
14 the dynamic, but, more importantly, I think this
15 gives us an opportunity to upgrade our grids and to
16 move our grids into the 21st Century and I think
17 that's a critical next step that we need to be
18 taking.
19 Thank you.
20 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,
21 Jeff, and I agree with you on the grid aspect here
22 and I think it's obviously an important factor.
23 We're putting more strain on the grid and that grid
24 has to be suitable for a variety of different
25 interconnections that are coming its way. And a lot

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1 of it boils down to a regional and professional
2 approach. And as, you know, New Jersey is part of
3 the PJM states, where they are a regional
4 transmission organization and there has to be a
5 regional approach and we will be working with PJM
6 and I'm hoping now with also the new FERG, the
7 composition of the new FERG, in order to promote
8 upgrade in our grid process, because this is vital
9 as we move forward. I want to thank you for your
10 input.
11 Go on, Aida.
12 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
13 upon Leon Petelle. Please state your full name for
14 the record.
15 MR. PETELLE: Leon Petelle, I'm an
16 older person, so I don't know how to do these things
17 very well. First of all, I'm representing the
18 Village Grand in Bear Creek. We are a retirement
19 community located in Mercer County. We have 540
20 homes and about a thousand residents. At the head
21 of this, I don't have a prepared presentation, but
22 at the head of this I would like to say that I am
23 very impressed by the elected officials that I have
24 heard and the members of the Board and particularly
25 the division of rate counsel.

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1 Recently we went through Isaias and
2 we had a great deal of problems. I'm newly elected
3 to the Board, so it fell to the newly elected Board
4 members to deal with this. We are an over 55
5 community and many of our residents are more elderly
6 and somewhat infirmed and it was a great difficulty
7 to us to deal with the outfall of that event. We
8 have recently put in place plans to deal and help
9 our more infirmed residents deal with future events
10 such as this, but that is not something that we can
11 do without some adequate communication.
12 So, first of all, we had problems,
13 we, apparently, and I'm not an electrical engineer
14 so I don't know about this, but our community was
15 designed and built in three electrical phases. We
16 had problems with communication between those
17 phases. We finally found an engineer in the
18 engineering department of JCP&L who would talk to us
19 and he came out and we finally were able to solve
20 some of those issues. So, thank you to JCP&L for
21 that.
22 More importantly, though, and I'm
23 going to give kudos to Ms. Brand. I think that we
24 have focused more on the issues to do with the
25 organization of JCP&L itself as member of a group

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1 called First Energy, an energy holding company in
2 Ohio. Now, we responded in the matter of JCP&L BGS
3 creditworthiness and we wrote a three page letter
4 detailing the issues that we felt that they had.
5 So, I'm just going to briefly hit some top points.
6 First of all, in looking at their
7 organization, it's apparent that they have not spent
8 much money on some of the needed efforts over the
9 last many years. Apologies to Mr. Fakult, but it is
10 difficult to know when we throw around numbers like
11 a hundred million dollars in spending exactly what
12 it is spent on and exactly what effect it may have
13 had. As I recall, if I recall correctly, the, that
14 was, that rate case, the hundred million dollars was
15 in response to Hurricane Sandy and probably included
16 a great deal of, what I'll call, remedial effort.
17 So, I think some of the things that
18 we would focus on would be to speak to matters of
19 communication. Certainly I think the elected
20 members of our panel today have done a very good job
21 of highlighting those. I don't need to. But, I
22 think one of the things that struck me about
23 communication was looking at the record between BPU
24 and the Division of Rate Counsel. And I was very
25 surprised to learn that BPU keeps certain matters

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1 from DRC. So, I don't want to start a political war
2 between the two organizations, but what I would say
3 is that in my limited experience with rate regulated
4 utilities, it would be very useful if both parties
5 communicated completely and fully and that BPU staff
6 not keep matters that may be important from DRC.
7 DRC represents the ratepayers, if I understand New
8 Jersey law correctly. I am more familiar with a
9 state that has BPU and DRC in the same organization
10 and, therefore, there is no communication issues.
11 I think the second thing is that,
12 to Ms. Brand's testimony this morning, there are a
13 couple of things that jumped out to me. One is
14 accountability. I have heard a couple of the local
15 politicians and leaders indicate that they would
16 like to get together and have a joint working group,
17 which I think is laudable, but I also think that you
18 have to have fully empowered members of that working
19 group that can actually get something done. Again,
20 with apologies to Mr. Fakult, I don't know that he
21 is fully in control of his own fisc. In other
22 words, he needs cash money to do things.
23 So, there are two focuses that I
24 would put there. Number one, and we responded to
25 the BGS creditworthiness statement, he is at the

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1 mercy of his holding company. First Energy has a
2 very sorry record of managing their own internal
3 fisc and we made note of that in our letter to the
4 Board, which was received and Aida, or Ms. Camacho,
5 responded to it. The one thing that we have to be
6 very careful about is that he has adequate funds.
7 So, and I'm all over the map here, so I apologize
8 for that.
9 But, one of the things that Ms.
10 Brand mentioned had to do with the return on equity
11 and I would suggest in this rate regulated model
12 that we have here that in addition to the equity
13 that is formally shown on their private financial
14 statements, that added to the rate base might also
15 be the cost of repair or vegetation maintenance. So
16 that the return funds those areas and remediation
17 takes place as part of the rate based consideration.
18 I think that would be useful.
19 The second thing is, is that JCP&L
20 is a member of a cash pooling system within the
21 First Energy group. One of the things that I'd like
22 to point out, even though I think one of the members
23 of Division of Rate Counsel, one of the staff
24 lawyers there, did a very good job of indicating the
25 ring fencing measures, that there's still avenues

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1 open to First Energy or another member of that
2 company structure to take money from JCP&L. We
3 recommend that their funds be kept to themselves as
4 all other members and that certain remedial
5 financial measures take place to assure that monies
6 are not moved between the companies. This will
7 permit cash required to be maintained within JCP&L
8 and used for the upgrades and the maintenance and
9 things that it has to be.
10 So, with accountability and the
11 ability and the responsibility of making decisions
12 also has to come the material or the cash used to
13 make those and enforce those decisions.
14 The next thing that we found in a
15 review of what was going on in this company
16 structure was that it does not appear that financial
17 audits are conducted of the constituent companies.
18 There is an audit, but that appears to be more
19 focused on the administrative structure for looking
20 at the rate base and things like that or the auction
21 system. So, I was very surprised at that, because
22 I'm more used to a structure in which there occurs a
23 financial audit and an operational audit.
24 We've talked about two simple
25 measures or maybe additional simple measures of rate

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1 reliability, of service reliability and things like
2 that. It seems to me that when we consider the rate
3 structures and the rate base, all elements have to
4 go into the consideration of the rate base so that
5 adequate funds are provided to these elected
6 companies to maintain the distribution structure. I
7 think JCP&L has divested itself of any ownership
8 positions it used to have in generation, so there's
9 so many in the game of distribution and we have to
10 take this 19th Century, as one of the speakers
11 pointed out, rate regulated utility structure,
12 rethink it and put it together.
13 Now, it seems to me that New Jersey
14 and, you know, I'm not native to New Jersey, we
15 moved here many years ago, but I'm still not
16 familiar with the way the State government works, it
17 would be useful to rethink how we do things to
18 strengthen communication between BPU and DRC to look
19 at the audit structure and make sure we understand
20 exactly what these companies are doing and how
21 they're using their money, rebuild the rate base,
22 rate regulated utility structure, refocused because
23 wind power and things like that are very sexy and
24 wonderful and we all love to talk about them, but
25 the basic stuff that actually needs to happen is

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1 very mundane and it involves things like trees and
2 rights of way and things like that.
3 So, I'm going to get off the -- I
4 also would like to support the smart grid approach,
5 because I think a smart grid approach would allow
6 much better communication between the actual
7 location of the outage, the management of JCP&L and,
8 I'm sorry to be on JCP&L, I'm sure the other
9 electric utilities have problems, too, but, you
10 know, we need something that gives information
11 instantly to the management, they can dispatch the
12 work crews. I have only in my life seen, and I've
13 lived here 12 years and a JCP&L service territory,
14 I've seen JCP&L trucks twice. It may be the same
15 truck and I just saw it twice. I'm not sure. But,
16 they use, they have to use a contractor and, to me,
17 that seems very strange. I can see contractor use
18 for surge capacity, but not for base capacity.
19 So, when I look at this I think
20 that it needs a topdown holistic review of what we
21 do and how we do it. There are practical things
22 that can be done to assure that the accountability,
23 that when the elected members of this Board meet
24 with JCP&L and stuff, they actually have a way of
25 accomplishing things that they agreed to, the money

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1 is present to do it, they communicate and I'm just
2 going to leave it there, because I've spoken long
3 enough. But, I think, we sent, the letter that we
4 sent has some practical suggestions as to how the
5 Board may be in a financial review, how DRC may
6 participate in that, how they may also keep control
7 of the cash, which is vitality important. And I
8 won't bother anybody with the details, but it's
9 quite clear that First Energy is not at all near
10 where its peers are in managing its systems and
11 managing its constituent company.
12 So, I'll stop at that and say thank
13 you very much for this opportunity. I can report
14 back to our Board and community that you were kind
15 enough to let me speak and, hopefully, we'll make
16 progress in the future. Thank you very much.
17 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you
18 for your input and I assure you we will make
19 progress in the future. And, number two, to my
20 knowledge, and if Director Brand has a different
21 opinion, I'd be happy to hear it, we don't
22 necessarily operate in cement asylums. There is
23 communication between the Board of Public Utilities
24 and the Division of Rate Counsel. Staffs are
25 constantly talking to one another and so on. And

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1 Ms. Brand and I actually like one another. So, I'm
2 not sure that, I'm not sure where you're getting
3 that information from, but I just wanted to set the
4 record straight.
5 MR. PETELLE: Actually, President
6 Fiordaliso, I got it right from the records from
7 BPU. So, when I looked at, because when you
8 communicate back and forth, you communicate to DRC
9 and it's not you necessarily personally to Director
10 Brand, but, rather, your staff's communicate with
11 one another. There are certain things that DRC asks
12 for that BPU staff does not communicate on the
13 grounds that it is sensitive and it is not something
14 that their utility would like to communicate.
15 So, I'll was just saying, there's
16 nothing that I know of that is so sensitive in any
17 electrical generation system that is that sensitive
18 that cannot be communicated to the Division of Rate
19 Counsel.
20 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Commissioner
21 or Director Brand and I will talk about that
22 offline. Thank you, sir.
23 Aida?
24 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
25 upon Stanislav Jaracz. Please state your full name

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1 for the record.
2 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Do we have
3 Stanislav? Please go to the next person, Aida.
4 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
5 upon Jessica Johnson. Please state your full name
6 for the record.
7 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Ms. Johnson?
8 No Ms. Johnson? Go to the next person, please.
9 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
10 upon Rozella Clyde. Please state your full name for
11 the record.
12 MS. CLYDE: Hello. My name is
13 Rozella Clyde, R-O-Z-E-L-L-A, C-L-Y-D-E, and I live
14 in Chatham Borough, which is located in southeastern
15 corner of Morris County. I want to echo everything
16 that Mayor Wolfe said. It is, just in a matter of
17 saving time, the Chatham experience was very similar
18 to everything that Mayor Wolfe said. And I also,
19 so, I've lived in Chatham Borough for nine years and
20 I serve on a number of local municipal and state
21 committees and I have a keen interest in
22 sustainability and environmental issues. I have a
23 PhD in instructional design for online learning, so
24 I have some experience in project design and
25 development and I am a JCP&L customer.

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1 I have to say that smart meters
2 might make, are a step in the right direction. It
3 was totally amazing to me that JCP&L depended upon
4 individual people with power out, customers with
5 power out to telephone them and let them know their
6 power was out in this day in age. That is really
7 incredible to me. There was sections of Chatham
8 Borough that were out of power for 11 days with
9 hurricane, with the Storm Isaias. And I can just go
10 down through several of the things that Mayor Wolfe
11 has already said and that Committeeman Ferro has
12 said.

13 Also, I'm interested in the, in all
14 the aspects of under grounding that have already
15 been mentioned. I, we've tried, in Chatham Borough,
16 we have tried to make communications with JCP&L
17 about what the actual cost would be and all we get
18 is, it's too expensive, it's too expensive. We've
19 asked for specific information on how much it would
20 cost and they said, well, we've done studies on it,
21 but we haven't found any of those studies. They do
22 not appear on the JCP&L website and so I know I saw
23 President Fiordaliso at the wind turbine conference
24 on Wednesday and Thursday and he spoke to us. I
25 look at the nice little wind turbine pin that he's

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1 wearing on his lapel and we're investing a
2 tremendous amount of money in developing energy from
3 wind power and all of that power is going to be
4 brought on shore through cables that are
5 underground. So, don't tell me that we don't have
6 the capacity to put wiring underground.

7 I agree with everything that
8 Committeeman Ferro has said about municipalities
9 coming together and working for this. Chatham is
10 part of a group of 17 other municipalities in the
11 Morris County, Union County and Essex County area
12 and I am certain that we would find the same kind of
13 cooperation there.

14 But, I want to talk from the
15 perspective of the trees and I belong to the Sierra
16 Club, so I appreciate everything that Mr. Tittel
17 said, but let me talk about trees in Chatham,
18 because our tree canopied streets are part of what
19 makes Chatham a desirable place to live and work.
20 The quality of our tree canopy has an impact on
21 property values and indirectly on our tax revenues.
22 Chatham has been designated Tree City by many local
23 real estate groups. It's not just aesthetic value.
24 A healthy tree canopy cleanses the air by producing
25 oxygen and storing carbon reserves in the very tree

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1 trunks that rise to support that foliage. The
2 intricate root systems developed by healthy trees
3 assist in soil preservation, provide a catch basin
4 for stormwater runoff and protect the river banks
5 along the Passaic River, as well as the ponds and
6 streams that are part of the Passaic River, our
7 network.

8 Our stable and secure tree cover is
9 literally being undermined by the way JCP&L has been
10 allowed to butcher the trees along the right of ways
11 to protect the overhead wiring. In most cases it is
12 those unstable trees that break pulling down
13 overhead wires as they fall. It is through the
14 carving out of large central swarths of the tree
15 cavity, this type of extreme pruning or total
16 removal of tree stock along the overhead wires that
17 the stability of this foliage is threatened and
18 these are the trees that break and become totally
19 uprooted.

20 In addition to that, the line poles
21 utilized in the borough were also extremely old.
22 Many are listing and have been temporarily
23 reenforced. Eight years ago during Hurricane Sandy,
24 JCP&L actually ran out of replacement poles and
25 residents were forced to wait longer until new poles

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1 could be trucked in from out of state. New Jersey
2 must find more sustainable ways to address the power
3 needs of our residents. We must require companies
4 that are involved in this process to find more
5 creative ways to protect against the storm damage.
6 One given is that the storms will continue to
7 increase in frequently and intensity. All
8 stakeholders must respond to that challenge and
9 JCP&L has not demonstrated a commitment to play a
10 major role in that area of the resiliency battle.

11 Too many people are saying that
12 it's too expensive. We would really like to know
13 how expensive it is to do the under grounding and I
14 agree completely with what Mr. Tittel said that 35
15 years ago he was talking to people about this and if
16 we had started the process 35 years ago it, we would
17 be a long ways down the road right now.

18 So, trees are not just aesthetic.
19 They're not just something that gets in the way.
20 When we're talking about climate change, we're going
21 to have to find ways to cleanse our environment and
22 if we just get rid of our trees and the vegetation,
23 we're hurting ourselves in other ways. So, I'm
24 really, really interested in the specifics about
25 what it would cost to start putting some of our

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1 wiring underground and actually address a resiliency
2 problem and create more resiliency in this entire
3 network for the entire State of New Jersey, but
4 right now I'm interested in Chatham Borough.
5 So, I thank you very much for the
6 opportunity to speak. I have learned a lot from all
7 of the speakers who have already spoken. I
8 appreciate the extreme amount of technical knowledge
9 that people are sharing. I don't have all that
10 technical knowledge, but I do realize that there are
11 major places in, across this country that have
12 already done their underground wiring. We actually
13 had a speaker come in from a community in Colorado
14 that's been underground for 30 years and they have
15 not had a single electric outage in that entire 30
16 year time, so, I encourage the Commission to really
17 look at the specifics, get us the numbers, find out
18 so we can really find out what kind of costs we're
19 talking about and how we can start doing it. Thank
20 you very much for the opportunity to talk.
21 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you
22 for your input, Ms. Clyde. Aida?
23 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
24 upon Ed Minall. Please state your full name for the
25 record.

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1 MR. MINALL: Hi, Ed Minall. That's
2 E-D, M-I-N-A-L-L, and I live in Scotch Plains. And
3 I appreciate the opportunity to talk here and
4 everybody who's spoken already.
5 You know, I just kind of want to
6 focus on when we talk about vegetation management, I
7 honestly think we're looking at tree removal versus
8 pruning or line clearing. The utility companies do
9 a very aggressive pruning and line clearing
10 practices, which are very detrimental to the trees.
11 When you remove more than 30 percent of a tree
12 canopy, that makes the tree asymmetrical and
13 susceptible to diseases. So, healthy, symmetrical
14 trees are able to counterbalance themselves during
15 high winds. Asymmetrical trees don't have the
16 ability to counterbalance themselves during high
17 winds. Therefore, the trees fall during the storm
18 events and high winds taking the wires down with
19 them.
20 Shade tree planting practices in
21 the past located tall trees directly behind a curb,
22 which is within the overhead wires alignment.
23 Smarter planting of trees could be done where an
24 understory type tree can be planted and the tree can
25 be placed at the edge of the right of way, not

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1 within the right of way, and the understory type
2 tree would grow no higher than the lowest wire.
3 Linemen from other states, when they're called in to
4 emergencies here in New Jersey, they think we're
5 insane due to the amount of vegetation that we have
6 within our overhead wires, our electrical grid
7 system. They can't believe that trees are
8 intertwined with the overhead electrical wires.
9 And with that being said, you know,
10 if you can take into consideration the costs of
11 property damage, reactively performing line repair
12 and the tree removal and the public health, safety
13 aspect and linemen safety aspects. I don't know if
14 you're familiar, but we talk about the safety
15 pyramid in the construction industry, where a number
16 of smaller instances and minor instances will lead
17 up to a fatality, so you kind of have the same
18 situation with the overhead electrical grid where
19 you have trees and lines and even utility poles
20 falling and eventually, and unfortunately, there's
21 going to be a fatality if, you know, if it
22 continues. It's just the law of probability.
23 Sooner or later, unfortunately, someone's going to
24 perish due to, you know, a downed line or a downed
25 tree.

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1 And, you know, and I hear people
2 talking about going underground versus the overhead
3 electrical grid. You know, we know there's a huge
4 cost with that. Not only that, you have to get
5 easement access to people's property and even when
6 you're going from overhead to underground, there's
7 trees are still going to be in the way and more than
8 likely would have to be removed at that point anyway
9 to go underground.
10 So, I think the Board's immediate
11 solution to this is to perform tree removal and not
12 pruning and, you know, I just think that's a planned
13 quicker solution, more of a return on investment
14 than either going underground or just continuing
15 with the old practice of doing some heavy line
16 pruning.
17 And I just, I just had a couple
18 things I just loaded down from the internet here.
19 Sorry. Got to, you know, just a copy here, but you
20 can see where you have a full healthy tree and then
21 they come in and, you know, they're encouraging the
22 tree company to take half the tree away. So, once
23 again, now that tree's asymmetrical, you get, you
24 know, a windy storm event, that tree's going to come
25 down and take the lines with it. And, I mean, I

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1 just, I just did a Google search and I found this
2 and this is what they're encouraging these tree
3 clearing companies contractors to do. And, once
4 again, it's just detrimental to the trees and
5 they're just creating a hazardous situation with
6 trees that are, basically, near the end of their
7 useful life as it is. So, it's just, it's just a
8 liability waiting to happen. Thank you.
9 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,
10 sir, for your input. We appreciate it. Aida?
11 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
12 upon Mike Strano. Please state your full name for
13 the record.
14 MR. STRANO: Mike Strano, I'm a
15 resident of East Amwell Township and I'd like to
16 take the opportunity to thank Mayor Wolfe for
17 providing me with the e-mail concerning today's
18 meeting. And I live in East Amwell. I've been here
19 for 60 years and we are the last residents on the
20 line coming down our road. We're the forgotten ones
21 in East Amwell Township. And I don't know if the
22 Board knows me by name, but I've filed numerous
23 complaints with the Board of Public Utility over the
24 years. There's times that I would get an answer
25 from the Board, many times I would not receive

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1 anything from the Board, which is deeply concerning.
2 So, the latest correction that the Board -- I'm
3 sorry. Did someone talk?
4 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: No, sir.
5 MR. STRANO: I thought I heard
6 something.
7 The latest correction from the
8 Board was that they were putting in trip savers,
9 which I believe I got a response in December and
10 installed three trip savers out in the state
11 highway, which is 31, comes down Linville Road,
12 maybe a half mile down my road, a mile and a half.
13 So, they put the trip savers and then Christmas Eve
14 we lost power again that went out until the day
15 after Christmas. Therefore, the trip savers are not
16 working, just to put it into the record.
17 I had a conversation with an
18 engineer, hopefully Jim's listening, Fakult, from
19 JCP&L and I explained to him concerning the trip
20 savers and how they're not, how they didn't work and
21 I offered, once again, for him to come out, we can
22 go up and down the road, take a look at everything
23 and, you know, he was hemming and hawing, I'm not
24 sure, with the COVID situation, I understand. I
25 said I'm willing to drive my own vehicle, wear a

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1 mask, stay six feet away. I'm still awaiting a call
2 back from him. So, those there didn't work.
3 And being the last customer on the
4 road, it's not a dead end road. You go through to
5 the other side of the road it's Public Service
6 Electric and Gas. On the other side of the road
7 they have a lot less problems than we do.
8 Now, two reasons in my opinion is
9 vegetation is one. 60 years ago these trees were
10 not like they are today and as one of the gentlemen
11 spoke, they need to be taken down. And you go on
12 the other side to PSE&G as well, they have much
13 taller trees, so you can give the trees a little bit
14 more opportunity if you so choose to let them grow
15 and they'll still be under the utility line. That's
16 a recommendation that I would put out there with the
17 brainstorming sessions going on today.
18 For the Isaias part -- let me go
19 back to the tree trimming. Sorry I'm a little
20 disorganized. Last year we had a tree trimming come
21 out and we had some trees identified, they'll come
22 out and do them. So, they took down a few of the
23 trees and one of the trees was too high. They
24 needed a hundred foot bucket truck, so they didn't
25 have a bucket truck, they had to wait on one from

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1 another job. So, what did the tree guys do for
2 three hours? Neighbors showed me a video, they were
3 out on a pond with ropes across the pond sledding
4 across the pond. And, meanwhile, someone else spoke
5 up about paying your bill every month, you've got to
6 pay your bill whether you do it automated or not,
7 that's what we're paying for. There's nobody
8 watching. There's nobody responsible to do any of
9 it. They come out here, do what they have to do and
10 move along.
11 So, let me just focus back to the
12 original reason for the meeting was the Isaias
13 storm. So, August 4, 11:10 a.m., we get an outage.
14 The phone system was down. Called it, talked to a
15 Sabrina, restore time it was August 4, 2 p.m. 8:08
16 p.m. requested crew status arrived 1 a.m., restore
17 time was on August 5, which was the next day. Tried
18 to get a confirmation number, couldn't get a
19 confirmation number. 5:20 a.m. on August 5, call
20 again and talked to another woman, no restore time.
21 No updates. 1:54 on August 5, text, restore time, 9
22 p.m. on 8/5, crew status arrived. Same day, August
23 5, 9:10 p.m., sent an e-mail. Then I get an e-mail
24 back on August 6, 11:17 a.m., majority restored
25 11:30 p.m. on 11:20. On August 7 at 8:23 a.m. I

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1 receive a text, expect power restored majority
2 before 8/11 at 11:30 p.m. Pending investigation is
3 the cause.
4 So on the seventh, again, 9:55 a.m.
5 get a text, still no power, they cut me off. I had
6 to call back again. They said power was restored.
7 Call back again to get it reinstated back into the
8 system, because they said my power was restored
9 when, in fact, it wasn't. I know Mayor Wolfe had a
10 lot of issues with it as well and it wasn't restored
11 and low and behold I didn't get the power back until
12 the eighth and 7 p.m.
13 There seems to be a lot of
14 communication problems and it appears to be bad
15 misinformation being provided to the customers, to
16 the mayors, maybe possibly to the Board. I'm
17 willing to work with anybody out there, whether it's
18 Jim from JCP&L, BPU, anyone who's willing to come
19 out and provide the service that we're paying for.
20 You know, for the safety we need electric. We have
21 sump pumps and buy generators, they go bad, we've
22 got to buy another generator, it's very costly. You
23 lose the food in the refrigerator and as someone
24 else said, we're not compensated for losses. We
25 just incur all those losses. Look what we're paying

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1 for these tree people to come out and do some
2 sledding or what have you on someone's pond for
3 three hours on our dimes, that's a problem. And I
4 reported it to the utility and I don't know what
5 they're doing or not doing. I really don't care.
6 That's not what it's about, but someone needs to be
7 watching when they come out here to actually do the
8 work.
9 And then the other thing was, when
10 they come out and they do an assessment of trees, I
11 try to engage with them as often as I possibly can,
12 everything has to do with a budget restraint. Not
13 allowed to do it, we can't do it because the money's
14 not in the budget, the tree's too big, the money's
15 not there. Who said that? Where's that coming
16 from? And then the other part or the other excuse
17 that I would receive would be, if you look at the
18 trees, well, here's one here, it's dying, well, it's
19 too far off of the right of way. I don't know what
20 that right of way it is. I'm told it's ten feet.
21 If you've got a ten foot right of way, you've got a
22 tree 80 feet in the air, I mean, if the tree's dying
23 and they can't go over that mark to get it to
24 provide safety, provide electric for everyone, what
25 needs to be done to correct these deficiencies?

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1 I guess I'll just look at my notes.
2 What they're claiming is that, I'm just looking at
3 my notes, the one engineer I talked to, he said
4 everything that's been done is in compliance with
5 the BPU. So, I guess, what is, what is required of
6 the utility, if what they're telling me is correct,
7 that the BPU mandates or whatever the terminology
8 would be? What requirements are they to do for
9 whether it's tree removal, vegetation, whatever we
10 want to call it? I mean, is there a requirement?
11 What is that requirement? And, you know, with the
12 latest correction here as well with the Board
13 satisfied with the utilities' correction with the
14 three trip savers that were put in and then, like I
15 said, I lost power Christmas Eve through day after
16 Christmas and the trip savers didn't work. So, how
17 do I go about getting that thing rolling again?
18 Because the complaints that I've filed over the
19 years, I can probably count on a handful that I got
20 a response from the Board back and the rest they
21 just have no idea whatever happened. They just go
22 there and they're gone, no response, no nothing.
23 So, I just, I'm just trying to look
24 for some kind of mechanism where I can go, how I can
25 go about it, who do I see, what do I do, to try to

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1 correct this problem. I'm not here to complain or
2 whine. I just want to get, you know, what we're
3 paying for. And that's it.
4 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you,
5 Mr. Strano. If you would forward your address and
6 phone number to the Board secretary and we'll have
7 somebody reach out to you specifically.
8 MR. STRANO: How do I reach her?
9 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: As I said in
10 the beginning, you should e-mail her at
11 Board.Secretary@BPU.NJ.gov. Do you want me to
12 repeat it?
13 MR. STRANO: Board.Secretary@
14 BPU.NJ.gov?
15 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Correct,
16 sir.
17 MR. STRANO: Okay. Thank you.
18 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Thank you.
19 Next person, Aida?
20 MS. CAMACHO: I would like to call
21 upon Peter Mousa. Please state your full name for
22 the record.
23 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Mr. Mousa?
24 Mr. Mousa? Next person, please, Aida.
25 MS. CAMACHO: That's the end of the

1 list.

2 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: That's the
3 end of the list. Mr. Ford, you didn't want to
4 speak? Mr. Ford? I guess not.

5 Okay. I want to thank everyone who
6 participated today. It was very helpful. As I
7 mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, we have a
8 court reporter. All of the words that were spoken
9 today have been recorded and will be reviewed by the
10 Board. And I would appreciate that if you have any
11 difficulties as we move forward to please reach out
12 to the Board and we're here to work with you. We're
13 ratepayers just like you. And we are doing, much of
14 our staff is doing an enormous job in trying to
15 ensure the fact that the lights stay on and having
16 an event like this certainly helps us and your
17 suggestions today have been extremely helpful. And
18 I appreciate you taking the time from your busy
19 schedules to speak with us regarding this.

20 As I said, we will be having these
21 quarterly meetings, so please look forward or stay
22 alert to any mention of the next quarterly meeting
23 and we'd love for you to participate then also.

24 Do any of my colleagues have any
25 closing comments? Seeing none or hearing none, I

1 will entertain a motion to adjourn.

2 COMMISSIONER HOLDEN: So moved.

3 COMMISSIONER SOLOMON: Second.

4 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: All those in
5 favor signify by saying aye.


6 UNANIMOUS BOARD: Aye.

7 PRESIDENT FIORDALISO: Again, thank
8 you all very much, stay safe and take care of
9 yourselves and take care of one another. Thank you.
10 (Meeting concluded at 12:00 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

1
2
3 I, DENISE L. SWEET, a Certified
4 Court Reporter and Registered Professional Reporter,
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