

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 STATE OF NEW YORK
3 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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MEETING OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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Thursday, March 15, 2018

10:28 a.m.

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Three Empire State Plaza
Agency Building 3, 19th Floor

16

Albany, New York

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COMMISSIONERS:

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JOHN B. RHODES, Chair

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GREGG C. SAYRE

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DIANE X. BURMAN

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JAMES S. ALESI

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 CHAIR JOHN RHODES: Good morning. We're
3 just at time. Let's get started and before we begin this
4 session, I'd like to ask Michael Worden, Director of the
5 Office of Electric, Gas, and Water to provide a brief
6 update on the recent storms that we're all extremely aware
7 of. Mike?

8 MR. MICHAEL WORDEN: Good morning, Chairman
9 Rhodes, Commissioners. On March 2nd, winter storm Riley
10 brought accumulations of heavy wet snow, over two feet in
11 many areas, and high winds that resulted in widespread
12 extensive damage to utility, transmission, and
13 distribution systems resulting in hundreds of thousands of
14 electric outages to much of New York state.

15 Five days later on March 7th, winter storm
16 Quinn brought more snow and wind to the state which
17 hindered completion of the remaining additional Riley
18 outages and caused further system damage and customer
19 outages. Statewide for the two storms combined there were
20 a total of approximately five hundred and ninety thousand
21 customer outages. The longest of these outages lasted up
22 to ten days in Westchester and Sullivan counties.

23 As you know, if you're in the Capital
24 region, on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, winter
25 storm Skylar, the third nor-easter in eleven days,

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 impacted the states, but thankfully did not cause
3 significant or prolonged outages. Just to give you a
4 sense of the footprint for Riley, it affected all
5 utilities in New York state, caused extensive damage to
6 electric utility infrastructure including hundreds of
7 broken poles, heavy damage in remote, hard to reach
8 locations and numerous road closures.

9 The governor declared states of emergency
10 in Dutchess, Putnam, Sullivan, and Westchester counties on
11 March 4th where approximately seventy-five percent of the
12 outages occurred.

13 Quinn happened as restoration was nearing
14 completion for the Riley storm outages and mostly affected
15 Hudson Valley and Long Island areas. So it affected in
16 large part the same footprint that was still out from
17 storm Riley. Peak wide -- peak wide -- peak -- statewide
18 outages, excuse me, for Riley were approximately four
19 hundred and twenty-four thousand customers and for Quinn
20 was approximately a hundred and ninety-three thousand
21 customers. So the hundred and ninety-three thousand, not
22 to get into -- too deep into numbers, included about
23 twenty-six thousand that were still out from Riley, so as
24 we moved forward, we had to continue to monitor the
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1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 restoration for Riley, those customers that have been out
3 the longest with the new customer outages that came along.

4 New York utilities have approximately
5 thirty-six hundred FTEs dedicated to restorations
6 throughout the state. These FTEs represent lineman, tree
7 trimmers, and servicemen, the people that actually are on
8 the street doing the work. During restoration, that
9 number rose to about forty-nine hundred FTEs and
10 continuing on through Quinn, it actually got up to
11 approximately fifty-four hundred FTEs on the street doing
12 restoration activities.

13 These numbers include about fourteen
14 hundred out of state line and tree workers from places
15 including Michigan, Texas, Ohio, Missouri, North Carolina,
16 Louisiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Vermont, Connecticut, Maine,
17 Quebec, and Ontario. So as you can see, it was a
18 widespread request for resources. We got a lot of
19 resources from a lot of areas, but I would point out that
20 the footprint of this while I've been talking about New
21 York state really affected from Virginia up through Maine.

22 For mutual assistance, utilities belong --
23 utilities in New York state belong to the North Atlantic
24 Mutual Assistance Group or NAMAG as its referred to.

25 NAMAG is a group of utilities from Maryland up through

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 Maine and Canada that work together to pool resources so
3 that when we have a large event like this, they can reach
4 out to each other and ask for additional assistance.

5 We also work with the New York Public
6 Private Utilities Association whereby the IOUs and PSEG
7 reach out to the MUNYS in New York state and beyond even
8 to get additional resources to assist. You know early on
9 in the Riley event, the MUNYS much like the New York
10 utilities were fully engaged in their own operations, but
11 as time moved on and they completed that work, they became
12 available and helped assist restoration for the downstate
13 utilities.

14 Resources were also sought from what's
15 called the Great Lakes Mutual Assistance Group and the
16 Southeast Electric Exchange, so NAMAG is what is referred
17 to as a regional mutual assistance group, so it covers the
18 Northeast region. Those other two as the name suggests
19 cover regions that are just beyond New York state. In the
20 early days of this restoration activity, those mutual
21 assistance groups had no crews or no line workers
22 available to assist NAMAG or the New York utilities
23 because they were experiencing outage events of their own.
24 So it was a -- an extremely large footprint for this
25 event. I would note that National Guard personnel were

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 deployed by the governor to assist counties with recovery
3 efforts. This included assisting counties and utilities
4 with road-clearing efforts and providing road security
5 near downed wires.

6 So regarding restoration and activities
7 during restoration, state representatives were dispatched
8 to Dutchess, Putnam, Sullivan, and Westchester counties to
9 provide recovery support and resources to local government
10 stakeholders. Department staff were also on the ground in
11 Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Sullivan, and Rockland
12 counties monitoring the utility restoration efforts and as
13 I think you're all aware, the utilities do municipal
14 assistance calls, staff monitors those calls, and we'll be
15 doing evaluation of those as we go forward. So all
16 customers affected by Riley were restored by Monday, March
17 12th, and then all customers on Quinn were also restored
18 by Monday, March 12th. So there was a small pocket of
19 customers in Sullivan county in particular that extended
20 out into the March 12th timeframe. It was an area where
21 there's -- it's very rural, a lot of customer -- a lot of
22 wire mileage to restore a small group of customers and
23 that took extensive rebuilding of some distribution
24 circuits.

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1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 On March 6th, the governor called for the
3 Department of Public Service to conduct a comprehensive
4 investigation of each of the New York utilities'
5 preparation and response to storms Riley and Quinn. To
6 that end, Chair Rhodes, as CEO of the Department, sent
7 letters to the CEOs of the New York utilities yesterday
8 advising them that the Department had commenced its
9 investigation under matter number 18-00618. The utilities
10 must also file their full performance assessment reports
11 as required by commission rule sixteen NYCRR part 105.
12 Those reports have to be filed within sixty days. The
13 letter also directed utilities to file emergency response
14 score card reports in thirty days in accordance with the
15 commission ordering case 13-E-0140.

16 I would note that there was a wide range of
17 performance amongst the utilities with some utilities
18 providing accurate ETRs and relatively timely restoration
19 while other utilities lagged.

20 We will, of course, review the factors that
21 led to the different experiences by utility. I would also
22 note that we heard complaints and concerns throughout the
23 event from local officials about some utilities not
24 providing accurate or useful information about restoration
25 times, communication breakdowns with county officials, and

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 critical infrastructure customers, and an inability to
3 effectively coordinate road clearance activities.

4 Finally, several utilities experienced IT
5 system malfunctions thereby providing erroneous
6 information on their websites and further frustrating
7 customers.

8 My experience has been that while no
9 customer wants to be without power for an extended period
10 of time, it is vitally important that utilities provide
11 good information regarding ETRs so that individuals can
12 plan accordingly. Each of these issues, the length of
13 time to restore power and contributing factors,
14 timeliness, and reliability of information to customers,
15 and the effectiveness of coordination with local and other
16 officials engaged in response to these storms, each of
17 these is important and will be a focus of our
18 investigation.

19 That completes my report. Thank you.

20 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Mike. We'll look
21 -- we'll expect to hear more about the storm and our
22 understanding of what took place as your investigation
23 moves forward.

24 Thank you again.

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1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 With that, I'd like to call the session --
3 this session of the Public Service Commission to order.
4 Secretary Burgess, are there any changes to the final
5 agenda?

6 MS. KATHLEEN BURGESS: Good morning, Chair
7 and commissioners. There are no changes to this morning's
8 agenda.

9 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you. So with that,
10 let's begin with Item 201, case 17-E-0238 et al which is
11 the petition by Niagara Mohawk Power to increase delivery
12 rates presented by Jim Costello, Administrative Law Judge,
13 Dakin LeCakes, Administrative Law Judge, Tammy Mitchell,
14 sorry -- Dakin LeCakes, Tammy Mitches, Deputy Director of
15 Electric, and Denise Gerbsch, Chief Accountant Office of
16 Accounting Audits and Finance, are available for
17 questions.

18 Jim, please begin.

19 MR. JAMES COSTELLO: Good morning, Chair
20 Rhodes and commissioners. You have before you a draft
21 order proposing adoption of the terms of a joint proposal
22 that would establish a three-year rate plan for Niagara
23 Mohawk's electric and gas businesses.

24 The proposed rate plan would run from April
25 1st, 2018 through March 31st, 2021. In evaluating the

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 terms of the joint proposal, the commission must determine
3 whether the joint proposal considered as a whole produces
4 a result that is in the public interest.

5 In doing that, the commission considers
6 whether the terms of the joint proposal are consistent
7 with the environmental, social, and economic policies of
8 the commission and the state, whether they produce results
9 within the range of outcomes that might result if the
10 issues in the case were fully litigated and whether they
11 appropriately balanced the interests of the utilities,
12 ratepayers, and investors, and the long-term viability of
13 the utility. The commission also looks at whether the
14 record is complete and the extent to which the settlement
15 is contested.

16 Here, the parties had full notice and
17 opportunity to make their views known in both litigated
18 and settlement tracks of the proceeding and we have a full
19 record with testimony and exhibits submitted by various
20 parties.

21 The joint proposal was entered into on
22 January 19, 2018 by nineteen parties with varied interests
23 including the company, trial staff of the Department of
24 Public Service, representatives of large commercial
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1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 customers, environmental groups and labor, and the three
3 largest cities in the company's service territory.

4 Statements in opposition to the joint
5 proposal were filed by a small number of parties and were
6 limited to discrete areas. Based upon the testimony filed
7 by the parties, the terms of the proposed rate plan could
8 reasonably have been expected to result from the parties'
9 litigated positions.

10 The draft order before you provides the
11 company with revenues needed for the company to maintain
12 and upgrade its electric and gas infrastructure and
13 information systems, fund additional energy efficiency
14 expenses, and significantly expand its low income customer
15 discount programs.

16 The proposed revenue increases are modest
17 compared to what the company originally requested and are
18 further moderated by application of deferred credits so
19 that net revenues to be collected from electric customers
20 are increasing by only one point seven percent in rate
21 year one, three point four percent in rate year two, and
22 three point four percent in rate year three. Net revenues
23 to be collected from gas customers are increasing by only
24 two point four percent in rate year one, three point five
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1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 percent in rate year two, and three point five percent in
3 rate year three.

4 The proposed revenue increases incorporate
5 estimated benefits resulting from the new federal tax
6 laws. For rate year one, approximately sixty-one million
7 dollars in net benefits are being recognized for the
8 benefit of electric customers and approximately fourteen
9 and a half million dollars net benefits are being
10 recognized for the benefit of gas customers. The draft
11 order contains provision to ensure that all of the actual
12 benefits resulting from the tax changes will be calculated
13 at a later date and used for the benefit of ratepayers.

14 The draft order establishes rates based on
15 return on equity of nine percent and a 48 percent common
16 equity ratio. The nine percent return on equity includes
17 the normal stay out premium and reflects additional risks
18 to the company for additional imputed productivity
19 savings.

20 The proposed order before you resolves
21 several contested issues and two cases that pre-date the
22 rate filings by establishing a new electric deferral
23 credit of 44.9 million dollars and a new gas deferral
24 credit of 28.4 million dollars and the company will reduce
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1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 by seven million dollars the level of its pension internal
3 reserve.

4 A portion of that money will be used to
5 fund gas safety programs including a program involving the
6 installation of residential methane detectors targeted
7 towards low income, multi-use residences. The company
8 will reconcile all rate plan deferral credit expenditures
9 during the rate plan and any underspending will be
10 deferred. If any money remains after that, the money will
11 be used for future rate mitigation.

12 The proposed rate plan also advances
13 important policy goals. It effectuates implementation of
14 the commission's low-income customer program policies by
15 instituting tiered discount levels based on customer's
16 need. It significantly increases funding for those
17 programs from approximately 11 million dollars to 56
18 million dollars for the electric program and from
19 approximately nine million dollars to 15 million dollars
20 for the gas program.

21 The company expects enrollment in these
22 programs to increase significantly by as much as
23 approximately 55 thousand customers. The company would
24 review the program yearly and make any necessary
25 modifications to discount levels.

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 The draft order also contains a number of
3 provisions designed to curb greenhouse gas emissions and
4 improve energy efficiency. Energy efficiency targets are
5 being increased dramatically by 45 percent for the
6 electric energy efficiency targets and a 110 percent for
7 the gas targets while funding is being increased for such
8 programs by approximately 21 percent for the electric
9 business and 33 percent for the gas business.

10 The proposed rate plan contains several
11 provisions that address street lighting which are strongly
12 supported by the cities of Buffalo, Albany, and Syracuse
13 and by the New York Power Authority. Resolving a long-
14 stand issue on costs, the company agrees to sell street
15 lighting assets at their net book value to any municipal
16 customer that agrees to purchase all street light assets
17 within the municipalities taxing jurisdiction.

18 The proposed rate plan also provides for an
19 annual rate allowance of 1.6 million dollars to support
20 energy efficiency conversions of both company-owned and
21 municipally-owned street light to light emitting diode
22 luminaires.

23 In addition, the proposed rate plan
24 provides for incentives for the company to seek out non-
25 wires alternatives that would have environmental benefits

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 while resulting in cost savings for customers. The
3 proposed rate plan establishes earning adjustment
4 mechanisms related to energy efficiency, system
5 efficiency, and beneficial electrification. The rate plan
6 also includes an electric vehicle program to promote
7 installation of electric vehicle charging stations at
8 commercial properties.

9 With respect to advanced metering
10 infrastructure, the company will participate in a
11 collaborative to update its advanced metering
12 infrastructure business plan and will provide the
13 commission with a report on AMI by October 1, 2018.

14 The draft order includes funding for the
15 replacement of 150 miles of leak prone pipe and requires
16 the company to advance methane reduction efforts in its
17 service territory and to work with the environmental
18 defense fund in implementing best practices for
19 identifying and abating high volume leaks. Gas safety
20 performance metrics are updated and with the company being
21 at risk for a total of 150 pre-tax basis points annually.

22 The plan also provides for positive
23 incentives up to a total of 37 basis points to encourage
24 further improvements in the company's performance.

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1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 The draft order includes several provisions
3 that benefit customers including an annual termination in
4 uncollectable expense metric, an electronic deferred
5 payment -- it provides for electronic deferred payment
6 agreements, enhanced customer service messaging to ensure
7 that customers know their options if they are behind on
8 their utility bills, updated training materials for
9 customer service representatives, and offers to customers
10 a written confirmation of non-deferred payment collection
11 agreements.

12 Customers currently pay a per transaction
13 fee when they pay their bills at authorized walk-in
14 payment locations. Under the proposed rate plan, those
15 fees will be included in rates to cover the cost of the
16 per transaction fee for such customers. The annual rate
17 allowance proposed for those fees is approximately 1.5
18 million dollars which is subject to full reconciliation
19 each rate year. The J.P. -- I'm sorry, the proposed rate
20 plan would update existing customer service metrics to
21 make the metric regarding the rate of public service
22 commission complaints more strict.

23 The total negative revenue adjustments to
24 which Niagara Mohawk would be exposed for the customer
25 service measures would remain at 19.8 million dollars each

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 rate year. Customer charges for residential electric and
3 gas customers would remain at current levels. The
4 customer charge issue is being addressed in a Department
5 led rate design working group.

6 The draft order also includes several
7 provisions to protect ratepayers. Ratepayers are
8 protected by an earning sharing threshold which is
9 triggered once the company's actual return on equity
10 exceeds 9.5 percent. They're also protected by a downward
11 only true-up for the carrying costs associated with under
12 target plant and service and both the company and the
13 ratepayers benefit from the predictability of a three-year
14 rate plan. Finally, the proposed rate plan recognizes
15 that the commission has ongoing policy proceedings and
16 nothing in the rate plan prevents the commission from
17 making changes to the rate plan based on those
18 proceedings.

19 Viewed as a whole, the provisions of the
20 proposed rate plan are in the public interest and we
21 recommend that they be adopted without modification. This
22 concludes my presentation. Advisory staff, Judge LeCakes,
23 and I are available for any questions you may have.

24 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Jim. I find this
25 is a much-improved plan over what was initially submitted

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 and there's much to like here. I think the reduction in
3 rate increases is an important benefit to consumers and I
4 think the affordability policy as implemented in the plan
5 is an important step forward. I find the cost
6 effectiveness generally of the plan is good. I like the
7 prudence on the approach to advanced metering
8 infrastructure. I highly endorse the gas safety focus. I
9 approve of the emphasis on energy efficiency as an
10 effective resource and I approve of the scope in this plan
11 for non-wires alternatives and other especially cost-
12 effective ways to achieve our system and policy goals. So
13 against the -- the standard of public interest, I will
14 vote in favor of this.

15 Commissioner Sayre?

16 COMMISSIONER GREGG SAYRE: I have long
17 supported multiparty hotly contested, but carefully
18 negotiated and multiyear rate settlements arrived at only
19 after staff has taken a full look all the way into the
20 heart of the issues of the case and as long as we at the
21 commission level take a good hard look at every -- every
22 issue to make sure that the settlement is in the public
23 interest. This case in my view does meet the test.

24 I am particularly pleased by the full
25 implementation of our low-income policy and by the

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 improvements to gas safety and methane emission detection
3 and reduction. I support the item.

4 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you. Commissioner
5 Burman?

6 COMMISSIONER DIANE BURMAN: Thank you. I
7 have been very focused on looking at the entire record and
8 trying to grapple with if this is in the best interest of
9 the ratepayers. I do think that overall there are some
10 positives within the joint proposal and I do think that as
11 a whole, it is in the best interest of the ratepayers.
12 From a legal standard, I did ask our counsel the -- what
13 the parameters were, so that we were all on the same page
14 for the review process from the legal standard, the rate
15 cases in terms of making sure that we were carefully
16 reviewing it and from the utility service application, the
17 first prong really is the utilities must provide service
18 that is safe and adequate and is all -- in all respects
19 just and reasonable and does this do that and I think it
20 does.

21 The second from the revenue requirement,
22 all utility charges must be just and reasonable and not
23 more than allowed by law or by order of the commission and
24 I think that does that and then the third, all utilities
25 must charge and provide to similarly-situated customers,

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 the same charge for the same service without any undue or
3 unreasonable preference or advantage or any undue or
4 unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage.

5 What gave me pause in reviewing this
6 frankly was the concern I had that from the joint proposal
7 in that this was really the first rate case that had taken
8 a very broad degree of looking at the open REV proceedings
9 and saying that to the extent that there are these open
10 REV proceedings that may impact, we're not going to
11 resolve in our joint proposal those outstanding issues and
12 recognizing that those outstanding issues will be decided
13 later, not necessarily saying we're not deciding them
14 here, but that we're agreeing that they're important and
15 we're resolving and we're coming together and putting it
16 into -- we put it into the order.

17 And so that open-endedness caused me to
18 have a concern because I was fearful that -- that open-
19 endedness might in fact trip us up from the perspective
20 that now we have in an order a sort of outstanding
21 potential major rate case that from a National Grid
22 footprint makes us have to look at what that means from
23 all of our different open proceedings and might not only
24 procedurally cause us problems, but might not have
25 necessarily the right parties in the room or might

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 actually not have had the right parties in the room with
3 the joint proposal.

4 And so I -- I found myself really spinning
5 myself up into a frenzy of trying to figure out what the
6 right situation was and coming to a difficult time and
7 then really going back to what the record was and not
8 having been the person in the room with the -- the parties
9 in the joint proposal, not really having the -- the full
10 breadth of understanding of why they came to the decisions
11 that they did or on some of their discussions around the
12 issues that they may have decided to what I would see as
13 saying okay to, but -- right? But we're going to look to
14 that for the next issue. And my worry that maybe they
15 didn't have enough information or maybe they felt
16 pressured to say okay to or maybe it was just a
17 recognition that that was important, so they were just
18 putting a placeholder.

19 So all of those things could have been
20 appropriate or inappropriate depending on the situation,
21 So for me, it was a recognition that really I needed to
22 look at how we're doing rate cases overall and from a
23 going forward perspective, one of the things that I have
24 struggled with is in all of our rate cases, it really is a
25 case by case situation in do we have the right tools and

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 the resources going into major rate cases and from a
3 threshold perspective, maybe we need to take a pause
4 before we start and make sure that the staff and the
5 parties have the proper structure and have the proper
6 issues before them, rather than sort of walking into the
7 room somewhat cold and then sort of whatever parties are
8 in there, they get to sort of define for themselves maybe
9 properly, maybe improperly what issues are on the table
10 and maybe give a little bit more structure to that
11 process.

12 At times, it's helpful, especially if you
13 have an evidentiary hearings that get into more direct
14 testimony before you go into settlement negotiations that
15 you can really have parties positions really to have more
16 meat on the bones for lack of a better phrase for the ALJs
17 also to see and understand, but also for those parties
18 that go into the settlement discussions to really know
19 where folks are. However, taking a step back on some of
20 the issues that came out through this particular
21 proceeding, I don't know that we would have gotten to some
22 settlement but for the joint proposal for -- so for
23 example the street lighting in particular, that has been
24 an ongoing debate and an ongoing struggle and so the
25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 resolution that is now at least happening to -- in this
3 rate case is giving somewhat closure to those issues.

4 It doesn't mean that street lighting issues
5 won't continue to be a challenge and we have to work
6 through that. And that will continue to be I think a
7 focus for the commission in general and the state in
8 general that we'll have to grapple with, but at least in -
9 - in my opinion, that was a positive from the -- the
10 settlement discussions. And I'm glad to see that that
11 resolution especially for the communities that have
12 blessed that and supported that is -- is a positive. And
13 again, I understand that there are also going to be some
14 side issues that we'll have to address and holistically
15 look at.

16 The other issue that I see that is
17 important is the tax law issue. To the degree that these
18 parties went into it to the extent that they said, we are
19 resolving the issues that we can around the tax law issue,
20 but we understand that there's a separate proceeding
21 that's addressing in a more granular and technical way
22 that's outside of our expertise here.

23 We're going to look to that proceeding to
24 address those issues. I see that as appropriate. I see
25 that as -- as a specific proceeding with a finite end date

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 and a finite issue that they'll be addressing. And so
3 that one doesn't give me concern or pause and so that
4 makes sense and I know that the staff is working hard on
5 those issues as well as the parties involved in it and I
6 look forward to the resolution on that.

7 One of the things that I -- I will address
8 is the low-income affordability aspect of this program.
9 As many of you are aware, when we brought forward the
10 generic proceeding on the low-income affordability, I
11 voted no on that.

12 One of my issues with that was that I was
13 concerned not only about the cost aspect of it, but I was
14 also concerned about the accountability aspect and how
15 that would fold into actually what it would mean with
16 actual customers and then into applying it into rate
17 cases.

18 On the positive side, in this rate case,
19 going into this rate case, there was an actual standard
20 for the company and the parties to look at. So while I
21 voted no on the generic proceeding, there was actually
22 something that the company and the party had a standard
23 with to look at and to see and to understand.

24 Now, it was a significant amount of dollars
25 and so that in and of itself had to be grappled with and

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 dealt with; however, it was something that gave the
3 standard and set the bar for the people -- for the parties
4 and -- and folks going into that and the settlement
5 discussions to -- to know and to see and to conceptualize
6 and to -- to work around. And I think that that -- that
7 helped and one of the things for me now as -- sitting here
8 is to see in the implementation of that, is the
9 accountability and to see from where we sit the
10 implementation perspective in the number of customers, how
11 effective is the program, what things need to be done to
12 make changes if -- if the policies that are -- that we've
13 adopted are not working, working with the company and the
14 customers, so that we are providing the value that was
15 from the front end, the point of the generic proceeding to
16 give value to putting it into the rate cases from that.

17 For me, when I look at it, with the open-
18 endedness of the rate case as it relates to the key
19 initiatives for the other aspects of the -- the
20 initiatives that are other proceedings whether it's the
21 value D or the energy efficiency or the DSIPs or the -- I
22 say twenty-five, somehow that became the number that we
23 talk about, you know, maybe I should have said a higher
24 number because, you know, that would be the number, but

25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 we'll say twenty-five, the twenty-five proceedings plus
3 that are out there.

4 What I think is important and what I think
5 the connection is between it in this order and in the
6 proceedings is that the connection that we're showcasing
7 is that we care about the cost effectiveness, so it is not
8 that we're trying to focus on that these are related and
9 so that our policy objectives have to align with what it
10 means to our role as economic regulators and our role as
11 providing value to the customers and our role as providing
12 safe and reliable service.

13 So, to the connection for the parties and
14 the company and to staff, we need to make sure that folks
15 are looking at it in looking forward so that the takeaway
16 should be that as we move forward in all of these
17 proceedings, we should not shy away from looking very
18 clearly how it will match up to that cost effectiveness
19 and the impact not just on the policy objectives, but
20 clearly very concretely on the rate impacts and the cost
21 impacts on the customers and if we can tie those together,
22 I think that that will help us and not shy away from it.

23 And so it is not just on the obligation of
24 the company though this order clearly says to the company
25 please you must speak, you must very clearly look at that,

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 but it also is an obligation on all of the parties in all
3 of those proceedings and on staff and on the commission to
4 be very mindful of those issues and to try to figure out
5 solutions so that we can work together. And so since it
6 comes from the joint proposal, it's really about us
7 collaborating together and I think that to me is what
8 resonated ultimately with me in being supportive of this
9 and trying to work together in sort of moving the ball
10 forward in a positive way and the interconnection here in
11 the electric and the gas system working together
12 seamlessly and so to the extent that all of it is tied
13 together, we cannot look at all of these in silos and
14 together we need to figure out the solutions. Because one
15 cannot survive without the other and we have to figure out
16 how to seamlessly deal with these issues together. So I
17 am supportive and I thank everyone for their hard work, so
18 thank you.

19 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you very much -- thank
20 you very much, Commissioner Burman. Commissioner Alesi?

21 COMMISSIONER JAMES ALESI: Thank you, Mr.
22 Chairman. Clearly the results of some hard work and
23 dedicated effort, we're seeing some moderate increases,
24 improved efficiencies, street lighting, the methane et
25 cetera all the way down the line, a solid three years of

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 predictability done without the burden of litigation. A
3 strong focus on ratepayers especially low income and I
4 think it's all done within the realm of the public
5 interest and I'll be voting yes.

6 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you very much. So
7 with that, I will proceed to call for a vote on item 201.
8 My vote is in favor of the recommendation to approve the
9 joint proposal as described. Commissioner Sayre, how do
10 you vote?

11 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: Aye.

12 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Burman, how do
13 you vote?

14 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: I concur.

15 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Alesi, how do
16 you vote?

17 COMMISSIONER ALESI: Yes.

18 CHAIR RHODES: The item is approved, and
19 the recommendation is adopted. We will move to item 202,
20 case 14-M-0224 et al, which is a petition by Joule Assets
21 to create a community choice aggregation program presented
22 by Kelly Strait, Utility Analyst, Bruce Alch, Chief Retail
23 Access and Economic Development, and Ted Kelly, Assistant
24 Counsel, are available for questions.

25 Kelly, please begin.

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 MS. KELLY STRAIT: Good morning, Chair
3 Rhodes and commissioners. Item 202 addresses the petition
4 filed by Joule Assets to serve as a CCA administrator.
5 This is the third CCA petition to come before the
6 commission since the sustainable Westchester PILOT and the
7 CCA framework order.

8 By way of background, on April 21, 2016,
9 the commission established the framework for the
10 development of CCA programs which aims to increase
11 consumer choice and participation while also supporting
12 local energy planning and deployment of DERs. The CCA
13 framework order authorized interested municipalities on
14 their own or through their selected CCA administrator to
15 make a series of filings as has been done by Joule Assets
16 for commission consideration.

17 After review, staff finds that with modest
18 modifications, Joule's proposed CCA program complies with
19 the commission's framework order and meets the general
20 requirements laid out in the framework order.

21 In addition, Joule's petition includes some
22 novel requests that have not been proposed or addressed in
23 previous CCA programs. Joule proposes that CCA customers
24 become community distributed generation CDG members. For
25 example, a member in a community solar project, these

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 members would be enrolled on an opt-out or an opt-up basis
3 as part of their participation in the CCA program. As
4 proposed, the CDG subscription fee will be a percentage of
5 the CDG credit value in that month such that in any given
6 month the savings on the customer's utility bill will
7 exceed the CDG subscription fee.

8 Joule is also proposing a single
9 consolidated bill format that would include the CDG
10 subscription fee along with the CDG credits on the
11 utility's bill. Joule states that a single bill would
12 present a clear and transparent value proposition to
13 program customers in a familiar format. Joule is also
14 requesting additional data sets that were not included in
15 the CCA framework order.

16 I'll now go over staff's recommendations.
17 Because consolidated billing for CDG and other DERs is
18 under consideration in the VDER proceeding and
19 the fact that significant technical work is still
20 needed to make consolidated billing a possibility
21 and utility billing systems, consolidated billing will not
22 be available to the Joule CCA programs at this time.

23 Joule's proposal to offer customers the
24 benefit of CDG while guaranteeing that each month the
25 monetary value billed of the CDG credits is greater than

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 the monthly CDG subscription fee is appealing; however,
3 the detail surrounding CDG projects and offerings are not
4 yet known. Further, if consolidated billing is not
5 available, customer outreach must be carefully conducted
6 to avoid confusion for customers who are in the CDG via
7 the opt-out process.

8 Before integrating CDG, Joule would be
9 required to submit a CDG implementation plan for staff
10 review and approval explaining the magnitude of
11 participating CDG projects, the target subscription class,
12 the scope and structure of the guarantee savings, the
13 billing arrangement, and the additional outreach and
14 education Joule must provide.

15 Once implemented, for each CDG project,
16 Joule must make quarterly filings demonstrating that CDG
17 credits provided in that quarter exceeded CDG subscription
18 fees charged in that quarter. Customers must be permitted
19 to opt-out or cancel their CDG membership at any time
20 without penalty. Additional annual reporting will also be
21 required for the CDG portion.

22 In regard to additional data sets, the cost
23 of fulfilling requests for additional data sets not
24 included in the CCA framework order should be worked out
25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 on a case by case basis between the CCA administrator and
3 the utility, based on the time needed and labor costs.

4 Finally, to the extent that Joule intends
5 to offer green energy, it must ensure that such energy is
6 generated by a biomass, biogas, hydropower, solar energy
7 or wind energy as defined in and subject to the
8 environmental attributes and delivery rules of the
9 commission's environmental disclosure program.

10 That concludes my presentation. I'm
11 available for questions. Thank you.

12 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Kelly. Community
13 Choice Aggregation provides New York consumers and small
14 businesses with greater control over their energy bills
15 and over their energy choices and basically takes
16 advantage of the power of bulk purchasing. This is an
17 arrangement that we've considered in the past. We've,
18 excuse me, we've evolved some standards. This proposal
19 both comports with those standards as well as presents
20 some interesting innovations on the renewable side.

21 I appreciate the work that has been done in
22 order to get us to this point and I'm also mindful of the
23 work that remains to be done in order to make this a
24 reality for New Yorkers. I will be voting in favor of
25 this item.

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 Commissioner Sayre?

3 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: This item, I see as a
4 -- an incremental and beneficial step to advance our REV
5 market development and clean energy goals by adding
6 provisions for Community Distributed Generation to
7 Community Choice Aggregation programs. I support both CDG
8 and CCA, both of which offer opportunities for ratepayers
9 to save themselves money and I'm happy to see REV market
10 development moving forward.

11 I support the item.

12 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you. Commissioner
13 Burman?

14 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Thank you. So just a
15 couple of things, the order states that it's important to
16 note that while the municipalities can outsource
17 requirements to vendors that the municipality is
18 ultimately the one responsible for ensuring its compliance
19 with all portions of the commission orders.

20 It's very important to me that we make sure
21 that we are working very carefully with the municipalities
22 because that aspect of that can be difficult, especially
23 if we're putting an obligation on the municipalities and
24 there is a lot of things that can trip up the municipality
25 in this especially working with a number of folks. So I

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 just really want to be very careful in -- in that and the
3 roll out of this communicatory choice segregation in a --
4 in a -- in a careful roll out can be a really good thing,
5 but we really need to be as -- Kelly, as the report that
6 you helped work on laid out, there are a number of
7 different challenges as well as opportunities and so I
8 just really want to be extra careful on that.

9 As -- as folks know, I have consistently
10 been focused on making sure that we are working with all
11 stakeholders on these issues, so that we're bringing the
12 full benefits and to the extent that there are challenges
13 in the programs that we are carefully doing our due
14 diligence and overseeing it in the way that we need to --
15 to do -- have corrective actions as appropriate.

16 As we move forward, there are a number of
17 Community Choice Aggregation programs already outstanding
18 that are coming up for review after the two year pilots or
19 about to end and we need to do a critical review that is
20 not focused on anything but a true analysis and review
21 that gives us information that is helpful to the parties
22 that are involved in it, but also to the greater statewide
23 audience that may benefit from that critical review, the
24 positive as well as lessons that can be learned for things
25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 that might be able to be changed. It's not a one size
3 fits all.

4 Everyone is going to make -- have to make
5 their own decisions on it. So I want us to really do that
6 and also focus on when may it might be appropriate for the
7 state to sort of start removing itself from what I see as
8 maybe getting out of the business of marketing of it and
9 maybe a more -- allowing the Community Choice Aggregators
10 themselves to take on more of the role of, you know,
11 stepping in as appropriate, so as the -- as the -- it
12 starts to develop in a more concrete way, we don't
13 necessarily need to expend as much energy on the -- that
14 aspect of it and rather more on the oversight role that is
15 maybe more appropriate and more resources devoted at the
16 Department rather than maybe at some of our sister
17 agencies.

18 I'd like to focus on that, so that's all.
19 Thanks.

20 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you very much.
21 Commissioner Alesi?

22 COMMISSIONER ALESI: I can be succinct on
23 this one. I think that this will just enhance our efforts
24 as we transition to renewable and clean energy and I'll be
25 voting yes.

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you. I will now
3 proceed to call for a vote on item 202. My vote is in
4 favor of the recommendation to approve Joule Asset Inc.'s
5 Community Choice Aggregation Implementation Plan and Data
6 Protection Plan as described.

7 Commissioner Sayre, how do you vote?

8 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: Aye.

9 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Burman, how do
10 you vote?

11 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: I concur.

12 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Alesi, how do
13 you vote?

14 COMMISSIONER ALESI: Yes.

15 CHAIR RHODES: The item is approved, and
16 the recommendation is adopted. We'll move now to item
17 203, case M, sorry excuse me, 15-M-0252 which is a
18 proposed 2019/2020 budgets and targets for utility energy
19 efficiency programs presented by Peggy Neville, Deputy
20 Director Office of Clean Energy, Ted Kelly, Assistant
21 Counsel, and Kevin Manz, Chief Utility Energy Efficiency
22 and Demand Response Programs, are available for questions.

23 Peggy, please begin.

24 MS. PEGGY NEVILLE: Good morning, Chair
25 Rhodes and commissioners. Today, I will be presenting

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 item 203, Utility Administered Energy Efficiency Portfolio
3 Budgets and Targets for 2019 and 2010 in case 15-M-0252.

4 On June 1, 2017, the major gas and electric
5 utilities filed budget and metric plans proposing budgets
6 and metrics for calendar years 2019 and 2020 for their
7 electric and gas energy efficiency portfolios. They also
8 filed companion documents, the Energy Efficiency
9 Transition Implementation Plans, referred to as ETIPs on
10 June 1st and revised on December 22, 2017.

11 The ETIPs provide additional information
12 regarding the initiatives that make up each of their
13 respective portfolios.

14 The draft item before you establishes
15 budgets and targets for all utilities with the exception
16 of Niagara Mohawk. Niagara Mohawk's energy efficiency
17 budgets and targets are being authorized in the Niagara
18 Mohawk rate order as presented earlier in this session.

19 With regard to all other utilities, all
20 with the exception of National Fuel, proposed flat funding
21 for 2019 and 2020 as compared to their currently
22 authorized annual budgets. National Fuel proposed a
23 decrease in their annual budget. All utilities with the
24 exception of Central Hudson and National Fuel propose flat
25 targets as compared to their currently authorized targets.

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 Central Hudson proposed a reduction and National Fuel
3 proposed an increase in their energy savings targets.

4 Staff recommends the commission reject
5 Central Hudson's proposal for reduced targets and National
6 Fuel's proposal for reduced budgets. Staff recommends the
7 commission approve National Fuel's proposal for an
8 increased target and establish flat budgets and targets
9 for all other utilities as compared to their currently
10 authorized levels.

11 Collectively, the recommended annual
12 budgets total 128.5 million dollars in electric funds and
13 50.6 million dollars in gas funds with corresponding
14 grossed first year annual targets of approximately 353
15 thousand megawatt hours and 1.4 MMBTU. Approval of these
16 budgets and targets today will provide certainty to the
17 utility's energy service providers and other market actors
18 as to base level of program activity for 2019 and 2020.

19 In addition to the approval of budgets and
20 targets, the draft item includes directional guidance
21 related to a number of other elements of the utility's
22 current and future energy efficiency initiatives. These
23 elements include transitioning of utility energy
24 efficiency funding to base rates, clarification of funding
25 cycles and reconciliation and reporting processes, and

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 increased emphasis on verified gross energy savings, a
3 more nimble approach to stakeholder and market engagement
4 as well as improvements to the maintenance and
5 implementation of the technical resource manual and
6 consistent application and presentation of the benefit
7 cost analysis across the utilities.

8 This concludes my remark. We, on the team
9 here, are all happy to answer any questions that you may
10 have.

11 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Peggy. I find
12 that this item is well done and timely. I think the
13 timing is right. There's a need with these programs to
14 maintain stability and clarity for all actors as the state
15 considers potentially new directions for energy
16 efficiency. This achieves this in a pragmatic and prudent
17 way. I will be voting to support -- in favor of this
18 item.

19 Commissioner Sayre?

20 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: I'm also in favor of
21 the item. It implements our policy to hold ratepayer
22 contributions steady and it pushes the utilities and --
23 and the parties toward further energy efficiency
24 improvements through the use of incentives in rate cases
25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 which I think is a more efficient way of getting the
3 utility behavior and the programs that we need.

4 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Commissioner
5 Sayre.

6 Commissioner Burman?

7 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Thank you. Sorry.
8 So I'm going to have a couple of questions first. I'm
9 sorry.

10 I want to remind folks in November 2017 we
11 concluded the EEPS program and since this order does a
12 little history of the energy efficiency and the EEPS
13 program, I thought it was helpful to read what I said at
14 that time. So I'm just going to read what I said at the
15 time because I do think it sort of sets the stage for some
16 of my comments today.

17 I was not a member of the commission when
18 the EEPS process was rolled out, but I do know that the
19 process was undertaken under an imperative to get the many
20 energy efficiency programs up and running in an extremely
21 tight and probably unreasonable time frame.

22 I do believe that there have been many
23 lessons learned from the EEPS initiative including the
24 need to be more prudent and measured in making our
25 demands, the need to be more realistic and thoughtful

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 ahead of time about how quickly goals would be
3 accomplished and the need to truly understand what the
4 financial implications may be to run the programs and to
5 prepare in case programs are more in demand than
6 anticipated, that way we can truly issue orders that
7 properly authorize programs that can be implemented
8 effectively and stay within the bounds of the commission
9 orders.

10 Those lessons are especially important when
11 the programs will affect varied types of customers in ways
12 that we likely may not be able to anticipate what we
13 should try to plan for, so while there were some successes
14 in the EEPS program and I do acknowledge that that is from
15 the hard, hard work of many of the utilities and the
16 commission staff. Colleen and her folks have spent an
17 enormous time and I do think that we need to recognize
18 there were many flaws and there were many trip-ups along
19 the way.

20 When the commission issues an order
21 establishing a maximum budget for a program, the utility
22 or other entities responsible for administering that
23 program including NYSERDA needs to respect the commission
24 order.

25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 I do have a concern when we overspend doing
3 retroactive authorizations. It does not go unnoticed and
4 I was not here when major reauthorizations -- retroactive
5 authorizations of overspending was done and I was not
6 here, you know, that goes into something else. I'm sorry.

7 Bottom line, I think going forward, we want
8 to ensure that we as a commission again properly set
9 goals, targets, timing, and funding in our orders that
10 account for the real-life design and implementation of
11 programs. We need to do a better job at the front end
12 when we establish programs rather than as in this case
13 with EEPS, the commission in furtherance of its energy
14 efficiency policy objectives inappropriately rushed
15 through and rolled out a flawed EEPS programs. And while
16 we did make course corrections, we didn't necessarily do
17 it without significant delay and we didn't do it fast
18 enough.

19 We owe it to the ratepayers to get it right
20 at the outset and I'd like to make sure that we take
21 careful note of the lessons from EEPS and we do a better
22 job continually and not just say it's behind us. We must
23 make sure we continually take note of the lessons learned,
24 the good, the bad, and the ugly. So I say that because
25 that was in November of 2017. I do think that this order

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 and since November 2017, and frankly as a credit to Chair
3 Rhodes, I do think that there has been an ongoing effort
4 to try to figure out a way to be carefully focused on
5 taking ownership of some ways that we can do a better job
6 and work in -- in prudently laying out the next steps and
7 taking into consideration how we move forward.

8 I think that we are trying to look at the
9 roll-out and carefully figure out what we're doing in a
10 careful and thoughtful way. I am a little concerned in --
11 in -- in this order in that we are rushing through right
12 now putting into place budget targets here that I'm not
13 sure exactly why at this -- today and really it's a
14 question, why now?

15 The order doesn't really explain why except
16 to the extent that we want to tee it up for the energy
17 efficiency targets for Earth Day and that's got to be in
18 the staff white paper. And I'm trying to figure out what
19 the -- what the rationale is that makes us have to do it
20 for the staff white paper that locks us in in setting it
21 in this order, rather than helping formulate some concepts
22 that will protect -- perhaps give us food for thought to
23 be SAPA'd for people to give us comments rather than
24 locking us in, so it's really a question for why now?

25 MS. NEVILLE: Sure. I can address that.

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 So I would kind of put this in the category
3 as -- as you suggested some of the lessons learned from
4 the EEPS era. In a couple of instances during EEPS, we
5 had what we called the cliff year where we didn't take
6 authorization for the next phase of funding until very
7 late in the calendar year before the next program was
8 supposed to start.

9 We heard very loud and clear from both
10 utilities as well as, in my opinion almost more
11 importantly, market actors, energy service providers.
12 These programs don't just turn on a dime. There's a lot
13 of planning that goes into them. There's marketing
14 material. There's kind of getting the whole machine up
15 and running.

16 And so what we were trying to do is prevent
17 those types of cliff years going forward with how we moved
18 into the ETIP phase, so in this particular order, as you
19 mentioned, the energy efficiency proposal that the staff
20 is working with NYSERDA on, that will be issued and that
21 will go through its formal process of SAPA comments and
22 ultimately an order on the other end.

23 Our feeling was that at a minimum, this
24 would be a base level of activity, that if we could handle
25 now, we could give that level of certainty going into

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 calendar year 2019 without having -- producing some
3 anxiety that that might not be approved until much later
4 in this year and again creating that cliff year dynamic
5 that was so problematic in the past.

6 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Uh-huh. Okay. Okay.
7 Great. Thank you. That -- that is helpful.

8 The other question I have and really it's
9 just questions to help elicit for me the whys. Here it's
10 the getting rid of the Energy Efficiency Surcharge and
11 trying to figure out from that perspective, I know there -
12 - there's -- some folks look at it from a baking it into
13 the rates and that's a lack of transparency and others
14 looking at it from the perspective of it's helpful because
15 utilities now have to look at it from a more holistic
16 perspective. It's part of their core business. But how
17 do you get around the fact that it's, you know, it's --
18 it's -- it's now potentially seen as being baked in and
19 there is a lack of transparency?

20 MS. NEVILLE: Uh-huh. So I think it's a
21 couple of things. I think it -- as the REV order spoke to
22 on track one or two, I don't recall which one it was, that
23 laid out this concept that it is kind of underscores the
24 desire to build energy efficiency into the core business
25 of the utilities, so that's one of the driving forces

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 behind that. The reason we didn't take those steps
3 immediately in the first kind of rate case that came from
4 it is we did have some concerns of whether we could still
5 implement some of the programs such as the Self Direct
6 Program. Since then, the staff teams worked with the
7 utilities and others and has figured out a way to do that.
8 So that ability to now move it fully into rates as was
9 seen in the Niagara Mohawk rate order that just was
10 discussed allows us to do that.

11 What I would say as far as transparency, as
12 you see with the NiMo order, the J.P. clearly lays out
13 budgets and targets so even though the cost recovery is
14 coming through rates, there's still full transparency over
15 what is the budget that is going into that program, what
16 is the expectation coming out of that program.

17 So my belief and I'll let the others speak
18 to this too that there's still that level that
19 stakeholders are accustomed to and so I think that that's
20 helpful.

21 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Uh-huh.

22 MS. COLLEEN GERWITZ: The only thing I'd
23 add Commissioner is there is still a requirement to have
24 the document now called an ETIP, the planned document
25 that's going to become the new acronym, the -- the System

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 Energy Efficiency Plan, the SEEP document, so that will
3 lay out transparently everything that the utilities are
4 doing and there's required reporting as well that'll do
5 the same thing so -- so hopefully those -- those documents
6 are meant to provide complete visibility into all the
7 energy efficiency efforts that the utilities are doing in
8 support of their systems.

9 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Okay. But moving
10 away from the energy efficiency track or surcharge, this
11 is a question really for Doris, does that have an effect
12 on, you know, Wall Street in terms of going from a tracker
13 to -- to -- into the rates?

14 MS. DORIS STOUT: I wouldn't think that
15 there would be an impact as long as we're providing for
16 recovery from ratepayers, it shouldn't have an impact on
17 how Wall Street views the recovery mechanism.

18 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Okay. All right.
19 Thanks. The other question I have really and -- and
20 Peggy, you mentioned the Self Direct Program, I was really
21 disappointed with the order in that it seemed like, you
22 know, the program was successful in ConEd's territory, but
23 it was not successful in other utilities, National Grid,
24 territory for one and the order, you know, is -- is -- is
25 allowing that utility time for consideration to decide

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 whether or not to get rid of the program and so for me
3 being disappointed frankly in the uptick of that program
4 especially because I think it gets to the heart of for
5 those folks who -- and customers who would like to take
6 advantage of the Self Direct Program primarily the
7 businesses who would feel that it's unfair to have energy
8 efficiency in the -- the -- the -- baked into the rates.

9 I'd like to see and -- and really make sure
10 that we are, you know, pushing the utilities, but frankly
11 making sure that the customers who might take advantage of
12 the Self Direct Program, this is really a transitional
13 period and an opportunity for the -- those folks
14 especially the advocates for those folks to really make
15 sure their -- their base is aware and those customers to
16 work with the utilities and the utilities really to work
17 with those customers so that if this program is a viable
18 one and it may not be, what are -- we -- I need to hear
19 the -- I don't want it to be that it's not viable because
20 of the way the program is structured or it's not viable
21 because it's something that the commission is not
22 allowing.

23 So I want to make sure that, you know,
24 we're doing all we can that's appropriate to foster what
25 is potentially a good program and maybe take a look at

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 what, you know, what worked in ConEd's territory that's
3 not working in others and if there's a connection, there
4 may not be, but if there's a connection that can be made
5 to make it a viable program and if not, you know, then
6 we've tried, that would be helpful from where I sit. The
7 other issue is -- could explain -- the online dashboard
8 and the status of that and the process with that.

9 MS. NEVILLE: Sure. The Clean Energy Fund
10 order that was issued in January of 2016 and at the same
11 session we approved the original ETIP utility energy
12 efficiency programs. In those orders, we spoke to the
13 need to have an online dashboard and the commission tasked
14 NYSERDA with the development of that dashboard, And in
15 part it was a recognition that the current reporting that
16 just goes into DMM and certainly is, you know, builds the
17 record for the case and all of that, but it isn't always
18 user friendly and we were looking for a way to look
19 collectively at all ratepayer funded energy efficiency
20 programs kind of in one place and so NYSERDA has been
21 tasked with developing that dashboard.

22 They had to submit a plan which they've
23 done and staff is working very closely as well as a team
24 of representatives from each of the utilities who meet
25 regularly to kind of keep that process moving so that

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 we're aligning not just the build-out of the technical
3 capabilities of the dashboard, but also as this order
4 speaks to too is making sure that we're all aligned with
5 common definitions for metrics when someone is reporting
6 something, everyone has kind of defined it the same way.
7 So that is very much continuing on and we would expect the
8 dashboard to go live I believe at the end of this year,
9 2018, or early 2019.

10 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Okay. That's
11 something I'd like more hands-on information on. Okay.
12 And now getting to the Clean Energy Advisory Council, as -
13 - as folks know, I have been from the very beginning I am
14 -- I've been concerned when we have formed different
15 working groups, different councils and what the roles are
16 and responsibilities of these different councils and
17 working groups. And the role of the commission in
18 formulating these and then the follow-up, so in here, the
19 Clean Energy Advisory Council is -- is being disbanded
20 except for one working group of the -- of the Clean Energy
21 Advisory Council.

22 In -- in some ways, it may be odd to you
23 that I am concerned about that and I will explain. So
24 from my perspective, one of the concerns that I have is
25 that part of the difficulty is that -- and this I've

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 expressed is that I think that the working groups
3 throughout and -- and councils and different things
4 throughout there've been so many since I've been here in
5 2013 that I've frankly lost track of the number of them.

6 We have a Consumer Advisory Council. We
7 have numbers somehow they're connected to the commission,
8 maybe they're connected to other agencies, and frankly I
9 don't have a real good handle on it, but the Clean Energy
10 Advisory Council does have -- we have a number of
11 different case numbers for them and I have been following
12 the -- the proceedings and the different reports that come
13 out and it does seem like it has been a lot of work.

14 I'm not necessarily sure in the way the
15 order is written, the order talks about it as being very
16 positive and that we should rely on it. I just want to
17 caution that to the extent that we -- we're not
18 necessarily adopting it, positive or negative. The
19 commission itself in this order really can't say it's all
20 good or it's all bad or some is good, some is bad because
21 we haven't really weighed in or reviewed it as a body.
22 And to the extent that we rely on it, we can't really rely
23 on it. This order can't mean that we're adopting any one
24 particular report or any one particular sentence in a
25 report. So it's really just information the way you'd

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 pull up, you know, a newspaper clipping frankly or
3 something that someone is submitting as a comment.

4 It's information that it falls -- if it
5 falls later into a record, it has to go in as its own
6 separate comment or report, but it doesn't mean that it is
7 now something that because it was -- comes from a report,
8 it now has some higher weight, so I just need to raise
9 that for at least where I see it and -- and feel so as it
10 is in this order and the language, I just want to make
11 clear that that's how I am interpreting that. Because I
12 haven't blessed anything and that's been sort of part of
13 my concern is that a lot of these working groups and
14 councils may be doing really good work, but I'm not
15 necessarily sure, you know, that that work is necessarily
16 getting to anything. And so now that they're -- they're
17 going away, while I think that that may be appropriate,
18 it's not necessarily that now we're going to take it and
19 now it's -- it's now -- we're going to use it in any
20 fashion. And it's unfortunate, but that's the nature of
21 that which is why I'm from the very beginning was
22 concerned about sort of all of it so I share that.

23 To the extent that we need to carefully
24 look at all of these different working groups and make
25 some determinations as a body, I think it is important

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 that we do that because again, the commission itself needs
3 to look at that.

4 In here, the other piece of the order
5 talked about forums and topical energy efficiency forums.
6 I did have a chance to see some of the energy efficiency
7 forums from -- I didn't participate in person, but I did
8 participate in web conference and in seeing -- getting
9 feedback on the energy efficiency forums that were in the
10 other case. And I thought from my viewpoint that they
11 were actually much of it was very well done and helpful,
12 so from my perspective, I would say if we could try to
13 focus on having substantive forums that are helpful that
14 would be a good thing.

15 We need to start focusing on -- on things
16 that add value and get input on what doesn't and so the
17 fact that the Clean Energy Advisory Council is going away
18 may be a positive to the extent that we're now having
19 another topical energy efficiency forum.

20 While the last ones were -- seemed to be
21 good, if these aren't, that doesn't mean that we can
22 continue because it worked well in the last round. If
23 these don't, then we need to reevaluate. So I just don't
24 want us to now start thinking that forums are good because
25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 it worked for three -- three of them, so that's just my
3 two cents. Okay.

4 Overall, I -- I -- I do think that this
5 next step in looking at energy efficiency is very helpful.
6 I look forward to where we are going, but I'm looking for
7 more drill-down of what we are doing in clear specifics in
8 energy efficiency. I am looking for being a part of that
9 rather than a directive on what, you know, is -- is being
10 given to me. So I am not necessarily going to be
11 supportive of this order at this point because I want to
12 see and be a part of the energy efficiency goal setting
13 that we will do as a commission and work through on what
14 that is.

15 Since this came out of, you know, the state
16 of the state, it also is a part of, you know, sort of also
17 going through the budget process as well. So since for
18 me, we still have more opportunity, I'm not sure that we
19 need to do it at this session. I do recognize and I do
20 think you added value on why it may be important, so I'm
21 going to vote no without prejudice to revisit once I see
22 more information on that, but I'm -- I'm not comfortable
23 locking in at this time. But I do think overall, I thank
24 you because I do think that we are trying to take lessons
25 learned, lessons learning from, you know, past issues with

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 the EEPS program and others and I appreciate that under
3 Chair Rhodes's leadership that folks are incorporating
4 that, so thank you.

5 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Commissioner
6 Burman.

7 Commissioner Alesi?

8 COMMISSIONER ALESI: I have nothing to add.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIR RHODES: With that, I will proceed to
11 call for a vote. My vote is in favor of the
12 recommendation be approved with modifications to the 2019
13 and 2020 budgets and targets for utility energy efficiency
14 programs as described.

15 Commissioner Sayre, how do you vote?

16 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: Aye.

17 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Burman, how do
18 you vote?

19 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: No, without
20 prejudice.

21 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Alesi, how do
22 you vote?

23 COMMISSIONER ALESI: Yes.

24 CHAIR RHODES: The item is approved, and
25 the recommendation is adopted.

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 We move now to the fourth item for
3 discussion, item 302, case 18-E-0126, which is the
4 petition by the New York Municipal Power Agency to
5 implement Rider A to its generic tariff schedule presented
6 by Mary Ann Sorrentino, Utility Supervisor, Mike Twergo,
7 Chief Electric Rates and Tariffs, Joe Dowling, Assistant
8 Counsel, and Mike Worden, Director of Electric Gas and
9 Water, are available for questions. Mary Ann, please
10 begin.

11 MS. MARY ANN SORRENTINO: Good morning,
12 Chairman and commissioners. Item 302 is a draft order
13 addressing a tariff filing made by the New York Municipal
14 Power Agency or NYMPA. NYMPA is an organization of 36
15 municipal utility members. In the tariff filing, NYMPA
16 proposes to implement Rider A for high density load
17 customers. High density load customers would be defined
18 as customers with energy intensive loads coupled with high
19 demands. If these customers do not qualify for the NYPA
20 Municipal and Rural Cooperative Economic Development
21 Program, they would be served under Rider A.

22 NYMPA states these customers are generally
23 involved in high volume data processing for
24 cryptocurrencies and they are attracted to municipal
25 systems due to their low energy costs. NYMPA members

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 receive low energy costs from NYPA. Power needs beyond
3 the amounts they receive from NYPA are purchased in the
4 open market which tends to be more expensive. Under the
5 Rider, incremental power costs associated with serving
6 these high-density load customers would be the cost
7 responsibility of those customers. The Village of Akron
8 received a request to serve a five-megawatt high density
9 load customer. NYMPA indicates this would increase the
10 power supply costs by fifty-four percent. This equates to
11 a total bill increase for existing customers of thirty
12 percent. To mitigate this adverse impact, NYMPA proposes
13 to apply a separate purchase power adjustment to Rider A
14 customers.

15 NYMPA proposes additional protections in
16 their filing including a requirement for Rider A customers
17 to provide up-front funding for one hundred percent of
18 required infrastructure investment costs as well as a
19 security deposit to protect existing customers in the
20 event a Rider A customer does not pay their final bill.
21 NYMPA proposes these safeguards indicating that
22 cryptocurrency companies are highly mobile. They can
23 operate in existing buildings and can pack up their
24 equipment easily. Without these safeguards, existing
25 customers would be at risk. The draft order largely

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 adopts Rider A as proposed by NYMPA. The draft order also
3 requires NYMPA members to defer incremental net delivery
4 service revenues resulting from providing service to Rider
5 A customers.

6 This concludes my presentation of item 302
7 and we are available for questions.

8 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Mary Ann. I find
9 this item timely and well done. I think these high
10 density load customers are a swiftly emerging phenomenon
11 and I think they can -- and I see that they can clearly
12 have consequences for neighboring customers both
13 residential and business and I think it's important to
14 address this phenomenon in a way that's fair and
15 reasonable and I also want to note with approval, my
16 awareness of the close interaction that the staff has had
17 with NYPA which also has dealings with these same
18 customers as you noted. I would vote to approve this
19 item.

20 Commissioner Sayre?

21 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: I don't have any
22 problems with cryptocurrency matters and I don't have any
23 problems with them getting good rates for the power they
24 need for their operation, but where there are problems is
25 when the rate design of the municipal utility that they

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 want to locate in is insufficient and inadequate in such a
3 way that their operations impose potentially huge purchase
4 power costs on everybody else who takes service from that
5 municipality.

6 The answer is simple, fix the rate design
7 and that's what this item does. In the absence of this
8 item, we'd have large increases as you've said to
9 everybody else in quite a number of municipal utilities
10 and on behalf of operations that as you say are highly
11 mobile can relocate very quickly and have made no long-
12 term commitments to the economic development of the area.
13 This is, as the Chair said, a very timely problem. It's a
14 very urgent problem.

15 I support the item and I support the
16 declaration of an emergency.

17 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Burman?

18 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Thank you. So, you
19 know, I had concerns just because from my perspective
20 looking at it and I think the petition really highlighted
21 to me that it was important that we look at this and grant
22 this petition because of the issues that really the
23 petition spoke to in the issue for the municipalities and
24 the customers in addressing it. Obviously, to the extent
25 that we should be working with companies and

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 municipalities to bring good economic vitality to the area
3 and figure out energy issues, that's really what is
4 important.

5 The disconnect for me was being aware of
6 the town of Massena and the issues there and whether or
7 not there was a disconnect between the petition which
8 talked about the fact that the cryptocurrency and the
9 Bitcoin didn't, you know, at least in this petition and
10 for these towns were not providing any significant jobs
11 and in the town of Massena, at least that Bitcoin operator
12 was seeming to have -- seeming to be bringing or
13 advocating bringing a significant number of jobs and so
14 for me, the disconnect was making sure that we were
15 working to make sure that we were working with our sister
16 agency and also the towns and also what the impact of this
17 regulation may or may not have.

18 But also, more holistically as state energy
19 regulators as it may apply not just with hydropower, but
20 in general to the extent that we may have high load, high
21 density customers that may only have one or two jobs, but
22 have potential economic growth opportunities, but have,
23 you know, huge energy costs. We may need to figure out
24 some solutions to that. And so to the extent that we have
25 conversations on what that means and how we address those

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 issues to the extent that we figure it out, it's
3 appropriate to know what that is.

4 Obviously in this case, it was a very
5 discrete issue with the hydropower and the Bitcoin
6 operator and, you know, we're all still struggling with
7 the terminology and -- but we really wanted, for me,
8 wanted to flag the, you know, making sure that we were
9 doing the right thing and understood that the petition was
10 correct in terms of the -- the job issue as well as the
11 hydropower issue and making sure that this would not have
12 a negative impact for the town of Massena and any other
13 towns that might be experiencing it so that these
14 operators didn't necessarily then go to other towns. And
15 so I just flag it from that perspective so that it does
16 make me very supportive of doing this, but also knowing
17 that we are laser focused in working with our sister
18 agencies as well as working with the towns to make sure
19 that they are also aware and then whether or not we need
20 to look at other issues outside of hydropower and other
21 issues outside of just Bitcoin that may involve high
22 density customers and how we may need to grapple with
23 those energy issues, so thank you.

24 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Commissioner
25 Burman.

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 Commissioner Alesi?

3 COMMISSIONER ALESI: Same as everyone else.

4 CHAIR RHODES: So with that, I will proceed

5 to call for a vote on item 302. My item is in favor of

6 the recommendation to approve the New York Municipal Power

7 Agency's petition to implement Rider A to its generic

8 tariff schedule as described.

9 Commissioner Sayre, how do you vote?

10 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: Aye.

11 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Burman, how do

12 you vote?

13 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Aye.

14 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Alesi, how do

15 you vote?

16 COMMISSIONER ALESI: Aye.

17 CHAIR RHODES: The item is approved, and

18 the recommendation is adopted. If I may now interrupt the

19 normal course of the session and give the floor I guess to

20 Commissioner Burman for a few moments.

21 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Thank you. It is

22 with a sad heart that I share that Gene Zeltmann, our

23 former PSC Deputy Chair and former President and CEO of

24 the New York Power Authority, passed away February 24th

25 following a courageous battle with leukemia. I did speak

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 yesterday to Susie, his devoted wife of almost forty-four
3 years, who asked that I let folks know that Saturday,
4 April 21st at eleven a.m. at the First Reformed Church in
5 Schenectady, New York will be a memorial service followed
6 immediately by a small reception across the street.

7 At the Power Authority, Gene was a zealous
8 advocate for expanded research and development,
9 implementation of energy efficiency measures,
10 environmental and economic sustainability regarding power
11 generation, and the importance of workplace safety.

12 He had also been vice chairman of the board
13 of EPRI, the Electric Power Research Institute. Prior to
14 joining NYPA, he was appointed by then governor George E.
15 Pataki to serve as a commissioner of the New York State
16 Public Service Commission in December 1995. Then
17 Commissioner Zeltmann was named Deputy Chair of the PSC on
18 May 30, 1996.

19 Gene had more than twenty years of
20 international trade and government relations experience as
21 an executive with GE. He joined the company in 1967
22 serving in many senior management positions related to
23 energy and environmental trade issues, market development
24 and communication programs, and operational and
25 environmental planning. Gene graduated with honors from

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 Beloit College earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in
3 chemistry and political science. He later received a
4 Master of Arts degree and Doctorate from Johns Hopkins
5 University in physical chemistry.

6 During his professional career, he was
7 active in a number of civic and educational organizations
8 including the board of the Boys and Girls Club of
9 Schenectady, the Schenectady Symphony Orchestra, the
10 Adirondack Scenic Railroad, the Albany Chamber of
11 Commerce, the Westchester County Association, the Advisory
12 Board to the Johns Hopkins University Krieger School of
13 Arts and Science, and the Board of Westchester Community
14 College Foundation.

15 When he retired, he became just as active,
16 frankly if not more active in numerous civic, educational,
17 and community organizations and became even more one with
18 the outdoors. He became an avid hiker and rural traveler
19 and his passion was with Lake Placid and the Adirondacks.

20 He was a big kid at heart, showing off his
21 extensive train collections, and his favorite foods he
22 liked to prepare, chocolate chip cookies and waffles. His
23 wife Susie raised two amazing children, Laura and John.
24 Gene was poppa to three beloved grandchildren, Grant, Ben,
25 and Abby. Gene had an amazing professional career and was

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 by all accounts brilliant, but for Gene the crown Joule in
3 his life was his family.

4 Gene was my friend. I first met him when I
5 was a staffer at DPS and he was a greeter as part of my
6 first official DPS tour of the Robert Moses Niagara
7 Hydroelectric Power Station. He was smart, engaging,
8 detailed oriented, wonky as they could be, kind, generous,
9 funny, fiscally sound, and frankly all that you want in a
10 state energy leader and humanitarian.

11 We connected over the years and he often
12 was there in a leadership role to seamlessly guide the
13 focus to what needs to be thoughtfully done to keep the
14 system together. He was a dedicated public servant and a
15 classically decent gentleman who was focused on fighting
16 for the public.

17 During his time in NYPA, he was most proud
18 in the role NYPA played in a diverse energy portfolio
19 including the unanticipated role NYPA's generation fleet
20 played helping with resiliency issues during the aftermath
21 of the World Trade Center attacks. His focus at NYPA was
22 striving to deliver essential and reliable energy service
23 to the people of New York in an environmentally
24 responsible way. As I said, Gene was a vigorous supporter
25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 of workplace safety and the valuable role and talents the
3 energy workforce plays.

4 I think for those of us fortunate enough to
5 have known him, the words he often said to staff whether
6 at DPS or NYPA are as true today as they were then and
7 fitting to close with. Be proud of what you're doing and
8 recognize that what you're doing really counts. These are
9 difficult times and we happen to be fortunate enough to be
10 in the position where what we do matters and counts.

11 It's terribly important even more so than
12 before that we keep this energy flowing, keep it flowing
13 at low prices, and we keep it flowing in the most reliable
14 way we know possible.

15 Gene, you're missed, and we thank you for
16 your service. Thank you.

17 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you, Commissioner
18 Burman, for that moving tribute to a remarkable career, a
19 remarkable colleague and predecessor, and clearly a
20 remarkable human being. Thank you.

21 We will now move to -- back to business.
22 We move to the consent agenda. Do any of my fellow
23 commissioners wish to recuse from voting or comment on any
24 items on the consent agenda?

25 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: I'm going to be on

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18
2 261, 262, 263 and 264 voting no on those items.

3 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you. With -- with
4 that notification, I will now call for a vote. My vote is
5 in favor of the recommendations on the consent agenda.

6 Commissioner Sayre, how do you vote?

7 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: Aye.

8 CHAIR RHODES: Commissioner Burman, how do
9 you vote?

10 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: No. Yes, but no.

11 CHAIR RHODES: Yes, but no. I understand.

12 Commissioner Alesi, how do you vote?

13 COMMISSIONER ALESI: Yes.

14 CHAIR RHODES: The items are approved, and
15 the recommendations are adopted.

16 Secretary Burgess, is there anything
17 further to come before us today?

18 MS. BURGESS: Nothing further for today.

19 The next commission meeting is April 19th.

20 CHAIR RHODES: Thank you. We are
21 adjourned.

22

23

24

25

1 Monthly meeting - Public Service Commission - 3-15-18

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 I, HOWARD HUBBARD, do hereby certify that the foregoing
4 was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place,
5 as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that
6 the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of
7 pages 1 through 67, is a true record of all proceedings
8 had at the hearing.

9 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
10 subscribed my name, this the 22nd day of March, 2018.

11

12

13 HOWARD HUBBARD, Reporter

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A	
a.m 1:13 63:4	administrator 29:4,14 32:2
abating 15:19	adopted 17:21 25:13 28:19 36:16 55:25 62:18 67:15
Abby 64:25	adopting 51:18,23
ability 46:8	adoption 9:21
able 35:2 41:12	adopts 58:2
absence 59:7	advance 15:16 33:4
Access 28:23	advanced 15:9,11 18:7
accomplished 41:3	advances 13:12
account 42:10	advantage 20:3 32:16 48:6,11
accountability 24:14 25:9	adverse 57:12
Accountant 9:15	advising 7:8
Accounting 9:16	Advisory 17:22 50:12,19,21 51:6 51:10 53:17 64:11
accounts 65:2	advocate 63:8
accumulations 2:10	advocates 48:14
accurate 7:18,24	advocating 60:13
accustomed 46:19	affect 41:11
achieve 18:12	affordability 18:4 24:8,10
achieves 39:16	aftermath 65:20
acknowledge 41:14	agencies 35:17 51:8 61:18
acronym 46:25	agency 1:14 56:4,14 60:16
actions 34:15	Agency's 62:7
active 64:7,15,16	agenda 9:5,8 66:22,24 67:5
activities 4:12 6:6 8:3	aggregation 28:21 32:13 33:7 34:17 36:5
activity 5:20 38:18 44:24	Aggregators 35:9
actors 38:17 39:14 44:11	agreeing 20:14
actual 12:11 17:9 24:16,19	agreements 16:6,11
add 46:23 53:16 55:8	agrees 14:14,16
added 54:20	ahead 41:2
adding 33:5	aims 29:10
addition 14:23 29:21 38:19	Akron 57:7
additional 2:17 5:4,8 11:13 12:17,18 30:14 31:13,20,22,23 37:11 57:15	al 9:10 28:20
address 14:11 23:14,24 24:7 43:25 58:14 60:25	Albany 1:15 14:12 64:10
addressed 17:4 29:22	Alch 28:22
addresses 29:3	Alesi 1:24 27:20,21 28:15,17 35:21,22 36:12,14 55:7,8,21 55:23 62:2,3,14,16 67:12,13
addressing 23:21 24:2 56:13 59:24	align 26:9
adequate 19:18	aligned 50:4
Adirondack 64:10	aligning 50:2
Adirondacks 64:19	ALJs 22:16
adjourned 67:21	allowance 14:19 16:17
adjustment 15:3 57:13	allowed 19:23
adjustments 16:23	allowing 35:9 47:25 48:22
Administered 37:2	allows 46:10
administering 41:22	alternatives 14:25 18:11
Administrative 9:12,13	amazing 64:23,25
	AMI 15:13

amount 24:24	Atlantic 4:23
amounts 57:3	attacks 65:21
analysis 34:20 39:7	attracted 56:24
Analyst 28:22	attributes 32:8
Ann 56:6,9,11 58:8	audience 34:23
annual 14:19 16:3,16 31:20 37:22,23 38:11,14	Audits 9:16
annually 15:21	Authority 14:13 62:24 63:7
answer 39:9 59:6	authorization 44:6
anticipate 41:12	authorizations 42:3,5
anticipated 41:6	authorize 41:7
anxiety 45:3	authorized 16:13 29:13 37:17,22 37:25 38:10
appealing 31:2	available 5:12,22 9:16 17:23 28:24 30:22 31:5 32:11 36:22 56:9 58:7
application 11:18 19:16 39:6	avid 64:18
apply 57:13 60:19	avoid 31:6
applying 24:16	aware 2:6 6:13 24:9 48:15 60:5 61:19
appointed 63:14	awareness 58:16
appreciate 32:21 55:2	Aye 28:11 36:8 55:16 62:10,13 62:16 67:7
approach 18:7 39:3	
appropriate 21:20 23:24 34:15 35:6,11,15 48:24 52:17 61:3	<hr/> B <hr/>
appropriately 10:11	B 1:22
approval 31:10 38:15,19 58:15	Bachelor 64:2
approve 18:9,10 28:8 36:4 38:7 58:18 62:6	back 21:7 22:19 66:21
approved 28:18 36:15 45:3 49:11 55:12,24 62:17 67:14	background 29:8
approximately 2:20 3:11,18,20 4:4,11 12:6,8 13:17,19,23 14:8 16:17 38:14	bad 42:24 51:20,20
April 9:24 29:8 63:4 67:19	baked 45:18 48:8
area 6:20 59:12 60:2	baking 45:12
areas 2:11 3:15 4:19 11:6	balanced 10:11
aren' t 53:21	ball 27:9
arrangement 31:13 32:17	bar 25:3
arrived 18:18	base 38:18,24 44:24 48:15
Arts 64:2,4,13	based 11:6 12:14 13:15 17:17 32:3
asked 63:3	basically 32:15
aspect 24:8,13,14 33:22 35:14	basis 15:21,23 30:2 32:2
aspects 25:19	battle 62:25
assessment 7:10	beginning 50:13 52:21
Asset 36:4	behalf 59:10
assets 14:15,16 28:20 29:4,15	behavior 40:3
assist 5:8,12,22 6:2	belief 46:17
assistance 4:22,24 5:4,15,17,21 6:14	believe 40:22 50:8
Assistant 28:23 36:20 56:7	Beloit 64:2
assisting 6:3	belong 4:22,23
associated 17:11 57:5	beloved 64:24
Association 5:6 64:11	Ben 64:24
	beneficial 15:5 33:4

benefit 12:8,10,13 16:3 17:13 18:3 30:24 34:23 39:6	55:17,19 59:17,18 61:25 62:11 62:13,20,21 66:18,25 67:8,10
benefits 12:5,7,9,12 14:25 34:12	business 14:9,9 15:12 35:8 45:16,24 58:13 66:21
best 15:18 19:8,11	businesses 9:23 32:14 48:7
better 22:16 42:11,21 43:5	
beyond 5:7,19 57:2	C
big 64:20	C 1:23
bill 30:6,9,11,11 57:11,20	calculated 12:12
billed 30:25	calendar 37:6 44:7 45:2
billing 30:17,20,21,21 31:4,13	call 9:2 28:7 36:3 55:11 62:5 67:4
bills 16:8,13 32:14	called 5:15 7:2 44:5 46:24
biogas 32:6	calls 6:14,14
biomass 32:6	can' t 51:19,22,23
bit 22:10	Canada 5:2
Bitcoin 60:9,11 61:5,21	cancel 31:19
blessed 23:12 52:12	capabilities 50:3
board 63:12 64:8,12,13	Capital 2:23
body 51:21 52:25	caption 68:5
bones 22:16	card 7:14
book 14:15	care 26:7
Bottom 42:7	career 64:6,25 66:18
bounds 41:8	careful 34:2,4,8 42:21 43:10
Boys 64:8	carefully 18:17 19:15 31:5 33:21 34:13 43:4,9 52:23
breadth 21:10	Carolina 4:15
breakdowns 7:25	carrying 17:11
brief 2:5	case 7:15 9:10 10:10 18:20,23 20:7,21 21:25,25 23:3 24:18 24:19 25:18 28:20 32:2,2 36:17 37:3 41:5 42:12 46:3 49:17 51:11 53:10 56:3 61:4
brilliant 65:2	cases 12:21 19:15 21:22,24 22:2 24:17 25:16 39:24
bring 60:2	category 44:2
bringing 34:11 60:12,13	cause 3:2 20:24 68:4
broad 20:8	caused 2:18 3:5 20:17
broken 3:7	caution 51:17
brought 2:10,16 24:9	CCA 29:4,5,7,10,12,14,18,23,23 30:3,15,22 31:24 32:2 33:8
Bruce 28:22	CDG 29:24 30:4,5,7,9,10,17,24 30:25 31:2,3,6,8,9,11,15,16 31:17,19,21 33:7
budget 37:5,23 41:21 43:12 46:15 54:17	Center 65:21
budgets 36:18 37:3,5,15,17,22 38:6,8,12,16,19 46:13 55:13	Central 37:24 38:2,5
Buffalo 14:12	cents 54:3
build 45:24	CEO 7:6 62:23
build-out 50:2	CEOs 7:7
Building 1:14	certainly 49:16
buildings 57:23	
builds 49:16	
bulk 32:16	
burden 28:2	
Burgess 9:4,6 67:16,18	
Burman 1:23 19:5,6 27:20 28:12 28:14 33:13,14 36:9,11 40:6,7 45:6 46:21 47:9,18 50:10 55:6	

<p> certainty 38:16 44:25 certify 68:3 cetera 27:25 Chair 1:22 2:2 7:6 8:20 9:6,9 9:19 17:24 19:4 27:19 28:6,12 28:15,18 29:2 32:12 33:12 35:20 36:2,9,12,15,24 39:11 40:4 43:2 55:3,5,10,17,21,24 58:8 59:13,17 61:24 62:4,11 62:14,17,23 63:17 66:17 67:3 67:8,11,14,20 chairman 2:8 27:22 56:12 63:12 challenge 23:5 challenges 34:7,12 Chamber 64:10 chance 53:6 changed 35:2 changes 9:4,7 12:12 17:17 25:12 charge 17:4 19:25 20:2 charged 31:18 charges 17:2 19:22 charging 15:7 chemistry 64:3,5 Chief 9:15 28:22 36:21 56:7 children 64:23 chip 64:22 chocolate 64:22 choice 28:21 29:11 32:13 33:7 34:3,17 35:9 36:5 choices 32:15 Church 63:4 circuits 6:24 cities 11:3 14:12 civic 64:7,16 clarification 38:24 clarity 39:14 class 31:11 classically 65:15 clean 33:5 35:24 36:20 49:9 50:12,19,20 51:9 53:17 clear 30:12 44:9 52:11 54:7 clearance 8:3 clearly 26:18,20,24,25 27:22 46:12 58:11 66:19 cliff 44:5,17 45:4 clipping 52:2 close 58:16 66:7 closely 49:23 closure 23:3 closures 3:8 </p>	<p> Club 64:8 cold 22:7 collaborating 27:7 collaborative 15:11 colleague 66:19 collected 11:19,23 collection 16:10 collections 64:21 collectively 38:11 49:19 Colleen 41:16 46:22 College 64:2,14 combined 2:19 come 29:5 51:12 67:17 comes 27:6 52:7 comfortable 54:22 coming 20:15 21:6 34:18 46:14 46:16 commenced 7:8 comment 52:3,6 66:23 comments 40:16 43:23 44:21 Commerce 64:11 commercial 10:24 15:8 commission 1:2,9 7:11,15 9:3 10:2,5,8,13 15:13 16:22 17:15 17:16 18:21 19:23 23:7 27:3 29:6,9,16 33:19 38:4,7 40:17 41:8,16,20,23 42:8,13 48:21 49:13 50:17 51:7,19 53:2 54:13 63:16 67:19 commission's 13:14 29:19 32:9 commissioner 18:15,16 19:4,6 27:20,20,21 28:9,11,12,14,15 28:17 33:2,3,12,14 35:21,22 36:7,8,9,11,12,14 39:19,20 40:4,6,7 45:6 46:21,23 47:9 47:18 50:10 55:5,7,8,15,16,17 55:19,21,23 58:20,21 59:17,18 61:24 62:2,3,9,10,11,13,14,16 62:20,21 63:15,17 66:17,25 67:6,7,8,10,12,13 commissioners 1:21 2:9 9:7,20 29:3 36:25 56:12 66:23 Commisssion 1:1 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1 18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1 </p>
--	--

48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1	connection 26:5,6,13 49:3,4
54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1	consent 66:22,24 67:5
60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1	consequences 58:12
66:1 67:1 68:1	consideration 29:16 30:18 43:7
commitments 59:12	47:25
common 12:15 50:5	considered 10:3 32:17
communication 7:25 63:24	considers 10:5 39:15
communicatory 34:3	consistent 10:6 39:6
communities 23:11	consistently 34:9
community 28:21 29:24,25 32:12	consisting 68:6
33:6,7 34:17 35:9 36:5 64:13	consolidated 30:9,17,20,21 31:4
64:17	consumer 29:11 51:6
companies 57:22 59:25	consumers 18:3 32:13
companion 37:8	contains 12:11 14:2,10
company 10:23 11:11,11,17 12:18	contested 10:15 12:21 18:17
12:24 13:7,21,23 14:14,24	continually 42:22,23
15:10,16,20 17:12 24:20,22	continue 3:24 23:5,6 53:22
25:13 26:14,24,24 63:21	continuing 4:10 50:7
company-owned 14:20	contributing 8:13
company's 11:3 15:24 17:9	contributions 39:22
compared 11:17 37:21,25 38:9	control 32:14
complaints 7:22 16:22	conversations 60:25
complete 10:14 47:6	conversions 14:20
completed 5:11	cookies 64:22
completes 8:19	Cooperative 56:20
completion 2:17 3:14	coordinate 8:3
compliance 33:18	coordination 8:15
complies 29:18	core 45:16,24
comports 32:19	correct 61:10
comprehensive 7:3	corrections 42:16
concept 45:23	corrective 34:15
concepts 43:21	corresponding 38:13
conceptualize 25:5	cost 15:2 16:15 18:5 24:13 26:7
concern 20:6,18 24:3 42:2 52:13	26:18,20 31:22 39:7 46:13
concerned 24:13,14 43:10 50:14	57:6
50:23 52:22	cost- 18:11
concerns 7:22 46:4 50:24 59:19	Costello 9:12,19
concluded 40:11	costs 14:14 17:11 32:3 56:25
concludes 17:22 32:10 39:8 58:6	57:2,5,10,18 59:4 60:23
concrete 35:12	Council 50:12,19,21 51:6,10
concretely 26:20	53:17
concur 28:14 36:11	councils 50:15,16 51:3 52:14
conduct 7:3	counsel 19:12 28:24 36:21 56:8
conducted 31:5	counties 2:22 3:10 6:2,3,8,12
ConEd's 47:22 49:2	counts 66:8,10
conference 53:8	county 6:19 7:25 64:11
confirmation 16:10	couple 33:15 40:8 44:4 45:21
confusion 31:6	coupled 56:18
connected 51:7,8 65:11	courageous 62:25
Connecticut 4:16	course 7:20 42:16 62:19

cover 5:19 16:15
covers 5:17
create 28:21
creating 45:4
credit 12:23,24 13:8 30:5 43:2
credits 11:18 30:10,25 31:17
crews 5:21
critical 8:2 34:19,23
crown 65:2
cryptocurrencies 56:24
cryptocurrency 57:22 58:22 60:8
curb 14:3
current 17:3 38:22 49:15
currently 16:12 37:21,25 38:9
customer 2:18,21 4:3 6:21 8:9
 11:14 13:14 14:16 16:6,9,20
 16:24 17:2,4 31:5 57:9,20
customer's 13:15 30:6
customers 3:19,21 4:2 6:16,17
 6:19,22 8:2,7,14 11:2,19,23
 12:8,10 13:23 15:2 16:3,7,9
 16:12,16 17:3 19:25 24:16
 25:10,14 26:11,21 29:23 30:13
 30:23 31:6,18 41:11 48:5,11
 48:15,17 56:17,17,18,19,22
 57:6,7,11,14,16,19,25 58:5,10
 58:12,18 59:24 60:21 61:22
cycles 38:25

D

D 25:21
Dakin 9:13,14
damage 2:12,18 3:5,7
dashboard 49:7,13,14,21 50:3,8
data 30:14 31:22,23 36:5 56:23
date 12:13 23:25
day 43:17 68:10
days 2:15,22,25 5:20 7:12,14
deal 27:16
dealings 58:17
dealt 25:2
debate 22:24
December 37:10 63:16
decent 65:15
decide 47:25
decided 20:12 21:12
deciding 20:13
decisions 21:10 35:5
declaration 59:16
declared 3:9

decrease 37:23
dedicated 4:5 27:23 65:14
deep 3:22
defense 15:18
defer 58:3
deferral 12:22,23 13:8
deferred 11:18 13:10 16:4,5
define 22:8
defined 32:7 50:6 56:17
definitions 50:5
degree 20:8 23:17 64:2,4
delay 42:17
deliver 65:22
delivery 9:11 32:8 58:3
demand 36:22 41:5
demands 40:25 56:19
demonstrating 31:16
Denise 9:15
density 56:16,17 57:8 58:10
 60:21 61:22
Department 6:10 7:3,6,8 10:23
 17:4 35:16
depending 21:20
deployed 6:2
deployment 29:12
deposit 57:19
Deputy 9:14 36:19 62:23 63:17
DERs 29:12 30:17
described 28:9 36:6 55:14 62:8
design 17:5 42:10 58:25 59:6
designed 14:3
desire 45:24
detail 31:3
detailed 65:8
detection 19:2
detectors 13:6
determinations 52:25
determine 10:2
develop 35:12
developing 49:21
development 28:23 29:10 33:5,10
 49:14 56:20 59:12 63:8,23
devoted 35:15 63:2
DIANE 1:23 19:6
didn't 21:15 42:16,17 44:5 46:2
 53:7 60:9 61:14
different 7:21 20:23 34:7 50:14
 50:15,16 51:3,11,12 52:24
difficult 21:6 33:22 66:9
difficulty 50:25

diligence 34:14
dime 44:12
diode 14:21
direct 22:13 46:5 47:20 48:6,12
directed 7:13
directional 38:20
directions 39:15
directive 54:9
Director 2:4 9:14 36:20 56:8
disadvantage 20:4
disappointed 47:21 48:3
disbanded 50:19
disclosure 32:9
disconnect 60:5,7,14
discount 11:15 13:15,25
discrete 11:6 61:5
discussed 46:10
discussion 56:3
discussions 21:11 22:18 23:10
 25:5
dispatched 6:7
distributed 29:24 33:6
distribution 2:13 6:23
diverse 65:18
DMM 49:16
Doctorate 64:4
document 46:24,24 47:2
documents 37:8 47:5
doesn't 23:4 24:3 43:15 52:6
 53:16,21
doing 4:8,11 6:15 10:5 21:22
 34:13 42:2 43:9 47:4,7 48:24
 52:14 54:7 61:9,16 66:7,8
dollars 12:7,9,23,24 13:2,17,18
 13:19,19 14:19 16:18,25 24:24
 38:12,13
don't 22:21 35:12 44:12 45:22
 48:19 51:9 53:23,23 58:21,22
Doris 47:11,14
Dowling 56:7
downed 6:5
downstate 5:12
downward 17:10
DPS 65:5,6 66:6
draft 9:20 11:10 12:10,14 14:2
 15:14 16:2 17:6 37:14 38:20
 56:12 57:25 58:2
dramatically 14:5
drill-down 54:7
driving 45:25

DSIPs 25:21
due 34:13 56:25
Dutchess 3:10 6:8,11
dynamic 45:4

E

E 63:14
earlier 37:18
early 5:8,20 50:9
earning 15:3 17:8 64:2
Earth 43:17
easily 57:24
economic 10:7 26:10 28:23 56:20
 59:12 60:2,22 63:10
education 31:14
educational 64:7,16
EEPS 40:11,12,18,23 41:14 42:13
 42:15,21 44:4,4 55:2
effect 47:11
effective 18:10,12 25:11
effectively 8:3 41:8
effectiveness 8:15 18:6 26:7,18
effectuates 13:13
efficiencies 27:24
efficiency 11:13 14:4,4,6,20
 15:4,5 18:9 25:21 36:19,21
 37:2,7,8,16 38:22,24 39:16,23
 40:12,20 42:14 43:17 44:19
 45:10,24 47:2,7,10 48:8 49:12
 49:19 53:5,6,9,19 54:5,8,12
 55:13 63:9
efficient 40:2
effort 27:23 43:3
efforts 6:3,4,12 15:16 35:23
 47:7
electric 2:5,14 3:6 5:16 9:15
 9:23 11:12,19 12:8,22 13:18
 14:6,8 15:6,7 17:2 27:11 37:4
 37:7 38:12 56:7,8 63:13
electrification 15:5
electronic 16:4,5
elements 38:21,23
eleven 2:25 63:4
elicit 45:9
emergency 3:9 7:13 59:16
emerging 58:10
emission 19:2
emissions 14:3
emitting 14:21
emphasis 18:9 39:2

Empire 1:14
encourage 15:23
endedness 20:19 25:18
endorse 18:8
energy 11:13 14:4,4,6,20 15:4
 18:9 25:21 29:12 32:5,5,6,7
 32:14,15 33:5 35:13,24 36:18
 36:20,21 37:2,7,8,16 38:3,17
 38:22,23 39:2,15,23 40:12,20
 42:13 43:16 44:11,19 45:10,24
 47:2,7,10 48:7 49:9,11,19
 50:12,19,20 51:9 53:5,6,9,17
 53:19 54:5,8,12 55:13 56:18
 56:25 57:2 60:3,18,23 61:23
 63:9,23 65:10,18,22 66:3,12
engaged 5:10 8:16
engagement 39:3
engaging 65:7
enhance 35:23
enhanced 16:6
enormous 41:17
enrolled 30:2
enrollment 13:21
ensure 12:11 16:6 32:5 42:8
ensuring 33:18
entered 10:21
entire 19:7
entities 41:22
environmental 10:7 11:2 14:25
 15:17 32:8,9 63:10,23,25
environmentally 65:23
EPRI 63:13
equates 57:10
equipment 57:24
equity 12:15,16,16 17:9
era 44:4
erroneous 8:5
especially 18:11 22:12 23:11
 28:3 33:22,25 41:10 48:4,14
essential 65:22
establish 9:22 38:8 42:12
established 29:9
establishes 12:14 15:3 37:14
establishing 12:22 41:21
estimated 12:5
et 9:10 27:24 28:20
ETIP 44:18 46:24 49:11
ETIPs 37:9,11
ETRs 7:18 8:11
evaluating 9:25
evaluation 6:15
event 5:3,9,25 7:23 57:20
events 5:23
everybody 59:4,9
evidentiary 22:13
evolved 32:18
exactly 43:13
example 22:23 29:25
exceed 30:7
exceeded 31:17
exceeds 17:10
exception 37:15,20,24
Exchange 5:16
excuse 3:18 32:18 36:17
executive 63:21
exhibits 10:19
existing 16:20 57:11,19,23,24
expand 11:14
expanded 63:8
expect 8:21 50:7
expectation 46:16
expected 11:8
expects 13:21
expend 35:13
expenditures 13:8
expense 16:4
expenses 11:14
expensive 57:4
experience 8:8 63:20
experienced 8:4
experiences 7:21
experiencing 5:23 61:13
expertise 23:22
explain 43:15 49:7 50:23
explaining 31:10
exposed 16:24
expressed 51:2
extended 6:19 8:9
extensive 2:12 3:5 6:23 64:21
extent 10:14 20:9 23:18 27:12
 32:4 34:12 43:16 51:17,22
 52:23 53:18 59:24 60:20,24
 61:2
extra 34:8
extremely 2:6 5:24 40:20

F

fact 20:19 30:19 45:17 53:17
 60:8
factors 7:20 8:13

fair 58:14	floor 1:14 62:19
falls 52:4,5	flowing 66:12,12,13
familiar 30:13	focus 8:17 18:8 23:7 26:8 28:3 35:6,18 53:13 65:13,21
family 65:3	focused 19:7 34:10,20 43:4 61:17 65:15
far 46:11	focusing 53:15
fashion 52:20	fold 24:15
fast 42:17	folks 22:19 25:4 26:14 33:25 34:9 40:10 41:16 45:12 48:5 48:13,14 50:13 55:3 63:3
favor 18:14 28:8 32:24 36:4 39:17,20 55:11 62:5 67:5	follow-up 50:18
favorite 64:21	followed 63:5
fearful 20:18	following 51:11 62:25
February 62:24	food 43:22
federal 12:5	foods 64:21
fee 16:13,16 30:4,7,10 31:2	footprint 3:4,16 4:20 5:24 20:22
feedback 53:9	forces 45:25
feel 48:7 52:9	foregoing 68:3,6
feeling 44:23	formal 44:21
fees 16:15,17 31:18	format 30:9,13
feet 2:10	formed 50:14
fellow 66:22	former 62:23,23
felt 21:15	formulate 43:21
fifty-four 4:11 57:10	formulating 50:18
fighting 65:15	fortunate 66:4,9
figure 21:5 27:4,14,15 43:4,9 43:18 45:11 60:3,23 61:2	forty-four 63:2
figured 46:7	forty-nine 4:9
file 7:10,13	forum 53:19
filed 7:12 11:5,6 29:4 37:5,8	forums 53:5,5,7,9,13,24
filing 56:13,15 57:16	forward 3:24 6:15 8:23 18:5 21:23 24:6,9 26:15,16 27:10 33:10 34:16 42:7 43:7 44:17 54:6
filings 12:22 29:15 31:16	foster 48:24
final 9:4 57:20	found 21:4
Finally 8:4 17:14 32:4	Foundation 64:14
Finance 9:16	four 3:18 11:21,22,24
financial 41:4	fourteen 4:13 12:8
find 17:24 18:5 39:11 58:8	fourth 56:2
finds 29:17	frame 40:21
finite 23:25 24:2	framework 29:7,9,13,19,20 30:15 31:24
first 19:17 20:7 38:14 40:8 46:3 63:4 65:4,6	frankly 20:6 43:2 48:3,10 51:5 51:8 52:2 64:16 65:9
fiscally 65:9	frenzy 21:5
fits 35:3	friend 65:4
fitting 66:7	friendly 49:18
five 2:15,20 11:24 12:2	front 25:15 42:11
five-megawatt 57:8	
fix 59:6	
flag 61:8,15	
flat 37:20,24 38:8	
flawed 42:15	
flaws 41:18	
fleet 65:19	

frustrating 8:6
FTEs 4:5, 6, 9, 11
Fuel 37:20, 22, 24 38:2
Fuel's 38:6, 7
fulfilling 31:23
full 7:10 10:16, 18 16:18 18:19
 18:24 21:9 34:12 46:14
fully 5:10 10:10 46:8
fund 11:13 13:5 15:18 49:9
funded 49:19
funding 13:16 14:7 15:14 37:20
 38:24, 24 42:9 44:6 57:17
funds 38:12, 13
funny 65:9
further 2:18 8:6 11:18 15:24
 31:4 39:23 67:17, 18
furtherance 42:13
future 13:11 38:22

G

gas 2:5 9:23 11:12, 23 12:10, 23
 13:5, 20 14:3, 7, 9 15:19 17:3
 18:8 19:2 27:11 37:4, 7 38:13
 56:8
GE 63:21
Gene 62:22 63:7, 19, 25 64:24, 25
 65:2, 4, 24 66:15
general 23:7, 8 29:19 60:20
generally 18:6 56:22
generated 32:6
generation 29:24 33:6 63:11
 65:19
generic 24:10, 21 25:15 56:5
 62:7
generous 65:8
gentleman 65:15
George 63:14
Gerbsch 9:15
GERWITZ 46:22
getting 35:8 40:2 44:14 45:10
 50:12 52:16 53:8 58:23
Girls 64:8
give 3:3 22:10 24:3 25:16 43:22
 43:23 44:25 62:19
given 30:5 54:10
gives 34:21
giving 23:3
glad 23:10
go 6:15 22:14, 18 30:16 42:3
 44:21 50:8 52:5 61:14

goal 54:12
goals 13:13 18:12 33:5 41:2
 42:9
goes 42:6 44:13 49:16
going 20:10 21:7, 13, 23 22:2
 23:13, 23 24:19 25:4 35:4 40:8
 40:14 42:7 44:17, 25 46:15, 25
 47:12 52:17, 18, 19 53:17 54:6
 54:10, 17, 21 66:25
good 2:2, 8 8:11 9:6, 19 18:6, 21
 29:2 34:4 36:24 42:24 48:25
 51:9, 20, 20 52:14 53:14, 21, 24
 56:11 58:23 60:2

gotten 22:21
government 6:9 63:20
governor 3:9 6:2 7:2 63:14
graduated 63:25
grandchildren 64:24
grant 59:21 64:24
granular 23:21
grapple 19:8 23:8 61:22
grappled 24:25
Great 5:15 45:7
greater 30:25 32:14 34:22
green 32:5
greenhouse 14:3
greeter 65:5
GREGG 1:23 18:16
Grid 20:21 47:23
gross 39:2
grossed 38:14
ground 6:10
group 4:24, 25 5:15, 17 6:22 17:5
 50:20
groups 5:21 11:2 50:15, 17 51:2
 52:13, 24
growth 60:22
guarantee 31:12
guaranteeing 30:24
Guard 5:25
guess 62:19
guidance 38:20
guide 65:12

H

half 12:9
handle 44:24 51:9
hands-on 50:11
happen 66:9
happened 3:13

happening 23:2	
happy 33:9 39:9	
hard 3:7 18:21 24:4 27:17,22 41:15,15	
haven' t 51:21 52:12	
hear 8:21 48:18	
heard 7:22 44:9	
hearing 68:8	
hearings 22:13	
heart 18:20 48:4 62:22 64:20	
heavy 2:10 3:7	
help 26:22 45:9	
helped 5:12 25:7 34:6	
helpful 22:12 34:21 40:13 45:7 45:14 46:20 49:6 53:11,13 54:5	
helping 43:21 65:20	
hereof 68:5	
hereto 68:5	
hereunto 68:9	
high 2:11 15:19 56:16,17,18,23 57:8 58:9 60:20,20 61:21	
high-density 57:6	
higher 25:23 52:8	
highlighted 59:20	
highly 18:8 57:22 59:10	
hiker 64:18	
hindered 2:17	
history 40:12	
hold 39:21	
holistic 45:15	
holistically 23:14 60:18	
honors 63:25	
hopefully 47:5	
Hopkins 64:4,12	
hotly 18:17	
hours 38:15	
HOWARD 68:3,13	
HUBBARD 68:3,13	
Hudson 3:15 37:24 38:2	
Hudson's 38:5	
huge 59:3 60:23	
human 66:20	
humanitarian 65:10	
hundred 2:20 3:19,20,21 4:5,9 4:11,14 57:17	
hundreds 2:13 3:6	
Hydroelectric 65:7	
hydropower 32:6 60:19 61:5,11 61:20	
	I
	I'd 2:4 9:2 35:18 42:20 46:22 48:9 50:11
	I'll 28:5 30:16 35:24 46:17
	I'm 16:19 23:10 32:10,22 33:9 39:20 40:8,8,14 42:6 43:12,18 51:14 52:14,21 54:6,18,20,22 54:22 66:25
	I've 4:20 50:14,25 51:4,5
	identifying 15:19
	immediately 46:3 63:6
	impact 20:10 26:19 47:15,16 57:12 60:16 61:12
	impacted 3:2
	impacts 26:20,21
	imperative 40:19
	implement 46:5 56:5,16 62:7
	implementation 13:13 18:25 25:8 25:10 31:9 36:5 37:9 39:5 42:10 63:9
	implemented 18:4 31:15 41:7
	implementing 15:18
	implements 39:21
	implications 41:4
	importance 63:11
	important 8:10,17 13:13 18:3,5 20:14 21:17 23:17 26:4 33:15 33:20 41:10 52:25 54:20 58:13 59:21 60:4 66:11
	importantly 44:11
	impose 59:3
	improperly 22:9
	improve 14:4
	improved 27:24
	improvements 15:24 19:2 39:4,24
	imputed 12:18
	inability 8:2
	inadequate 59:2
	inappropriate 21:20
	inappropriately 42:14
	incentives 14:24 15:23 39:24
	include 4:13 30:9 38:23
	included 3:22 6:3 16:15 30:14 31:24
	includes 12:16 15:6,14 16:2 17:6 29:21 38:20
	including 3:6 4:15 10:23 13:5 16:3 40:23 41:23 57:16 64:8 65:19

<p>income 11:14 13:7 28:3 incorporate 12:4 incorporating 55:3 increase 9:11 13:22 29:10 38:3 57:9,11 increased 14:5,7 38:8 39:2 increases 11:16 12:4 13:16 18:3 27:23 59:8 increasing 11:20,23 incremental 33:4 57:5 58:3 indicates 57:9 indicating 57:21 individuals 8:11 information 7:24 8:6,11,14 11:13 21:15 34:21 37:11 50:11 51:25 52:4 54:22 infrastructure 3:6 8:2 11:12 15:10,12 18:8 57:18 initially 17:25 initiative 40:23 initiatives 25:19,20 37:12 38:22 innovations 32:20 input 53:16 installation 13:6 15:7 instances 44:4 Institute 63:13 instituting 13:15 insufficient 59:2 integrating 31:8 intends 32:4 intensive 56:18 interaction 58:16 interconnection 27:10 interest 10:4 17:20 18:13,23 19:8,11 28:5 interested 29:13 interesting 32:20 interests 10:11,22 internal 13:2 international 63:20 interpreting 52:11 interrupt 62:18 investigation 7:4,9 8:18,22 investment 57:18 investors 10:12 involve 61:21 involved 24:5 34:22 56:23 involving 13:5 IOUs 5:6</p>	<p>Iowa 4:16 Island 3:15 isn't 49:17 issue 14:14 17:4 18:22 21:14 23:16,17,19 24:2 41:6 49:7 59:23 61:5,10,11 issued 44:20 49:10 issues 8:12 10:10 12:21 18:20 20:11,12 21:12 22:6,9,20 23:3 23:4,14,19,24 24:5,12 27:4,16 34:11 41:20 54:25 59:22 60:3 60:6 61:2,20,21,23 63:23 65:20 it's 6:21 22:12 25:20 27:6 28:4 33:15,20 35:2 42:22 43:13,24 45:8,9,14,16,17,17,18,18,20 48:7,19,20,21 51:19,20,25 52:4,18,19,19,20 58:13 59:13 61:2 66:11 item 9:10 19:3 28:7,18,19 29:3 32:25 33:3,11 36:3,15,16 37:2 37:14 38:20 39:12,18,21 55:24 56:2,3,12 58:6,9,19 59:7,8,15 62:5,5,17 items 66:24 67:2,14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">J</p> <hr/> <p>J.P 16:19 46:12 JAMES 1:24 9:19 27:21 January 10:22 49:10 Jim 9:12,18 17:24 job 42:11,22 43:5 61:10 jobs 60:10,13,21 Joe 56:7 John 1:22 2:2 64:23 Johns 64:4,12 joined 63:21 joining 63:14 joint 9:21 10:2,3,6,21 11:4 19:10 20:6,11 21:3,9 22:22 27:6 28:9 Joule 28:20 29:4,15,23 30:8,11 30:13,22 31:8,14,16 32:4 36:4 65:2 Joule's 29:18,21 30:23 Judge 9:12,13 17:22 June 37:4,10 jurisdiction 14:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">K</p> <hr/>
---	--

KATHLEEN 9:6	length 8:12
keep 49:25 65:13 66:12,12,13	lessons 34:24 40:23 41:10 42:21 42:23 44:3 54:24,25
Kelly 28:22,23,25 29:2 32:12 34:5 36:20	let's 2:3 9:10
Kevin 36:21	letter 7:13
key 25:18	letters 7:7
kid 64:20	leukemia 62:25
kind 44:2,14 45:23 46:3 49:20 49:25 50:6 65:8	level 13:2 18:21 38:18 44:24,25 46:18
know 2:23 5:8 16:7 22:18,21 24:4 25:5,23,24 34:9 35:10 40:18 42:6 45:11,17 47:12,22 47:24 48:10,23 49:2,5,16 50:13 52:2,15 54:9,15,16,25 59:19 60:9,23 61:3,6,8 63:3 66:14	levels 13:15,25 17:3 38:10
knowing 61:16	life 65:3
known 10:17 31:4 66:5	light 14:16,21,21
Krieger 64:12	lighting 14:11,15 22:23 23:4 27:24
L	liked 64:22
labor 11:2 32:3	limited 11:6
lack 22:16 45:13,19	line 4:14 5:21 27:25 42:7
lagged 7:19	lineman 4:6
laid 29:20 34:6 45:23	litigated 10:10,17 11:9
Lake 64:19	litigation 28:2
Lakes 5:15	little 22:10 40:12 43:10
language 52:10	live 50:8
large 3:16 5:3,24 10:24 59:8	load 56:16,17 57:6,9 58:10 60:20
largely 57:25	loads 56:18
largest 11:3	local 6:9 7:23 8:15 29:12
laser 61:17	locate 59:2
lasted 2:21	locations 3:8 16:14
late 44:7	locking 43:24 54:23
Laura 64:23	locks 43:20
law 9:12,13 19:23 23:17,19	long 3:15 18:16,20 47:15
laws 12:6	long- 14:13 59:11
lay 47:3	long-term 10:12
laying 43:6	longest 2:21 4:3
lays 46:12	look 8:20 18:19,21 20:22 21:13 21:22 23:15,23 24:6,20,23 25:17 26:25 27:13 43:8 45:12 45:15 48:25 49:18 52:24 53:3 54:6 59:21 61:20
leader 65:10	looking 19:7 20:8 26:15,15,17 45:14 49:18 54:5,6,8 59:20
leadership 55:3 65:12	looks 10:13
leak 15:15	lost 51:5
leaks 15:19	lot 4:18,19 6:21,21 33:24 44:12 51:13 52:13
learned 34:24 40:23 42:23 44:3 54:25	loud 44:9
learning 54:25	Louisiana 4:16
LeCakes 9:13,14 17:22	low 11:14 13:7 28:3 56:25 57:2 66:13
led 7:21 17:5	low-income 13:14 18:25 24:8,10
legal 19:12,14	

luminaires 14:22	54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1
	60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1
	66:1 67:1,19 68:1
M	
M 36:17	meets 29:19
machine 44:14	megawatt 38:15
magnitude 31:10	member 29:25 40:17
Maine 4:16,21 5:2	members 29:24 30:2 56:15,25
maintain 11:11 39:14	58:3
maintenance 39:4	membership 31:19
major 20:21 22:2 37:4 42:4	memorial 63:5
making 17:17 19:15 34:10 40:24	mentioned 44:19 47:20
48:11 50:4 60:14 61:8,11	messaging 16:6
malfunctions 8:5	met 65:4
management 63:22	metering 15:9,11 18:7
manual 39:5	methane 13:6 15:16 19:2 27:24
Manz 36:21	metric 16:4,21 37:5
March 1:13 2:9,15 3:11 6:16,18	metrics 15:20 16:20 37:6 50:5
6:20 7:2 9:25 68:10	Michael 2:4,8
market 33:5,9 38:17 39:3 44:11	Michigan 4:15
57:4 63:23	Mike 2:7 8:20 56:6,8
marketing 35:8 44:13	mileage 6:22
Mary 56:6,9,11 58:8	miles 15:15
Maryland 4:25	million 12:6,9,23,24 13:2,17,18
Massena 60:6,11 61:12	13:19,19 14:19 16:18,25 38:12
Master 64:4	38:13
match 26:18	mindful 27:4 32:22
material 44:14	minimum 44:23
materials 16:8	missed 66:15
matter 7:9	Missouri 4:15
matters 58:22 66:10	Mitchell 9:13
maximum 41:21	Mitches 9:14
mean 23:4 24:15 51:23 52:6	mitigate 57:12
53:21	mitigation 13:11
means 20:22 26:10 60:25	MMBTU 38:15
meant 47:6	mobile 57:22 59:11
measured 40:24	moderate 27:23
measures 16:25 63:9	moderated 11:18
meat 22:16	modest 11:16 29:17
mechanism 47:17	modification 17:21
mechanisms 15:4	modifications 13:25 29:18 55:12
meet 18:23 49:24	Mohawk 9:11 16:24 37:16,18 46:9
meeting 1:1,9 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1	Mohawk's 9:23 37:16
6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1	moments 62:20
12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1	Monday 6:16,18
18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1	monetary 30:25
24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1 29:1	money 13:4,10,10 33:9
30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1	monitor 3:24
36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1	monitoring 6:12
42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1	monitors 6:14
48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1	month 30:5,6,24

<p>monthly 1:1 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1 18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1 29:1 30:1 31:1,2 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1 54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1 60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1 66:1 67:1 68:1</p> <p>morning 2:2,8 9:6,19 29:2 36:24 56:11</p> <p>morning's 9:7</p> <p>Moses 65:6</p> <p>move 26:16 28:19 34:16 36:16 43:7 46:8 56:2 66:21,22</p> <p>moved 3:24 5:11 44:17</p> <p>moves 8:23</p> <p>moving 27:9 33:10 47:9 49:25 66:18</p> <p>much-improved 17:25</p> <p>multi-use 13:7</p> <p>multiparty 18:17</p> <p>multiyear 18:18</p> <p>municipal 6:13 14:15 56:4,13,15 56:20,24 58:25 59:9 62:6</p> <p>municipalities 14:17 29:13 33:16,21,23 59:23 60:2</p> <p>municipality 33:17,24 59:5</p> <p>municipally-owned 14:21</p> <p>MUNYS 5:7,9</p> <p>mutual 4:22,24 5:15,17,20</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <hr/> <p>NAMAG 4:24,25 5:16,22</p> <p>name 5:18 68:10</p> <p>named 63:17</p> <p>National 5:25 20:21 37:20,22,24 38:2,5,7 47:23</p> <p>nature 52:20</p> <p>near 6:5</p> <p>nearing 3:13</p> <p>necessarily 20:13,25 35:13 42:16 51:14,18 52:15,15,18 54:10 61:14</p> <p>necessary 13:24</p> <p>need 13:16 22:3 25:11 26:14 27:14 34:5,14,19 35:13 39:13</p>	<p>40:3,24,25 41:3,17 42:11 48:18 49:13 52:8,23 53:15,23 54:19 58:24 60:23 61:19,22</p> <p>needed 11:11 21:21 30:20 32:3</p> <p>needs 41:23 53:2 57:2 65:13</p> <p>negative 16:23 51:18 61:12</p> <p>negotiated 18:18</p> <p>negotiations 22:14</p> <p>neighboring 58:12</p> <p>net 11:19,22 12:7,9 14:15 58:3</p> <p>Neville 36:19,24 43:25 45:20 49:9</p> <p>new 1:2,15 2:14 3:5 4:3,4,20,23 5:5,7,9,19,22 7:4,7 12:5,22 12:23 14:13 32:13,24 39:15 46:25 56:4,13 62:6,24 63:5,15 65:23 68:2</p> <p>newspaper 52:2</p> <p>Niagara 9:11,22 16:24 37:16,16 37:17 46:9 65:6</p> <p>nimble 39:3</p> <p>NiMo 46:12</p> <p>nine 12:15,16 13:19</p> <p>nineteen 10:22</p> <p>ninety 2:20</p> <p>ninety-three 3:20,21</p> <p>non- 14:24</p> <p>non-deferred 16:10</p> <p>non-wires 18:11</p> <p>nor-easter 2:25</p> <p>normal 12:17 62:19</p> <p>North 4:15,23</p> <p>Northeast 5:18</p> <p>note 5:25 7:16,22 33:16 42:21 42:23 58:15</p> <p>noted 58:18</p> <p>notice 10:16</p> <p>notification 67:4</p> <p>novel 29:22</p> <p>November 40:10 42:25 43:2</p> <p>number 4:9 7:9 11:5 14:2 25:10 25:22,24,24 33:25 34:6,16 38:21 51:5,10 59:9 60:13 64:7</p> <p>numbers 3:22 4:13 51:7,11</p> <p>numerous 3:8 64:16</p> <p>NYCRR 7:11</p> <p>NYMPA 56:14,14,15,22,25 57:9,12 57:15,21 58:2,3</p> <p>NYPA 56:19 57:2,3 58:17 63:14 65:17,18,21 66:6</p>
---	--

NYPA' s 65:19	ordering 7:15
NYSERDA 41:23 44:20 49:14,20	orders 33:19 41:6,9 42:9 49:12
	organization 56:14
O	organizations 64:7,17
objectives 26:9,19 42:14	oriented 65:8
obligation 26:23 27:2 33:23	original 49:11
Obviously 59:24 61:4	originally 11:17
occurred 3:12	outage 5:23
October 15:13	outages 2:14,18,19,21,21 3:3,12 3:14,18 4:3
odd 50:22	outcomes 10:9
offer 30:23 32:5 33:8	outdoors 64:18
offerings 31:3	outreach 31:5,13
offers 16:9	outset 42:20
Office 2:5 9:15 36:20	outside 23:22 61:20,21
official 65:6	outsource 33:16
officials 7:23,25 8:16	outstanding 20:11,12,20 34:17
Ohio 4:15	overall 19:9 21:22 54:4,23
okay 21:13,16 45:6,6 47:9,18 50:10,11 54:3	overseeing 34:14
once 17:9 31:15 54:21	oversight 35:14
ones 53:20	overspend 42:2
ongoing 17:15 22:24,24 43:3	overspending 42:5
online 49:7,13	owe 42:19
Ontario 4:17	ownership 43:5
open 20:8,9,23 57:4	P
open- 20:18 25:17	pack 57:23
open-endedness 20:17	page 19:13 68:5
operate 57:23	pages 68:7
operation 58:24	paper 43:18,20
operational 63:24	parameters 19:13
operations 5:10 59:3,10	part 3:16 7:11 30:3 45:16 49:15 50:25 52:12 54:8,12,16 65:5
operator 60:11 61:6	participate 15:10 53:7,8
operators 61:14	participating 31:11
opinion 23:9 44:10	participation 29:11 30:3
opportunities 33:8 34:7 60:22	particular 6:19 22:20,23 44:18 51:24,24
opportunity 10:17 48:13 54:18	particularly 18:24
opposition 11:4	parties 10:16,20,22 11:5,7,8 20:25 21:2,8 22:5,7,15,17 23:18 24:5,20 25:3 26:13 27:2 34:21 39:23
opt-out 30:2 31:7,19	party 24:22
opt-up 30:2	passed 62:24
options 16:7	passion 64:19
Orchestra 64:9	Pataki 63:15
order 9:3,21 11:10 12:11,14,20 14:2 15:14 16:2 17:6 19:23 20:16,20 26:5,24 29:7,13,19 29:20 30:15 31:24 32:22,23 33:15 37:18 40:11 41:20,24 42:25 43:11,15,21 44:18,22 45:21 46:9,12 47:21,24 49:10 50:3 51:15,15,19,23 52:10 53:4 54:11 56:12 57:25 58:2	pause 20:5 22:3 24:3
	pay 16:12,13 57:20
	payment 16:5,5,10,14

peak 3:17, 17, 17
Peggy 36:19, 23, 24 39:11 47:20
penalty 31:20
pension 13:2
people 4:7 25:3 43:23 65:23
percent 3:11 11:20, 21, 22, 24
 12:2, 2, 15, 15, 16 14:5, 6, 8, 9
 17:10 57:10, 12, 17
percentage 30:4
performance 7:10, 17 15:20, 24
period 8:9 48:13
permitted 31:18
person 21:8 53:7
personnel 5:25
perspective 20:19 21:23 22:3
 25:10 45:11, 14, 16 50:24 53:12
 59:19 61:15
petition 9:11 28:20 29:3, 5, 21
 56:4 59:20, 22, 23 60:7, 9 61:9
 62:7
phase 44:6, 18
phenomenon 58:10, 14
phonetic 30:18
phrase 22:16
physical 64:5
piece 53:4
PILOT 29:6
pilots 34:18
pipe 15:15
place 8:22 43:12 49:20 68:4
placeholder 21:18
places 4:14
Placid 64:19
plan 8:12 9:22, 24 11:7 13:8, 9
 13:12 14:10, 18, 23 15:3, 5, 12
 15:22 16:14, 20 17:14, 14, 16, 17
 17:20, 25 18:4, 6, 10 31:9 36:5
 36:6 41:13 47:2 49:22
planned 46:24
planning 29:12 44:13 63:25
plans 37:5, 9
plant 17:12
played 65:18, 20
plays 66:3
Plaza 1:14
please 9:18 26:25 28:25 36:23
 56:9
pleased 18:24
plus 26:2
pocket 6:18
point 4:19 11:20, 21, 22, 24, 24
 12:2 25:15 32:22 54:11
points 15:21, 23
poles 3:7
policies 10:7 13:14 25:12
policy 13:13 17:15 18:4, 12, 25
 26:9, 19 39:21 42:14
political 64:3
pool 5:2
poppa 64:24
portfolio 37:2 65:18
portfolios 37:7, 13
portion 13:4 31:21
portions 33:19
position 66:10
positions 11:9 22:15 63:22
positive 15:22 23:9, 12 24:18
 27:10 34:24 51:16, 18 53:18
positives 19:10
possibility 30:20
possible 66:14
potential 20:21 60:22
potentially 39:15 45:18 48:25
 59:3
power 8:9, 13 9:11 14:13 32:16
 56:4, 14 57:2, 5, 10, 13 58:23
 59:4 62:6, 24 63:7, 10, 13 65:7
practices 15:18
pragmatic 39:16
pre-date 12:21
pre-tax 15:21
predecessor 66:19
predictability 17:13 28:2
preference 20:3
prejudice 20:4 54:21 55:20
premium 12:17
preparation 7:5
prepare 41:5 64:22
present 30:12
presentation 17:22 32:10 39:6
 58:6
presented 9:12 28:21 36:19
 37:18 56:5
presenting 36:25
presents 32:19
President 62:23
pressured 21:16
prevent 44:16
prevents 17:16
previous 29:23

prices 66:13	13:12 14:10,18,23 15:3 16:14
primarily 48:6	16:17,19 17:14,20 29:18,22
Prior 63:13	30:4 36:18 37:20,22 38:2,3
Private 5:6	58:2
probably 40:21	proposes 29:23 56:16 57:12,15
problem 59:13,14	57:21
problematic 45:5	proposing 9:21 30:8 37:5
problems 20:24 58:22,23,24	proposition 30:12
procedurally 20:24	protect 17:7 43:22 57:19
proceed 28:7 36:3 55:10 62:4	protected 17:8,10
proceeding 10:18 22:21 23:20,23	Protection 36:6
23:25 24:10,21 25:15 30:19	protections 57:15
proceedings 17:15,18 20:8,10,23	proud 65:17 66:7
25:20 26:2,6,17 27:3 51:12	provide 2:5 6:9 8:10 15:12
68:7	19:17,25 31:14 37:11 38:16
process 19:14 22:11 31:7 40:18	47:6 57:17
40:19 44:21 49:8,25 54:17	provided 31:17
processes 38:25	providers 38:17 44:11
processing 56:23	provides 11:10 14:18,24 15:22
produce 10:8	16:5 32:13
produces 10:3	providing 6:4 7:18,24 8:5 25:14
producing 45:2	26:11,11 47:15 58:4 60:10
productivity 12:18	provision 12:11
professional 64:6,25	provisions 14:3,11 16:2 17:7,19
program 13:5,14,18,20,24 15:6	33:6
24:8 25:11 28:21 29:18 30:3	prudence 18:7
30:13 32:9 38:18 40:11,13	prudent 39:16 40:24
41:14,21,23 44:7 46:6,15,16	prudently 43:6
47:20,22 48:2,3,6,12,17,20,25	PSC 62:23 63:17
49:5 55:2 56:21	PSEG 5:6
programs 11:15 13:5,17,22 14:8	public 1:1,2,9 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1
29:10,23 30:22 33:7 34:13,17	5:5 6:1 7:1,3 8:1 9:1,3 10:1
36:19,22 39:13 40:3,20 41:4,5	10:4,24 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1
41:7,11 42:11,12,15 44:12	15:1 16:1,21 17:1,20 18:1,13
46:5 49:12,20 55:14 63:24	18:22 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1
project 29:25 31:15	23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1
projects 31:3,11	28:4 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1
prolonged 3:3	34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1
promote 15:6	40:1 41:1 42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1
prone 15:15	46:1 47:1 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1
prong 19:17	52:1 53:1 54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1
proper 22:5,5	58:1 59:1 60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1
properly 22:9 41:7 42:8	63:16 64:1 65:1,14,16 66:1
properties 15:8	67:1 68:1
proposal 9:21 10:2,3,6,21 11:5	pull 52:2
19:10 20:6,11 21:3,9 22:22	purchase 14:16 57:13 59:3
27:6 28:9 30:23 32:18 38:5,6	purchased 57:3
38:7 44:19	purchasing 32:16
propose 37:24	pushes 39:22
proposed 9:24 11:7,16 12:4,20	pushing 48:10

put 20:16 44:2
Putnam 3:10 6:8,11
putting 20:15 21:18 25:16 33:23
 43:12

Q

qualify 56:19
quarter 31:17,18
quarterly 31:16
Quebec 4:17
question 43:14,24 45:8 47:11,19
questions 9:17 17:23 28:24
 32:11 36:22 39:9 40:8 45:9
 56:9 58:7
quickly 41:2 59:11
Quinn 2:16 3:13,19 4:10 6:17
 7:5
quite 59:9

R

Railroad 64:10
raise 52:8
raised 64:23
range 7:16 10:9
rate 9:22,24 11:7,20,21,22,24
 12:2,3,6,22 13:8,9,11,12
 14:10,18,19,23 15:3,5 16:14
 16:16,19,19,21 17:2,5,14,14
 17:16,17,20 18:3,18 19:14
 20:7,21 21:22,24 22:2 23:3
 24:16,18,19 25:16,18 26:20
 37:18 39:24 46:3,9 58:25 59:6
ratepayer 39:21 49:19
ratepayers 10:12 12:13 17:7,7
 17:13 19:9,11 28:3 33:8 42:19
 47:16
rates 9:12 12:14 16:15 38:24
 45:13 46:8,14 47:13 48:8 56:7
 58:23
ratio 12:16
rationale 43:19
reach 3:7 5:3,7
read 40:13,14
real 51:9
real-life 42:10
realistic 40:25
reality 32:24
really 4:21 19:17 20:7 21:4,7,9
 21:21,24 22:15,15,18 27:6
 34:2,4,5,8 35:5 43:13,15,24

45:8 47:11,19,20 48:9,12,14
 48:16 51:19,21,22,25 52:14
 59:20,22 60:3 61:7 66:8
realm 28:4
reason 46:2
reasonable 19:19,22 58:15
reasonably 11:8
reauthorizations 42:4
rebuilding 6:23
recall 45:22
receive 57:2,3
received 57:8 64:3
reception 63:6
recognition 21:17,21 49:15
recognize 41:17 54:19 66:8
recognized 12:7,10
recognizes 17:14
recognizing 20:12
recommend 17:21
recommendation 28:8,19 36:4,16
 55:12,25 62:6,18
recommendations 30:16 67:5,15
recommended 38:11
recommends 38:4,6
reconcile 13:8
reconciliation 16:18 38:25
record 10:14,19 19:7 21:7 49:17
 52:5 68:7
recovery 6:2,9 46:13 47:16,17
recuse 66:23
reduce 12:24
reduced 38:5,6
reduction 15:16 18:2 19:3 38:2
reevaluate 53:23
referred 4:24 5:16 37:9
reflects 12:17
Reformed 63:4
regard 31:22 37:19
regarding 6:6 8:11 16:21 37:12
 63:10
region 2:24 5:18
regional 5:17
regions 5:19
regularly 49:25
regulation 60:17
regulators 26:10 60:19
reject 38:4
related 15:4 26:8 38:21 63:22
relates 25:18
relations 63:20

<p> relatively 7:18 reliability 8:14 reliable 26:12 65:22 66:13 relocate 59:11 rely 51:16,22,22 remain 16:25 17:3 remaining 2:17 remains 13:10 32:23 remark 39:8 remarkable 66:18,19,20 remind 40:10 remote 3:7 removing 35:7 renewable 32:20 35:24 replacement 15:15 report 8:19 15:13 34:5 51:24,25 52:6,7 reported 68:4 Reporter 68:13 reporting 31:20 38:25 47:4 49:15 50:5 reports 7:10,12,14 51:12 represent 4:6 representatives 6:7 10:24 16:9 49:24 request 4:18 57:8 requested 11:17 requesting 30:14 requests 29:22 31:23 required 7:11 31:9,21 47:4 57:18 requirement 19:21 46:23 57:16 requirements 29:20 33:17 requires 15:15 58:3 research 63:8,13 reserve 13:3 residences 13:7 residential 13:6 17:2 58:13 resiliency 65:20 resolution 23:2,11 24:6 resolve 20:11 resolves 12:20 resolving 14:13 20:15 23:19 resonated 27:8 resource 18:10 39:5 resources 4:18,19 5:2,8,14 6:9 22:2 35:15 respect 15:9 41:23 respective 37:13 respects 19:18 </p>	<p> response 7:5,13 8:16 36:22 responsibilities 50:16 responsibility 57:7 responsible 33:18 41:22 65:24 restoration 3:13 4:2,8,12 5:12 5:20 6:6,7,12 7:18,24 restorations 4:5 restore 6:22 8:13 restored 6:16,17 result 10:4,9 11:8 resulted 2:11 resulting 2:13 12:5,12 15:2 58:4 results 10:8 27:22 Retail 28:22 retired 64:15 retroactive 42:3,4 return 12:15,16 17:9 REV 20:8,10 33:4,9 45:21 revenue 11:16 12:4 16:23 19:21 revenues 11:11,19,22 58:4 review 7:20 13:24 19:14 29:17 31:10 34:18,19,20,23 reviewed 51:21 reviewing 19:16 20:5 revised 37:10 revisit 54:21 Rhodes 1:22 2:2,9 7:6 8:20 9:9 9:20 17:24 19:4 27:19 28:6,12 28:15,18 29:3 32:12 33:12 35:20 36:2,9,12,15,25 39:11 40:4 43:3 55:5,10,17,21,24 58:8 59:17 61:24 62:4,11,14 62:17 66:17 67:3,8,11,14,20 Rhodes's 55:3 rid 45:10 48:2 Rider 56:5,16,21 57:5,13,16,20 58:2,4 62:7 right 20:25 21:2,6,13,25 39:13 42:19 43:11 47:18 61:9 Riley 2:9,17 3:4,14,17,18,23 4:2 5:9 6:16 7:5 risk 15:21 57:25 risks 12:17 road 3:8 6:4 8:3 road-clearing 6:4 Robert 65:6 Rockland 6:11 role 26:10,10,11 35:10,14 50:17 65:12,18,19 66:2 </p>
--	---

roles 50:15
roll 34:3,4
roll-out 43:9
rolled 40:18 42:15
room 20:25 21:2,8 22:7
rose 4:9
round 53:22
rule 7:11
rules 32:8
run 9:24 41:4
running 40:20 44:15
rural 6:21 56:20 64:18
rushed 42:14
rushing 43:11

S

s 1:24 36:4
sad 62:22
safe 19:18 26:12
safeguards 57:21,24
safety 13:5 15:19 18:8 19:2
 63:11 66:2
SAPA 44:21
SAPA'd 43:23
Saturday 63:3
save 33:9
savings 12:19 15:2 30:6 31:12
 38:3 39:2
saying 20:9,13 21:13
Sayre 1:23 18:15,16 28:9,11
 33:2,3 36:7,8 39:19,20 40:5
 55:15,16 58:20,21 62:9,10
 67:6,7
says 26:24
Scenic 64:10
schedule 56:5 62:8
Schenectady 63:5 64:9,9
School 64:12
science 64:3,13
scope 18:10 31:12
score 7:14
seamlessly 27:12,16 65:12
second 19:21
Secretary 9:4 67:16
security 6:4 57:19
see 4:17 21:12 22:17 23:10,16
 23:24,24 24:23 25:5,8,9 33:3
 33:9 35:7 46:12 48:9 52:9
 53:6 54:12,21 58:11
seeing 27:23 53:8

seek 14:24
seen 45:18 46:9
SEEP 47:2
segregation 34:3
selected 29:14
Self 46:5 47:20 48:6,12
sell 14:14
senior 63:22
sense 3:4 24:4
sent 7:6
sentence 51:24
separate 23:20 52:6 57:13
series 29:15
servant 65:14
serve 29:4 57:8 63:15
served 56:21
service 1:1,2,9 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1
 6:1 7:1,3 8:1 9:1,3 10:1,24
 11:1,3 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1,17
 16:1,6,9,20,21,25 17:1,12
 18:1 19:1,16,17 20:1,2 21:1
 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1,12
 27:1 28:1 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1
 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1
 38:17 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1
 43:1 44:1,11 45:1 46:1 47:1
 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1
 54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1,4,4
 59:1,4 60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1,5
 63:16 64:1 65:1,22 66:1,16
 67:1 68:1
servicemen 4:7
serving 57:5 63:22
session 2:4 9:2,3 37:18 49:11
 54:19 62:19
set 25:3 42:8
sets 30:14 31:22,23 40:15
setting 43:20 54:12
settlement 10:14,18 18:22 22:14
 22:18,22 23:10 25:4
settlements 18:18
seven 11:20 13:2
seventy-five 3:11
share 52:22 62:22
sharing 17:8
shouldn't 47:16
showcasing 26:6
showing 64:20
shy 26:17,22
side 23:14 24:18 32:20

<p>significant 3:3 24:24 30:19 42:17 60:10,13</p> <p>significantly 11:14 13:16,22</p> <p>silos 27:13</p> <p>similarly-situated 19:25</p> <p>simple 59:6</p> <p>single 30:8,11</p> <p>sister 35:16 60:15 61:17</p> <p>sit 25:9 49:6</p> <p>sitting 25:7</p> <p>situation 21:6,20,25</p> <p>sixteen 7:11</p> <p>sixty 7:12</p> <p>sixty-one 12:6</p> <p>size 35:2</p> <p>Skylar 2:25</p> <p>small 6:18,22 11:5 32:13 63:6</p> <p>smart 65:7</p> <p>snow 2:10,16</p> <p>social 10:7</p> <p>solar 29:25 32:6</p> <p>solid 27:25</p> <p>solutions 27:5,14 60:24</p> <p>somewhat 22:7 23:3</p> <p>Sorrentino 56:6,11</p> <p>sorry 9:14 16:19 36:17 40:7,9 42:6</p> <p>sort 20:20 22:6,7,8 27:9 35:7 40:15 52:12,22 54:16</p> <p>sought 5:14</p> <p>sound 65:9</p> <p>Southeast 5:16</p> <p>speak 26:25 46:17 62:25</p> <p>speaks 50:4</p> <p>specific 23:25</p> <p>specifics 54:7</p> <p>spelling 30:18</p> <p>spent 41:16</p> <p>spinning 21:4</p> <p>spoke 45:21 49:12 59:23</p> <p>stability 39:14</p> <p>staff 6:10,14 10:23 17:22 18:19 22:4 24:4 26:14 27:3 29:17 31:9 38:4,6 41:16 43:18,20 44:19 46:6 49:23 58:16 66:5</p> <p>staff's 30:16</p> <p>staffer 65:5</p> <p>stage 40:15</p> <p>stakeholder 39:3</p> <p>stakeholders 6:10 34:11 46:19</p>	<p>stand 14:14</p> <p>standard 18:13 19:12,14 24:19 24:22 25:3</p> <p>standards 32:18,19</p> <p>start 22:4 35:7 44:8 53:15,24</p> <p>started 2:3</p> <p>starts 35:12</p> <p>state 1:2,14 2:14,16 3:5 4:6,14 4:21,23 5:7,19 6:7 10:8 23:7 35:7 39:14 54:15,16 60:18 63:15 65:10 68:2</p> <p>stated 68:5</p> <p>Statements 11:4</p> <p>states 3:2,9 30:11 33:15 56:22</p> <p>statewide 2:19 3:17 34:22</p> <p>Station 65:7</p> <p>stations 15:7</p> <p>status 49:8</p> <p>stay 12:17 41:8</p> <p>steady 39:22</p> <p>step 18:5 22:19 33:4 54:5</p> <p>stepping 35:11</p> <p>steps 43:6 46:2</p> <p>storm 2:9,15,25 3:14,17 8:21</p> <p>storms 2:6,19 7:5 8:16</p> <p>STOUT 47:14</p> <p>Strait 28:22 29:2</p> <p>street 4:8,11 14:11,14,16,21 22:23 23:4 27:24 47:12,17 63:6</p> <p>strict 16:22</p> <p>striving 65:22</p> <p>strong 28:3</p> <p>strongly 14:11</p> <p>structure 22:5,10 31:12</p> <p>structured 48:20</p> <p>struggle 22:24</p> <p>struggled 21:24</p> <p>struggling 61:6</p> <p>subject 16:18 32:7</p> <p>submit 31:9 49:22</p> <p>submitted 10:19 17:25</p> <p>submitting 52:3</p> <p>subscribed 68:10</p> <p>subscription 30:4,7,10 31:2,11 31:17</p> <p>substantive 53:13</p> <p>successes 41:13</p> <p>successful 47:22,23</p> <p>succinct 35:22</p>
---	---

suggested 44:3	tariff 56:5,13,15 62:8
suggests 5:18	Tariffs 56:7
Sullivan 2:22 3:10 6:8,11,19	tasked 49:13,21
Supervisor 56:6	tax 12:5,12 23:17,19
supply 57:10	taxing 14:17
support 6:9 14:19 19:3 33:7,11 39:17 47:8 59:15,15	team 39:8 49:23
supported 14:12 18:17 23:12	teams 46:6
supporter 65:24	technical 23:21 30:19 39:5 50:2
supporting 29:11	Ted 28:23 36:20
supportive 27:8,17 54:11 61:16	tee 43:16
supposed 44:8	ten 2:22
surcharge 45:10 47:10	tends 57:4
sure 18:22 19:15 22:4 26:14 33:20 34:10 42:20,23 43:13,25 48:9,11,15,23 49:9 50:4 51:14 52:15 54:18 60:14,15 61:8,11 61:18	term 59:12
surrounding 31:3	termination 16:3
survive 27:15	terminology 61:7
Susie 63:2 64:23	terms 9:21 10:2,6 11:7 19:15 47:12 61:10
sustainability 63:10	terribly 66:11
sustainable 29:6	territory 11:3 15:17 47:22,24 49:2
swiftly 58:10	test 18:23
Symphony 64:9	testimony 10:19 11:6 22:14
Syracuse 14:12	Texas 4:15
system 2:18 8:5 15:4 18:12 27:11 46:25 65:14	th 6:17
systems 2:13 11:13 30:21 47:8 56:25	thank 8:19,20,24 9:9 17:24 19:4 19:6 27:17,18,19,19,21 28:6 32:11,12 33:12,14 35:20 36:2 39:11 40:4,7 45:7 54:23 55:4 55:5,9 58:8 59:18 61:23,24 62:21 66:15,16,17,20 67:3,20
	thankfully 3:2
T	Thanks 35:19 47:19
table 22:9	that' ll 47:4
take 18:21 22:3 35:10 42:20,23 44:5 46:2 48:5,11,25 52:18 54:24	that' s 23:21,22 35:18 43:17 45:13,25 46:19,25 48:24 49:2 50:10 52:11,12,20 54:2 58:14 59:7 60:3
takeaway 26:15	there' s 6:21 18:2 23:20 39:13 44:12,13,14 45:12 46:14,18 47:4 49:3,4
taken 18:19 20:7	there' ve 51:4
takes 32:15 59:4	they' ll 24:2
talents 66:2	they' re 17:10 20:14 51:7,8 52:16,16
talk 25:23	they' ve 49:22
talked 53:5 60:8	thing 34:4 46:22 47:5 53:14 61:9
talking 4:20	things 21:19,23 24:7 25:7,11 33:15,24 34:24 45:21 51:3 53:15
talks 51:15	
Tammy 9:13,14	
target 17:12 31:11 38:8	
targeted 13:6	
targets 14:4,6,7 36:18 37:3,15 37:17,25,25 38:3,5,8,14,16,20 42:9 43:12,17 46:13 55:13	

think 6:13 18:2,4 19:9,10,19,24 23:6 25:6 26:4,4,22 27:7 28:4 35:23 39:12 40:2,15 41:17 42:7,25 43:3,8 45:20,21 46:19 47:14 48:4 51:2 52:17,25 54:4 54:20,23,24 58:9,11,13 59:20 66:4	transaction 16:12,16 transcription 68:6 transition 35:24 37:9 transitional 48:12 transitioning 38:23 transmission 2:12 transparency 45:13,19 46:11,14 transparent 30:12 transparently 47:3 traveler 64:18 tree 4:6,14 trial 10:23 tribute 66:18 tried 49:6 triggered 17:9 trimmers 4:7 trip 20:19 33:24 trip-ups 41:18 true 34:20 66:6 68:7 true-up 17:11 truly 41:3,6 try 27:4 41:13 43:4 53:12 trying 19:8 21:5 26:8 27:9 43:8 43:18 44:16 45:11 54:24
thinking 53:24 third 2:25 19:24 29:5 thirty 7:14 57:11 thirty-six 4:5 thought 40:13 43:22 53:10 thoughtful 40:25 43:10 thoughtfully 65:13 thousand 2:20 3:19,20,21,23 13:23 38:15 thousands 2:13 three 1:14 11:2,21,22,22,24 12:2,3 27:25 54:2,2 64:24 three-year 9:22 17:13 threshold 17:8 22:3 Thursday 1:13 tie 26:21 tied 27:12 tiered 13:15 tight 40:21 time 2:3 5:11 8:10,13 21:6 30:22 31:19 32:3 40:14,15,21 41:2,17 47:25 54:23 65:17 68:4 timeframe 6:20 timeliness 8:14 timely 7:18 39:12 58:9 59:13 times 7:25 22:12 66:9 timing 39:13 42:9 today 36:25 38:16 40:16 43:13 66:6 67:17,18 tools 21:25 topical 53:5,19 total 2:20 15:21,23 16:23 38:12 57:11 tour 65:6 town 60:6,11 61:12 towns 60:10,16 61:13,14,18 track 45:22 47:10 51:5 tracker 47:12 tracks 10:18 trade 63:20,23 65:21 train 64:21 training 16:8	triggered 17:9 trippers 4:7 trip 20:19 33:24 trip-ups 41:18 true 34:20 66:6 68:7 true-up 17:11 truly 41:3,6 try 27:4 41:13 43:4 53:12 trying 19:8 21:5 26:8 27:9 43:8 43:18 44:16 45:11 54:24 Tuesday 2:24 turn 44:12 twenty 63:19 twenty-five 25:22 26:2,2 twenty-four 3:19 twenty-six 3:23 Twergo 56:6 two 2:10,19 5:18 11:21,24 12:2 12:21 34:18 45:22 54:3 60:21 64:23 types 41:11 44:17 typewritten 68:6
	U
	ugly 42:24 Uh-huh 45:6,20 46:21 ultimately 27:8 33:18 44:22 unanticipated 65:19 uncollectable 16:4 underscores 45:23 underspending 13:9 understand 22:17 23:13,20 24:23 41:3 67:11 understanding 8:22 21:10 understood 61:9 undertaken 40:19

undue 20:2, 3
unfair 48:7
unfortunate 52:20
University 64:5, 12
unnoticed 42:3
unreasonable 20:3, 4 40:21
up-front 57:17
update 2:6 15:11 16:20
updated 15:20 16:8
upgrade 11:12
uptick 48:3
urgent 59:14
use 39:24 52:19
useful 7:24
user 49:18
utilities 3:5 4:4, 22, 23, 25 5:6
 5:10, 13, 22 6:3, 13 7:4, 7, 9, 13
 7:17, 17, 19, 23 8:4, 10 10:11
 19:17, 24 37:5, 15, 19, 23 38:9
 39:7, 22 41:15 44:10 45:15, 25
 46:7 47:3, 7, 23 48:10, 16, 16
 49:24 59:9
utility 2:12 3:6 6:12 7:21
 10:13 16:8 19:16, 22 28:22
 30:6, 21 32:3 36:18, 21 37:2
 38:23 40:3 41:21 47:25 49:11
 55:13 56:6, 15 58:25
utility's 30:11 38:17, 21

V

Valley 3:15
valuable 66:2
value 14:15 25:14, 16, 21 26:11
 30:5, 12, 25 53:16 54:20
varied 10:22 41:11
various 10:19
Vder 30:18
vehicle 15:6, 7
vendors 33:17
verified 39:2
Vermont 4:16
viability 10:12
viable 48:17, 19, 20 49:5
vice 63:12
view 18:23
Viewed 17:19
viewpoint 53:10
views 10:17 47:17
vigorous 65:24
Village 57:7

Virginia 4:21
visibility 47:6
vitality 60:2
vitally 8:10
volume 15:19 56:23
vote 18:14 28:7, 8, 10, 13, 16 36:3
 36:3, 7, 10, 13 54:21 55:11, 11
 55:15, 18, 22 58:18 62:5, 9, 12
 62:15 67:4, 4, 6, 9, 12
voted 24:11, 21
voting 28:5 32:24 35:25 39:17
 66:23 67:2

W

waffles 64:22
walk-in 16:13
walking 22:6
Wall 47:12, 17
want 34:2, 8 35:5 40:10 42:7
 43:16 48:19, 23 51:16 52:10
 53:24 54:11 58:15 59:2 65:9
wanted 61:7, 8
wants 8:9
Water 2:5 56:9
way 18:19 23:21 27:10, 25 29:8
 34:14 35:12 39:17 40:2 41:6
 41:19 43:4, 10 46:7 48:20
 49:18 50:6 51:14, 25 58:14
 59:3 65:24 66:14
ways 18:12 41:11 43:5 50:22
we'd 59:8
we'll 6:14 8:20, 21 23:8, 14 26:2
 36:16
we're 2:2, 6 20:10, 13, 14, 15, 15
 21:13, 22 23:23 26:6, 8 27:23
 33:23 34:11 43:9 47:15 48:24
 50:2, 4 51:17, 23 52:18, 19
 53:18 61:6
we've 25:12 32:17, 17, 18 49:6
web 53:8
websites 8:6
Wednesday 2:24
week 2:24
weighed 51:21
weight 52:8
went 23:18
Westchester 2:22 3:10 6:8, 11
 29:6 64:11, 13
wet 2:10
what's 5:14

WHEREOF 68:9	32:13 56:4,13 62:6,24 63:5,15
white 43:18,20	65:23 68:2
whys 45:9	Yorkers 32:24
wide 3:17,17 7:16	you' d 51:25
widespread 2:11 4:18	you' re 2:23 6:13 66:7,8,15
wife 63:2 64:23	you' ve 59:8
wind 2:16 32:7	
winds 2:11	Z
winter 2:9,15,24	zealous 63:7
wire 6:22	Zeltmann 62:22 63:17
wires 6:5 14:25	
Wisconsin 4:16	0
wish 66:23	
WITNESS 68:9	1
won' t 23:5	1 15:13 37:4 68:5,7
wonky 65:8	1.4 38:15
Worden 2:4,8 56:8	1.5 16:17
words 66:5	1.6 14:19
work 4:8 5:2,5,11 15:17 23:5	10:28 1:13
25:6 27:5,9,17,22 30:19 32:21	105 7:11
32:23 34:6 41:15 43:6 48:16	11 13:17
48:16 51:13 52:14,15 54:13	110 14:6
worked 31:24 46:6 49:2 53:22	12 6:18
54:2	128.5 38:12
workers 4:14 5:21	12th 6:17,20
workforce 66:3	13-E-0140 7:15
working 17:5 24:4 25:13,13	14-M-0224 28:20
27:11 33:21,25 34:10 44:20	15 1:13 13:19
49:3,23 50:15,17,20 51:2	15-M-0252 36:17 37:3
52:13,24 59:25 60:15,15 61:17	150 15:15,21
61:18	17-E-0238 9:10
workplace 63:11 66:2	18-00618 7:9
World 65:21	18-E-0126 56:3
worry 21:14	19 10:22
wouldn' t 47:14	19.8 16:25
written 16:10 51:15	1967 63:21
	1995 63:16
X	1996 63:18
X 1:23	19th 1:14 67:19
	1st 9:25 37:10
Y	
year 11:21,21,22,24 12:2,3,6	2
16:19 17:2 34:18 38:14 44:5,7	201 9:10 28:7
45:2,4,4 50:8	2010 37:3
yearly 13:24	2013 51:5
years 27:25 37:6 44:17 63:3,19	2016 29:8 49:10
65:11	2017 37:4,10 40:10 42:25 43:2
yesterday 7:7 63:2	2018 1:13 9:25 10:22 15:13 50:9
York 1:2,15 2:14 3:5 4:4,21,23	68:10
5:5,7,9,19,22 7:4,7 14:13	2019 37:3,6,21 38:18 45:2 50:9

55:12 2019/2020 36:18 202 28:19 29:3 36:3 2020 37:6,21 38:18 55:13 2021 9:25 203 36:17 37:2 21 14:8 29:8 21st 63:4 22 37:10 22nd 68:10 24th 62:24 261 67:2 262 67:2 263 67:2 264 67:2 28.4 12:24 2nd 2:9	<hr/> 6 <hr/> 67 68:7 6th 7:2 <hr/> 7 <hr/> 7th 2:15 <hr/> 8 <hr/> 9 <hr/> 9.5 17:10
<hr/> 3 <hr/> 3 1:14 3-15-18 1:1 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1 18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1 54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1 60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1 66:1 67:1 68:1 30 63:18 302 56:3,12 58:6 62:5 31st 9:25 33 14:9 353 38:14 36 56:14 37 15:23	
<hr/> 4 <hr/> 44.9 12:23 45 14:5 48 12:15 4th 3:11	
<hr/> 5 <hr/> 50.6 38:13 55 13:23 56 13:17	