

STATE OF NEW YORK
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Regular Meeting of the Public Service Commission

Thursday, January 16, 2014
10:30 a.m.
Three Empire State Plaza
Agency Building 3, 19th Floor
Albany, New York

COMMISSIONERS:

AUDREY ZIBELMAN, Chair
DIANE X. BURMAN
GREGG C. SAYRE
PATRICIA L. ACAMPORA
GARRY BROWN

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2 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Good morning,
3 everyone and welcome back. Happy New Year.

4 Hope everybody had a great
5 holiday and you're ready for a very busy year. So,
6 we certainly are looking forward to it.

7 I'd like to call the commission
8 to order and Secretary Burgess, do we have any
9 changes to the agenda today?

10 MS. BURGESS: Good morning.

11 There are two changes to the
12 agenda this morning. The first is Item 162 Case
13 13-G-0443, which is the enclave at Malta which had
14 requested an extension of a five-year limit on a
15 letter of credit to National Grid. That item is
16 over.

17 And the other is just a
18 clarification to Item 202. One case number was
19 inadvertently omitted, and that's Case 10-M-0551,
20 the comprehensive management audit Iberdrola, New
21 York State Electric and Gas, and Rochester Gas and
22 Electric Company.

23 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Okay. Thank
24 you.

25 Before we begin or -- talking

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2 about the agenda, I want to note that it's just
3 sort of one of those -- even though it's not
4 Christmas anymore, best of times and worst of times
5 type of events. And for us one of the -- we're --
6 we're delighted and sad to say that Mark Reeder who
7 has been with the commission for thirty-four years
8 will be retiring in the next several weeks, and
9 will be spending some time with his wife Cheryl and
10 we're -- we're going to miss him quite a bit.

11 We're going to have a party, and
12 we're going to spend a lot of time lauding him and
13 talking about all the great things he did. But I
14 did want to -- want to note that Mark has been
15 an -- is an exceptional person to have that the
16 commission.

17 I often think about it as a sort
18 of we -- we tend to go in a lot of uncharted
19 waters, and having Mark sort of sitting the
20 ballast, keeping our boat from tipping is -- is
21 always really helpful. And we're going to miss him
22 quite a bit.

23 Fortunately, Mark's done a great
24 job in developing his staff, and we're going to
25 have -- ask Warren to step up and act as the acting

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2 director in regulatory economics.

3 So congratulations to -- to Mark.

4 And, Mark not one for ever loosing -- leaving an

5 opportunity aside, as we were chatting at lunch

6 yesterday, and I won't tell you the whole story.

7 You have to wait for the party on that, but he did

8 give me a little story in -- a lesson in economics.

9 And he was so delighted about his
10 opportunity for retirement that he bought a new

11 pair of pants. But, he told me that both from a

12 cost perspective and a shopping perspective he

13 was -- was very, very prudent in how he went about

14 it. And I'll tell you the rest at his party. And

15 the other thing that I'd like to note is that Jeff

16 Cohen, who is one of our senior advisors has taken

17 a new opportunity at NYPA and will be leaving us.

18 We're going to miss Jeff quite a bit.

19 And we've also made some

20 organizational changes. I've asked Peter McGowan

21 who's our general counsel to take the position --

22 new position we've created of chief policy advisor.

23 And Peter will be working with me

24 and with Judy and others as we develop the policy

25 in the commission. We have now asked Kim Harriman

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2 who many of you know as an administrative law judge
3 to take the position of acting general counsel.

4 And we've also established a team
5 that's going to be working and leading our Utility
6 of the Future efforts, and we'll have Michael
7 Corso, Peter and -- and Rudy Stegemoeller leading
8 that team. So more to come on that, but want to
9 congratulate everyone and, again, always appreciate
10 our staff for stepping up. Did I mess something up
11 or no?

12 COMMISSIONER BROWN: No.

13 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Oh, okay. Good.
14 So --.

15 COMMISSIONER BROWN: I was just
16 noting the ceremonial handing of the public service
17 law from Peter to Kim.

18 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: That's good.
19 That's good. We also did the ceremonial midnight
20 e-mail last night from Peter to Kim, so. With that
21 anyone say anything? We are going to have a party
22 for -- for Mark, et cetera, but I didn't want to --
23 any other commissioners?

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN: No, I
25 just -- I -- I had promised I would say absolutely

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2 nothing nice about Jeff Cohen, and I'm going to
3 keep my promise.

4 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Gregg.

5 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: I -- I will
6 say I'm going to very much miss Mark's towering
7 intellect and I'm going to do my best to -- to get
8 anything I can from him before he retires.

9 And for Jeff, even though you're
10 now going to be a party and therefore have to be
11 more cautious than a senior staffer, you're still
12 permitted to tease me all you want.

13 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Great. Well,
14 thanks.

15 So let's -- we're going to move
16 now to the regular agenda. The first item for
17 discussion today is Item 201, Case 3-M-0449, which
18 is our focused operations audit on internal
19 staffing levels and use of contractors for selected
20 core-utility functions at major New York electric
21 utilities.

22 John Scherer who's our deputy
23 director of office and accounting audits and
24 finance will be presenting this items.

25 So, John, please begin.

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2 MR. SCHERER: Very good. Good
3 morning, Chairman Zibelman, and Commissioners. In
4 the item before you, staff recommends the
5 Commission approve the release of a Request for
6 Proposal or R.F.P. for an operations audit of the
7 staffing level trends over the past five years for
8 key positions at the major New York State
9 investor-owned gas and electric utilities to
10 determine if staffing levels necessary to provide
11 safe and adequate service are being maintained.

12 The subject utilities include
13 Consolidated Edison, Orange and Rockland, Central
14 Hudson, New York State Electric Gas Corp.,
15 Rochester Gas and Electric, National Fuel Gas,
16 Niagara Mohawk, KeySpan New York and KeySpan Long
17 Island.

18 The R.F.P. will be sent to nearly
19 fifty consulting firms who have previously
20 expressed interest in performing audits for the
21 department, and is open to all interested bidders.
22 Governor Cuomo in his 2013 State of the State
23 address highlighted the importance of management
24 and operations audits of New York utilities.

25 Moreover, the governor's Moreland

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2 objectives and deliverables outlined in the R.F.P.
3 and present the firm's approach to meeting the
4 objectives in a timely and comprehensive manner.

5 Once the proposals are received,
6 they will be read and evaluated by a team of
7 subject matter experts from the offices of Electric
8 Gas and Water, Consumer Policy, Consumer Services
9 as well as Accounting Audits and Finance staff.
10 The proposals will be scored and the highest ranked
11 firms will be selected as finalists to be
12 interviewed by that team.

13 Based on the interviews,
14 finalists will be evaluated and scored a second
15 time. This evaluation process will yield a
16 selection of a firm that will be recommended to the
17 commission for approval. We expect to present our
18 recommendation at the May 8th session.

19 The consultant, under the
20 direction of staff, will examine the utilities
21 internal staffing of core utility functions, the
22 criteria and controls used for external staffing,
23 consideration of industry best-practices as they
24 may apply to the various New York utility corporate
25 structures, and address the core policy outcomes as

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2 articulated in last month's EEPS order.

3 The consultant will make
4 recommendations for improvements as needed. The
5 core function -- core functional areas to be
6 studied are those that have the greatest potential
7 impact on the provision of safe and reliable
8 service and customer satisfaction. They include
9 gas and electric engineering, supervision, quality
10 control, field operations, customer service
11 representation -- representatives rather, customer
12 service field staff, D.P.S. liaisons handling
13 complaints, information technology and last but not
14 least physical and cyber security.

15 A final report from the selected
16 consultant is expected to be presented to staff in
17 August 2015 and to the Commission shortly
18 thereafter.

19 Staff has noted declining
20 internal staffing levels at some utilities over the
21 past several years, and is concerned that the loss
22 of institutional knowledge in the workforce could
23 adversely affect service quality and the utilities
24 ability to respond to emergency events.

25 Formal management audits of

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2 NYSEG, RG&E, Consolidated Edison and the Long
3 Island Power Authority have noted declining
4 internal staff levels and raised concerns over the
5 cost and oversight of external staffing.

6 This audit will examine the
7 utilities internal staffing of certain core utility
8 functions, the criteria and controls used -- used
9 for external staffing, consideration of industry
10 best practices as they apply to the various utility
11 corporate structures and will make recommendations
12 for improvement as needed.

13 The audit will review the trends
14 at each of the subject utilities as well as the
15 corporate processes used to manage staffing levels.
16 Cost comparison used by the utilities in making
17 staffing decisions will be studied during this
18 audit to ensure that ratepayers are not shouldering
19 excessive costs as a result of management's
20 decisions.

21 In addition, the consultants will
22 evaluate whether staffing levels are adequate and
23 sufficiently flexible to position the utilities to
24 address the five core policy outcomes expressed by
25 the commission in its December 26, 2013 order

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2 approving the EEPS program changes in Case
3 09-M-0548.

4 These core policy outcomes
5 include ensuring customer knowledge and tools that
6 support effective management of their total energy
7 bill, market animation and leverage of ratepayer
8 contributions, system wide efficiency, fuel and
9 resource diversity and system reliability and
10 resiliency.

11 I would recommend that you
12 approve the issuance of the R.F.P. to conduct the
13 operations audit of the staffing levels at the
14 major New York State energy utilities as I've
15 described here this morning.

16 I'm available for your questions.

17 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Thank you, John.

18 Any question for John from any of
19 the Commissioners? Okay. Thank you.

20 Well, then let me just take a --
21 see -- all those in favor then of the
22 recommendation?

23 COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

24 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Hearing aye and
25 no opposition, the recommendation is approved and

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2 we'll move forward.

3 Thank you, John.

4 MR. SCHERER: Thank you.

5 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Okay. The next
6 item for discussion is Item 202 which is Cases
7 808-M-0152 et al which is the status reporting on
8 our ongoing management and audit operations or
9 ongoing management operations audits.

10 Sandra Reulet who is the unit
11 leader of the Office of Accounting will be giving
12 us an update on this. This is a non-decisional
13 item. So, Sandra, please proceed.

14 MS. REULET: Good morning, Chair
15 Zibelman and Commissioners. I'm here today to
16 provide you a status report regarding the ongoing
17 comprehensive management and operations audits and
18 several focused operations audits that have been
19 initiated since 2008 when the unit was
20 reinvigorated to comply with Public Service Law
21 Section 6619.

22 The item is for informational
23 purposes only, no action is required, and we have
24 no significant issues to report at this time. Here
25 we have a snapshot of the eight audits being

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2 Regarding asset management
3 strategies, Con Ed is now viewing expenditures much
4 more holistically.

5 In addition, the financial
6 effects, both in terms of the audit cost and the
7 net savings resulting from the implementation of
8 audit recommendations, are reflected in the rate
9 case joint proposal that will be coming to the
10 commission next month.

11 Next, we'll turn to the
12 comprehensive management and operations audit for
13 the National Grid Electric Company, Niagara Mohawk.
14 The audit was completed in December 2009 by North
15 Star Consulting Group. There were forty-five
16 recommendations. The company reports thirty-two of
17 them are completed. Staff has accepted thirty as
18 completed -- or actually it's thirty-one, and
19 there's one currently under review. The remaining
20 thirteen recommendations are expected to be
21 completed in 2014.

22 Some of the key findings and
23 recommendations include the recommendation that the
24 company should consolidate the management of the
25 U.S. transmission and distribution lines of

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2 business into one entity and to place more emphasis
3 on discrete New York operations.

4 The audit had highlighted that
5 the line of business model was not protecting New
6 York ratepayer interest.

7 There were also three other
8 recommendations related to service-level
9 agreements. These agreements basically govern the
10 services that are provided by an affiliate to a
11 regulated utility. And the recommendations
12 essentially codify the utilities expectations for
13 services that are provided by the affiliate and the
14 costs. There were also five recommendations
15 regarding project management for the purpose of
16 ensuring adequate planning, documentation and
17 control over projects that are affecting customer
18 service.

19 Key developments after the audit:
20 Previously Niagara Mohawk's transmission and
21 distribution reported to two different lines of
22 business. Each line of business reported directly
23 to a C.E.O. in the U.K. Despite the transmission
24 and distribution having frequent and interdependent
25 interests, they're planning and budgeting were

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2 performed by independent departments, so each line
3 of business was vying for the same pool of capital
4 dollars.

5 Clearly this did not facilitate
6 the promotion and protection of New York ratepayer
7 interest. In response to the audit
8 recommendations, the company reorganized to the
9 jurisdictional model in early 2011 and now most of
10 the operations functions operate on a U.S. wide
11 basis with liaisons to jurisdictional presidents.

12 Regarding the service-level
13 agreements, per the three-year rate case joint
14 proposal, the company has agreed to provide certain
15 relevant details such as service descriptions that
16 align with budgeted costs and also an annual
17 external cost comparison.

18 Next we have the comprehensive
19 management and operations audit for the Central
20 Hudson Electric and Gas business. The audit was
21 completed in March 2011 by North Star Consulting
22 Group. There were twenty recommendations made.
23 Central Hudson reports eighteen as completed.
24 Staff concurs that ten are complete and eight
25 others are currently under review.

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2 The final recommendation to
3 improve the work-management system is expected to
4 be completed in July of 2015. Some of the key
5 findings and recommendations are that Central
6 Hudson should develop a comprehensive integrated
7 strategic plan of performance measures. The
8 company should also seek candidates for the board
9 of directors that reside within the service
10 territory, and that it should develop written
11 affiliate transactions, policies and procedures.

12 Key developments after the audit
13 include in June of last year, the Commission
14 approved the acquisition of Central Hudson parent
15 company by Fortis. The merger and resulting J.P.
16 impacted one recommendation which was related to
17 the board of directors. And the end result of
18 that, among other things, was a requirement that at
19 least two independent directors be residence of
20 Central Hudson service territory.

21 Subsequent to the merger with
22 Fortis, Central Hudson has added two new members to
23 the board of directors who both reside in service
24 territory. Central Hudson has also made revisions
25 to its organizational structure to ensure the

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2 another three are rejected.

3 Staff concurs that eleven
4 recommendations are completed and is reviewing the
5 twenty-seven others. The last non-governance
6 recommendation is scheduled to be implemented later
7 this year. Some of the key findings and
8 recommendations from that audit are that the senior
9 Spanish executives and directors do not take a
10 direct interest in or have more than a general
11 knowledge regarding the details of U.S. regulatory
12 requirements.

13 And the companies should also
14 evaluate what is the most cost-effective size of
15 the overall internal workforce and strive to
16 achieve a balanced and cost-effective workforce
17 level. It was also recommended that they should
18 implement a holistic cost-management program and
19 move to a five-year distribution vegetation trim
20 cycle.

21 Key developments after the audit
22 include the company has created a management team
23 to oversee and manage the company's participation
24 in the New York I.S.O., FERC and other such
25 proceedings and issues assessments. This was done

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2 to better address some of the U.S. regulatory
3 requirements, especially these that are pertaining
4 to wholesale market issues.

5 The company has also moved its
6 vegetation management time frame to a five-year
7 time cycle, which is significantly shorter than it
8 was operating under in the past.

9 Our next comprehensive management
10 and operations audit is the National Fuel Gas
11 Distribution Corporation. The audit was completed
12 in August 2013 by Shoemaker, and I'd like to note
13 that this is the first management and operations
14 audit report that was brought to the Commission
15 since the most recent changes to Public Service Law
16 Section 6619.

17 Prior to those changes, the
18 utility just had to file the implementation plan
19 and no commission action was required. However,
20 now the implementation plans will be SAPA'd for
21 comments, and staff will be coming back to the
22 commission with either recommendations that the
23 plan be approved as filed or with recommendations
24 for modification.

25 The audit report for National

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2 Fuel Gas had seventy-six recommendations, and a
3 couple of the key findings were that the company
4 should establish a formal dividend policy, and that
5 it should develop service-level agreements for all
6 major departments within the company that provide
7 services to the regulated entity.

8 The company also should
9 reconfigure the gas supply portfolio to lower
10 costs, add diversity and minimize risk.

11 Key developments since that audit
12 was completed, the company has filed its
13 implementation plan on September 18th. However,
14 staff recognizes that the thirty-day time frame can
15 be a challenge considering the level of detail
16 that's required to be incorporated into the
17 implementation plan.

18 And, in fact, the company's plan
19 did lack the sufficient level of detail that's
20 required for staff to effectively oversee the
21 implementation. So we've been working with the
22 company providing feedback and guidance regarding
23 the level of details that need to be incorporated,
24 and the company will be filing a revised
25 implementation plan tomorrow, after which point we

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2 R.F.P. was issued, and the commission selected
3 Overland as the consultant in December. And John
4 just recently discussed the focused operations
5 audit regarding staffing levels.

6 So in conclusion, this item was
7 for informational purposes only. No action is
8 required by the commission and this completes my
9 prepared remarks.

10 If you have any questions I'll do
11 my best to answer them.

12 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Thank you,
13 Sandra. Any questions or comments from the
14 commissioners?

15 COMMISSIONER BROWN: Yeah, I just
16 want to make one comment and thank you for the
17 comprehensive overview. I think Commissioner
18 Acampora and I are now the historians here, and
19 when I first got here the management audit program
20 was just being revitalized under then Chair
21 Acampora's leadership, and we moved forward.

22 And I just want to comment on the
23 two oldest ones that I -- just the significant
24 effect that I believe they've had.

25 The -- the Con Ed audit, and I

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2 So thank you for the -- your
3 group for the very hard work that's gone into this
4 and to the consultants and to the utilities that
5 have taken these to heart.

6 I know sometimes it's a bit of a
7 battle along the way, but that's just part of the
8 dynamics of the system.

9 So thank you very much.

10 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Any further
11 questions? Thank you and let me echo I think for
12 the -- both the comprehensive report and also I
13 think it is really very sort of exceptional work
14 because around the idea is that you identify
15 problems, we solve the problems and we move on.

16 And I think that's the best way
17 we need to proceed. So thank you and thank you,
18 Garry, for your historical perspective.

19 We're going to now move on then
20 to Item Three which is our proceeding to examine
21 issues relating to the establishment of the
22 universal service fund. And that's going to be
23 presented by Libby Liebschutz who is the chief
24 administrative law judge. So, Libby, please
25 proceed.

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2 MS. LIEBSCHUTZ: Thank you. Good
3 morning, Chair Zibelman and Commissioners.

4 Item 501 before you is a draft
5 order to show cause that will institute a process
6 to bring to conclusion the third and final phase of
7 this case. It will -- it is designed to address
8 the remaining open issue which is reform of
9 originating access charges.

10 The impetus to look at reforming
11 these charges is to make sure that we send
12 appropriate market signals that will stimulate
13 innovation and investment in the telephone and
14 broadband sectors. The F.C.C. has characterized
15 the current regime of access charges as outdated
16 and unfair. It creates competitive distortions
17 because some carriers are required to pay these
18 charges while their competitors, who may be
19 delivering service over a different platform, do
20 not.

21 It was this sort of problem that
22 was one of the reasons that this commission
23 initiated our proceeding here and that the F.C.C.
24 similarly has looked at comprehensive reform.

25 During the pendency of our case,

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2 and -- and, Steve, welcome. I -- I have no
3 questions or comments.

4 COMMISSIONER SAYRE: Chair
5 Zibelman, I'm recusing myself from this matter.

6 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: I just
8 wanted to make sure I understood.

9 If the F.C.C. acts between now
10 and July, I think your statement said that then the
11 commission could choose a different path. I think
12 even if the F.C.C. doesn't act we could choose a
13 different path. This is really an order to show
14 cause. And, it's very important to me that we keep
15 abreast of what's happening at the federal level
16 on -- on all topics.

17 But in particular, the universal
18 service fund is -- you know, has a long history
19 both at the federal level and the state level, and
20 I think it's important for us to try to make sure
21 that we don't act in a vacuum and to really -- I
22 know that I was not here at the -- the June 2013
23 session when there was a decision to go a different
24 path in the joint proposal. And, I know that there
25 is ongoing litigation with the universal service

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2 fund.

3 So it's important for us to make
4 sure that as we go forward we look to really what's
5 happening both on a short-term and a long-term
6 perspective, and make sure that we are doing things
7 that are helpful to provide stability and
8 transition planning to anything that we do. But
9 also keep in mind the goals of the universal
10 service fund and the effect that it might have on
11 the ratepayers, especially the rural folks.

12 So, I think it's important for us
13 to be mindful that we really do have a slate open
14 to really take in the comments and see what can be
15 done. And, that we're not really bound to a
16 certain path that we must do right now.

17 MS. LIEBSCHUTZ: That's correct,
18 Commissioner. Your action today is essentially
19 procedural.

20 It does announce a -- a bit of a
21 presumption as to the direction the commission
22 proposes to take, but it does not bind your future
23 action on the merits at all.

24 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Okay.

25 Thank you.

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2 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Any other
3 questions? Thank you for that explanation. With
4 the -- I note that Commissioner Sayre has -- is
5 recusing himself. With that, with respect to the
6 other commissioners, I'd like to take a vote on the
7 show cause for -- are you -- all those in favor?

8 COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

9 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Okay. There
10 being no opposition we will issue the show cause
11 order. Thank you.

12 COMMISSIONER BURMAN: Thank you.

13 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Okay. Moving
14 ahead now, we're to our consent agenda.

15 First, are there any
16 commissioners who wish to recuse or abstain from
17 any of the items on the consent agenda?

18 Hearing none, do we have any
19 comments from any of the commissioners on the items
20 in the consent agenda?

21 Hearing none, all those in favor
22 of the recommendations of the consent agenda please
23 say aye.

24 COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

25 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: With no

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2 opposition we will then accept those
3 recommendations.

4 Secretary Burgess, are there any
5 other items that are before us today?

6 MS. BURGESS: There are no other
7 items and the next commission meeting is February
8 20th at ten thirty.

9 CHAIR ZIBELMAN: Okay. Thank you
10 all very much and we look forward to seeing you
11 next month.

12 (Off the record)

13 (The proceeding concluded)

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STATE OF NEW YORK
I, Kirsten Lemire, do hereby certify that the foregoing
was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place,
as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that
the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of
pages 1 through 34, is a true record of all proceedings
had at the hearing.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
subscribed my name, this the 18th day of January, 2014.

Kirsten Lemire, Reporter

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