

Introduction

1 **Q. Mrs. Doucette, please state your full name and business address.**

2 A. My name is Pauline M. Doucette. My business address is 32 Artisan Court #2, Gilford,
3 New Hampshire 03249

4 **Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?**

5 A. I am the President of Abenaki Water Co., Inc. (“AWC”), as well as the Office Manager
6 for New England Service Company (“NESC”) in the Gilford New Hampshire office. In
7 this capacity, I am responsible for the operations of AWC including administrative, fiscal
8 and accounting operations as well as billing, financial and regulatory reporting.

9 **Q. Please describe your educational background and professional experience.**

10 A. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting with a Minor in Business
11 Administration from Southern New Hampshire University. I owned and operated a
12 Property Management and Restoration business from August 2007 until it was sold in
13 August 2016. I began to work full time for NESC in January 2017 in the Gilford Office
14 as the Customer Service/Accounting Representative. I was promoted to Office Manager
15 in November 2017 and President of AWC in May 2018.

16 **Q. Have you previously testified before the New Hampshire Public Utilities
17 Commission or other regulatory bodies?**

18 A. Yes, I provided testimony in Docket No. DW 17-165 in support of AWC’s request for an
19 increase in rates for the Rosebrook System. I also provided testimony in Docket No. DW
20 18-026 in support of the Joint Petition for Declaratory Ruling or Rule Making Regarding

1 ROE for Small Water Systems presented by AWC, Lakes Region Water Co., Inc., and
2 the Hampstead Area Water Co., Inc.

3 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony in this proceeding?**

4 A. My testimony describes the improvements to customer service and administrative support
5 that will benefit customers as a result of AWC's acquisition of Tioga River Water
6 Company, Inc ("TRWC").

7 **Q. How will the proposed acquisition benefit customers and the public interest?**

8 A. TRWC customers will benefit from increased managerial, technical and financial
9 expertise that NESAC is able to provide to all its subsidiary customers as a larger water
10 utility. NESAC currently owns and operates Mountain Water Systems and Colonial Water
11 Systems in Massachusetts in addition to Valley Water Systems in Connecticut. These are
12 in addition to the Belmont, Bow and Rosebrook water systems in New Hampshire. There
13 are currently 9,418 total customers being serviced. This benefits customers due to an
14 increasingly greater economies of scale, with 23 experienced staff and technical resources
15 available and through the ability to finance future projects with lower cost capital.

16 **Q. Please describe the customer service and administrative improvements and
17 enhancements that will benefit the Tioga River Water Company users from this
18 acquisition.**

19 A. AWC customer service experience includes a state of the art website including
20 information on system updates, online access to consumption history, account
21 information and the option of e-billing and online bill payment. AWC provides live
22 customer support during normal working hours and a 24/7 emergency call line.

1 **Q. Please explain the reason for requesting approval of a change in the billing cycle for**
2 **Tioga River customers, to transition from quarterly to monthly.**

3 A. Generally speaking, water bills are less than those of other utilities such as electric and
4 gas as well as other monthly homeowner expenses. However, the costs are nevertheless
5 increasing due to regulations, compliance, the need to replace aging infrastructure and
6 other factors beyond the water utilities' control. Monthly billing helps customers manage
7 expenses and helps customers monitor and control their water usage. It is increasingly
8 becoming a standard industry practice and has no adverse impact on customers.

9 **Q. What are those benefits?**

10 A. Abenaki uses state of the art metering technology that has enabled utilities to collect
11 consumption data in a fraction of the time compared to traditional walk, read and note
12 methodologies. The development of this technology has facilitated a condensed data
13 collection period, a matter of a few hours, that previously required days and has made
14 monthly billing viable and actually desirable for the customer and company alike. For
15 example, some benefits include:

- 16 1. Monthly billing will make water charges more manageable and
17 predictable as well as coincide with other utilities' invoicing cycle.
- 18 2. Many billing disputes are the results of domestic water leaks. With
19 monthly billing these plumbing leaks can be identified quicker and
20 eliminate customer water losses and costs will be minimized.
- 21 3. Monthly billing will influence customers consumption habits.
22 Conservation and customer awareness of usage is a desired goal of DES.

1 4. Bad Debts and delinquencies which are ultimately borne by the customer
2 base can be minimized through monthly billing.

3 5. Non-Revenue Water, unaccounted for water loss, can be quickly and
4 accurately calculated. This calculation is a metric for the system integrity
5 which is a valuable data point for the water operator.

6 6. Although difficult to quantify, in our experience, monthly billing has
7 lessened the administration requirements of handling customer billing
8 questions or complaints because the customers see the bill monthly and
9 are aware of their water usage on a monthly basis.

10 As a result, the Company believes that conversion to monthly billing as part of the
11 acquisition by AWC is an appropriate and cost-effective approach negating the need for a
12 later and separate resource consuming docket.

13 Exhibit A shows TWRC's existing quarterly rates converted to monthly rates and
14 from cubic feet to gallons. Changing the units of measurement from Cubic Feet to
15 Gallons is more customer friendly by adopting a more recognizable and understandable
16 unit of measurement.

17 **Q. What are Abenaki's plans for Plant Additions in regards to improving data**
18 **collection and billing practices?**

19 A. Currently, TRWC does not own the meters located on customer services. AWC
20 understands that the Town of Gilford required customer water consumption data to
21 produce the waste water bills to customers. As a result, the Town installed meters that
22 are incompatible with AWC's software. The Town reads the meters quarterly and
23 provides TRWC the data which it uses for water billing purposes. With AWC installing

1 new meters, AWC will be able to manage the meters in regards to ownership, removal,
2 repairs, testing and proper operation. In total, there are about 60 meters to be installed and
3 at an estimated cost of \$19,500.

4 **Q. Does Abenaki plan to seek recovery of costs incurred in the acquisition of Tioga**
5 **River Water Company in its next rate case?**

6 A. Yes. The Company intends to request recovery of its transaction expenses associated
7 with this acquisition as a part of its next rate filing, subject to approval by the
8 Commission. In Docket No. 15-199, the Commission approved recovery of
9 organizational costs based on demonstrated savings to customers and improvements to
10 service. The Company expects to make a similar request in its next rate case, subject to
11 review by Staff and approval by the Commission.

12 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

13 A. Yes.