

1 TATE OF MICHIGAN

2 BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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5
6 PUBLIC TOWN HALL MEETING

7 (Regarding the Power Outages for Electric Customers

8 Occurring After the Recent Ice and Snow Storms)

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11
12 American 1 Credit Union Event Center

13 128 W. Ganson Street

14 Jackson, Michigan

15 At 12:00 P.M.

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18
19 COMMISSIONERS

20 DANIEL SCRIPPS, MPSC Chair

21 TREMAINE PHILLIPS, MPSC Commissioner

22 KATHERINE PERETICK, MPSC Commissioner

23
24 - - -

25 REPORTED BY: Lori Anne Penn, CSR-1315

Penn Reporting, LLC - lori.penn@yahoo.com

1	<u>I</u> <u>N</u> <u>D</u> <u>E</u> <u>X</u>	
2	<u>NAME</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
3	Opening Remarks by Chair Scripps	4
4	Opening Remarks by Commissioner Phillips	6
5	Opening Remarks by Commissioner Peretick	9
6	- - -	
7	DONALD DZIACHAN	13
8	CATHERINE TERVOL	15
9	TROY OF THE HOUSE OF CASAD	17
10	LEVI KIMBALL	19
11	RACHEL UDABE	20
12	DAVID MORRIS	22
13	JACE BYLENGA	25
14	AMADOR YBARRA	27
15	JOE LaRUSSA	29
16	ROBERT WHEELER	33
17	ABBY BARKER	35
18	JOHN BRANSTETTER	37
19	MIKE BRANIGAN	39
20	MARGUERITE CLEVINGER	40
21	KATHY SCHMALTZ	44
22	SYDNEY (From Sen. Shinks' Office)	45
23	GLENN FROBEL	45
24	NORBERT FREITEL	48
25	KEITH BENNETT	49

1	<u>I</u> <u>N</u> <u>D</u> <u>E</u> <u>X</u>	
2	<u>NAME</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
3	GLENN FROBEL	51
4	KARLA SMITH	53
5	Closing Remarks by Chair Scripps	54
6	GLENN FROBEL	56
7	DAVEDA QUINN	57
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

Jackson, Michigan

Monday, March 20, 2023

At 12:01 p.m.

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CHAIR SCRIPPS: Hello, everybody. My name is Dan Scripps, I'm the Chair of the Michigan Public Service Commission, and we're going to get started with this Town Hall Meeting, and appreciate all of you being here. We are here because of the events of a month ago, two separate storm systems that came through Michigan and also impacted the Consumers Energy territory. The first was an ice storm that came through on February 22 and left hundreds of thousands of people across the State, and including in the Consumers Energy service territory, without power, and for some of them, up to a week or more. That was followed by a second storm on February 27, a little further north, but also had significant consequences and large numbers of outages. We know that this storm was, was unique in many ways, it was the worst ice storm in my lifetime, the worst storm in 50 years, with some places seeing more than two-thirds of an inch of ice on tree branches and electrical lines, which is certainly a contributing factor, but we also know that this is not the first major storm or the first with major outages that we've experienced even just in

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1 the last couple of years. It seems clear that we're
2 seeing more frequent severe weather and more extreme
3 severe weather with consequences for the grid. And for
4 the folks who have lived through this, who were without
5 power on days on end, it creates a hardship, and one of
6 the core focuses of the Commission over the last years
7 has been what steps do we need to take to ensure that we
8 have a grid, an electrical grid that meets the needs and
9 expectations of the people of Michigan.

10 And so the reason that we're here today
11 is that we want to hear from you. We've got a lot of
12 data, a lot of statistics, we've got -- we throughout the
13 storm events were in regular contact with both Consumers
14 Energy and DTE, as well as some of the other electric
15 utilities, but we want to hear your stories, what this
16 means on a human level for your family, for your
17 business, because I think and what we found in the last
18 several years is that when we hear those stories, they
19 really help to crystallize the challenges that are
20 associated with long-duration outages and hopefully give
21 us and spark ideas as part of the conversation of what we
22 can do to get better, and that's I think the shared goal
23 of the three of us and one I know that's shared more
24 broadly than that as well. So we're excited today be
25 here.

1 The Commission is the regulator of
2 electric and natural gas utilities, we also have a role
3 in telecommunications and the siting of energy
4 infrastructure. We were created first as the Railroad
5 Commission 150 years ago, and have been essentially in
6 our current form since 1939 as the Public Service
7 Commission.

8 So I want to introduce my two colleagues,
9 Commissioner Tremaine Phillips and Commissioner Katherine
10 Peretick. I'll turn the mic over to the two of them for
11 some opening remarks. And then really we don't have a
12 presentation, we don't have anything else, we're just
13 here to listen, and look forward to hearing from you, and
14 I'll tee that up.

15 And by the way, just for sort of
16 transparency purposes, I don't have COVID, I have tested
17 a couple of times, but my village up north has had a
18 recent outbreak, I'm assuming exposure, I don't know that
19 for certain, but just in the interest of an abundance of
20 caution, I'm wearing a mask today. But I feel fine, I
21 don't have COVID, I have tested negative, but just wanted
22 to let you know why I was wearing a mask.

23 Commissioner Phillips.

24 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you, Chair
25 Scripps. And good afternoon everyone. My name is
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1 Commissioner Tremaine Phillips. I can assure you we did
2 not choose this room because it is, shares the same name
3 as myself. But I wanted to just briefly give some
4 comments before we hear from you, I want those comments
5 to be brief because really we want to maximize the
6 opportunity for you to speak with us and to again share
7 those personal stories, as Chair Scripps mentioned.

8 First, I just want to take a quick minute
9 to thank our staff for your hard work, your flexibility,
10 and your responsiveness in coordinating and staffing not
11 one but three Town Halls over a span of two days. As a
12 reminder for everyone here this afternoon, if you have
13 friends, associates, and colleagues who were not able to
14 join us this afternoon, we will also be hosting a Virtual
15 Town Hall tomorrow starting at 6:00 p.m., so please feel
16 free to ask any of our staff here if you would like some
17 additional details on how to participate or share
18 information about our Virtual Town Hall tomorrow.

19 Secondly, of course I would like to thank
20 all of you for taking time out of your day to communicate
21 with us your challenges, your frustrations, as well as
22 your solutions in the aftermath of the extreme weather
23 and subsequent power outages that Michigan has
24 experienced not only over the last several weeks, but
25 really over the last several years. But I also realize

1 that you all don't want to be here, you have better
2 places to be, you have better things to do than coming
3 here to voice your frustrations with us. Yes, our grid
4 and, by extension, our jobs as regulators have only
5 become more challenging, we are confronting the headwinds
6 of an aging utility system, uncertain economic and
7 geopolitical times, and have real and unabating impacts
8 of abrupt climate change, but we don't have the luxury of
9 waiting or attempting to tackle any one of these problems
10 in isolation; and though I can assure you that this
11 Commission and our staff, that we continue to have an
12 unwavering focus on grid reliability and grid resilience
13 and on safety, and I can assure you that we are using
14 every tool at our disposal to confront and address these
15 challenges, we also know that you all demand and deserve
16 better and, therefore, we, as regulators, as utilities,
17 as legislators, we must do more and we have to do more
18 faster.

19 So again, I thank you for the sacrifices
20 that you've made coming here during the afternoon, during
21 a workday, your commitment for being here, we are truly,
22 deeply sorry for the financial and the personal losses
23 that individuals, families, and business have faced over
24 these last several weeks, but again, we are here to
25 listen to you, and again, thank you for just making that

1 commitment to tell us your stories this afternoon. Thank
2 you.

3 COMMISSIONER PERETICK: Hi, I'm Katherine
4 Peretick, I'm the third of the three Commissioners, and
5 just will keep my remarks quite brief, also. I would
6 like to just thank everybody for taking the time out of
7 your day to attend this and for sharing your experiences
8 with the recent outages that followed the ice storms, and
9 also thank you to all of the MPSC staff for organizing
10 this event to allow the opportunity for the members of
11 the public to share their experiences directly with us.

12 I do want to note that if anyone here
13 needs any help or has any questions, there are members of
14 our customer assistance team at the MPSC that are here
15 and ready to assist you. They can help you with any
16 information on bill assistance, on filing formal
17 complaints, or any other questions that you might have,
18 so just to talk to anybody with an MPSC badge on and they
19 will point you to the right person who will be able to
20 help you.

21 When the power goes out, people lose;
22 they lose the ability to stay warm in the winter or cool
23 in the summer, they can lose food that was in their
24 fridge, lose medicine, there are even people who have
25 lost pets or have had health impacts as a result of

1 losing power. None of that is O.K., and we as a
2 Commission are working diligently to make sure that we
3 identify the root of the problems that are facing our
4 electric grid and that we help find those right
5 solutions.

6 I don't want to spend too much time right
7 now talking about what we're doing because the purpose of
8 this Town Hall Meeting is to hear from you, but I do just
9 want to mention three things that we're actively doing to
10 make these improvements so you are able to hold us
11 accountable.

12 We're rewriting the Service Quality
13 Rules, which will tighten acceptable service restoration
14 times and increase penalties and payments to customers
15 when the power does go out to \$35 per day, it's an
16 automatic credit once the threshold is met, and we expect
17 this to go into effect on Friday, this coming Friday.

18 We're increasing transparency in the
19 performance of our utilities by requiring monthly
20 reporting on outages and on the fixes to address these,
21 and that, requiring that reporting by census tract so we
22 can really understand the location of where these
23 problems are being felt. And then that data that we
24 collect is going to be posted publicly to our website, to
25 the MPSC's website. The website goes live this Friday,

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1 and the first data is due on May 15.

2 And then the third thing, third and final
3 thing, is that for the first time ever in the State of
4 Michigan, we're performing an audit on both DTE and
5 Consumers Energy's electric system to identify for
6 ourselves as a Commission where the deficiencies are.
7 We're hiring a third-party independent contractor to do
8 this audit, and the request for proposals for this
9 third-party auditor went live last Monday. So if you
10 know a firm that you think that would do a good job at
11 that audit, please let them know to submit a proposal, we
12 want as many good proposals as we can get.

13 So I want to stop talking now and give
14 the floor to all of you who came here today. Thank you.

15 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Excellent. Thanks to you
16 both.

17 So we have so far about ten cards from
18 individuals who wish to make comments. If you haven't
19 been able to fill one out and want to make a public
20 meeting at the -- a public comment at the meeting today,
21 you should get a blue card that looks like this, they're
22 out front and at the welcome table, complete it, and then
23 turn it in to Leslie or Wendy over here and they will
24 feed it us to. They're numbered, so we're going to take
25 folks in order.

1 When I call your name, you can come to
2 the mic and make your comments and, again, this is an
3 opportunity for us to hear from you. Public comments are
4 limited to one per person, we'll be limiting them to
5 three minutes. Shatina, over here, is keeping time, she
6 will let you know when you've got 30 seconds to go by
7 holding up the yellow folder, well done, and then will
8 hold up a red folder when you've reached your time, and
9 we'll ask you to wrap up at that point. We want to hear
10 from as many folks as possible, so we are -- that is the
11 reason for the limits on time.

12 And then if you are interested in
13 providing additional comments or providing comments but
14 don't necessarily want to speak at a public meeting, we
15 also want to hear from you in that regard, so we have
16 white written comments cards out back at the welcome
17 table that you can fill out with comments. You can also
18 email your comments or mail your comments to us, and
19 those -- there's details out at the welcome table on
20 where to send those in terms of the email address or the
21 physical mailing address. So again, if you've got more
22 comments than three minutes, we don't want to limit the
23 input, but we do want to try and hear from everybody, so
24 you can send additional comments that way, you can also,
25 if you're uncomfortable speaking at a public meeting,

1 just send the written comments directly.

2 So we have a few more, and I am going to
3 start with Donald Dziachan, and then on deck, Catherine
4 Tervol. And I'll just apologize in advance, I'm going to
5 try and get your names right, but if I don't, please
6 correct me when you get up here. But we'd love to hear
7 from Donald Dziachan, you're welcome to come to the mic.
8 Thank you, sir, for being here.

9 DONALD DZIACHAN: Thank you. My name a
10 Donald Dziachan, I'm a retired aerospace engineer, live
11 here in the Jackson area, south of Jackson in Summit
12 Township. And I lost power on Wednesday around 6:00 or
13 6:30, wasn't restored until Sunday about the same time,
14 6:00 or 6:30. So without power for four or five days,
15 you lose all the food in your refrigerator, all the food
16 in the freezer. You call Consumers, they tell you, well,
17 we can give you a \$25 stipend or something like that, and
18 otherwise they say turn it in to your insurance company.
19 So you call up your insurance company and you say, I have
20 lost all the food in the freezer and refrigerator and
21 I've got tree damage and what can I expect if I put in a
22 claim. Well, you have to pay the first \$1,000
23 deductible, then they allow you \$1,000 for tree damage
24 and \$500 for loss of the food, the perishables. But in
25 the meantime, I said, and what can I expect to happen on

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1 my paying, payments for going forward; she says, well, it
2 will increase for the next three years to pay them back.
3 So as you see that the citizens are just left in the
4 lurch. All we do is, you know, we're stuck paying for
5 all the bills and there isn't anything we get out of
6 Consumers.

7 One comment that stuck with me was
8 Consumers said they were extremely well prepared for this
9 storm, but if that means they're extremely well prepared
10 and we have to live without power for five days, that's a
11 problem. So what I would say is that when you approve
12 any increases to Consumers or DTE, that you find out
13 where they're spending the money, and what are they doing
14 to improve so we don't have these issues. When they talk
15 about putting underground lines in instead of, you know,
16 using utility poles, they say it's too expensive. When I
17 hear the word it's too expensive, that means nobody is
18 doing what they could be doing, they'd just rather spend
19 the money on something else.

20 So that's what I have for you and, you
21 know, it's just that I'm like everybody else trying to go
22 without power to four to five days, especially in the
23 cold. I mean the houses were down in the, I don't know,
24 I want to say high 30s, low 40s, something like that.
25 Anyways, that's my two cents. Anything you can do to

1 improve, when you give them the pay raises, make sure
2 they're spending it on improvements, not just on wages.
3 Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

5 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Mr. Dziachan.
6 I have Catherine Tervol up next, and then Troy of the
7 House of Caesar. Ms. Tervol.

8 CATHERINE TERVOL: Congratulations on
9 pronouncing my name correctly. That -- I was waiting for
10 that because nobody does.

11 I live in Onsted, but I am a nurse and I
12 work with special needs kids and adults, and I was at the
13 home of my clients and there are ten people with
14 life-threatening problems and in need of medical
15 equipment. They do have a demand generator, but it
16 doesn't produce enough. O.K.

17 Their place is seven miles west of
18 Hillsdale on a dirt road, and their main power line runs
19 through a swamp that Consumers can't access in this kind
20 of weather, and this happens frequently, not just this
21 storm. They aren't doing enough as far as taking care of
22 the trees that are rotting and need to be removed so they
23 aren't landing on the lines and stuff like that. We went
24 seven days without power there. Consumers told them they
25 had power back two days before that, and then they told

1 them that they had power back again. She had to register
2 a complaint every day after Consumers said that they had
3 had power when they didn't. No. 1, it cost her a fortune
4 in propane to run the generator, and yet you're going to
5 give her maybe \$35. O.K.

6 Now, these kids, these people range in
7 age from 5 to 70, and it's not acceptable to have 5 year
8 olds not have their breathing equipment and other stuff,
9 and us running extension cords from one side of the room
10 to the other so we can run that stuff. Many of them are
11 on monitors all night, a couple of them are on
12 ventilators. This is not acceptable. And we want to go
13 to all power vehicles; where would we have been? We
14 wouldn't have been anywhere.

15 O.K. I personally live in Lenawee
16 County, and in Onsted, they have torn up my street. My
17 street is Onsted Highway, becomes Main Street in downtown
18 Onsted. O.K. They've taken out all the trees in front
19 of, along there, they're redoing the street, and yet they
20 are not burying the power lines. They could be doing
21 that. One of your -- one of the complaints is that it's
22 all the infrastructure they have to work around. It's
23 all torn up. They replaced the water lines, they're
24 replacing the sidewalk today. Why in the heck are they
25 not out there burying the lines so at least that part of

1 Onsted would have power? And I realize, having driven
2 through Jackson, Hillsdale, and Lenawee County, that a
3 lot of it was the tree damage and getting it to there,
4 O.K., but we need to start getting more of this buried so
5 we don't have this problem, especially for those of us
6 that live out in the more rural areas.

7 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Ms. Tervol. I
8 have Troy of the House of Caesar, and then --

9 TROY OF THE HOUSE OF CASAD: No, it's the
10 House of Casad.

11 CHAIR SCRIPPS: -- Levi Kimball. Sorry,
12 what's that?

13 TROY OF THE HOUSE OF CASAD: It's the
14 House of Casad.

15 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Sorry. House of Casad.

16 TROY OF THE HOUSE OF CASAD: Yep. Well,
17 I'm a Consumers user, an end user, and I've been through
18 the, what was it, the hundred-year vertical winds, I've
19 been through this last one, both times I lost power for
20 seven days. But really why I'm here is I want to know
21 why you guys are misidentifying with wordplay and
22 changing the end word, the end users to a commercial --
23 or residential commercial customers, and knowingly
24 assigning an incorrect residential address to their homes
25 when in fact they're not residential pursuant to the

1 International Building Code, and their usage is just
2 prepaid under this UCC filing, because you guys are part
3 of the North American Water and Power Alliance, aren't
4 you?

5 CHAIR SCRIPPS: I actually --

6 TROY OF THE HOUSE OF CASAD: I will make
7 sure I give you every one of these, a copy of this UCC,
8 I'm going to fill out the form right there. This is all
9 I wanted to say to you, so this will -- takes away any
10 unknowing from any of you. There will be no more
11 unknowing.

12 And in fact, like I said, the problem
13 with Consumers is they're worried about corporate profit
14 and not taking care of their lines, they're not taking
15 care of the highways, because you know as well as I do
16 that those lines are considered federal highways and
17 they're supposed to be maintained to certain standards,
18 and they don't, because all you got to do is come to
19 where I live, Napoleon Township, Michigan, and you can
20 see the devastation. Well, you know, we are -- my home
21 is located less than two miles from your franchisee's
22 transformer, transformation center so, you know, you guys
23 need to step up your game and do what's right for the
24 people, because as public servants, you're held to the
25 public trust. Am I not wrong? That's all I got to say.

1 I'll make sure I get all this information to you within
2 the next week. Thank you very much for your time.

3 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

4 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you for that. Levi
5 Kimball and then Rachel Udabe. Mr. Kimball.

6 LEVI KIMBALL: Thank you. I live out in
7 the Napoleon Township. My power was out on March 22 --
8 or February 22, I was out before anybody else around me.
9 Once everybody else went out, I figured, hey, you know,
10 it's going to be a while. It was 6 days, 17 hours and 28
11 minutes according to the slip I got from Consumers
12 telling me when it came back on. But they also told me
13 it came back on Sunday the 26th, and it didn't, just
14 like the gentleman before me mentioned. So you call back
15 in, you go back in and reregister, and it sends you
16 backwards on their grid, or somebody was looking at it or
17 working on it and then you go back to somebody looking at
18 it. Three days in a row they did that. There's no
19 reason for that, and no reason to go 6 days, 17 hours and
20 28 minutes with power out when they say they had it
21 handled.

22 Again, with the refrigerators that need
23 to be run, freezers need to be run, heat in the house, it
24 all comes back to Consumers doing their job or the
25 customers paying -- and the \$25, \$35 stipend they're

1 going to give us is not, that's not going to cut it for
2 anybody. Seriously. Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

4 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Rachel Udabe, and then
5 David Morris.

6 RACHEL UDABE: Hello, y'all. My name is
7 Rachel Udabe, and I'm with We The People Michigan, and
8 I'm here to help us fight for the dignity of all
9 Michiganders, and that includes the basic right to
10 electricity and being able to functionally run your
11 household. And we've built this system for ourselves
12 where we have investor-owned utilities in the State of
13 Michigan, but we need it to be functioning and not be
14 prioritizing the investors over people, the profits over
15 people, and they actively do, as you know.

16 Once again, in this past couple months,
17 over one million Michiganders were without power, and
18 that's different than the Lansing situation. Their own
19 board was dealing with the same ice storms that the rest
20 of the southern Michigan had, and they were fine, they
21 did not have as many outages, and neighboring states also
22 did not have as many outages as we did with our
23 investor-owned utilities. And as a reminder, in 2021 all
24 of the outages cost Michiganders an estimated \$3.5
25 billion. Meanwhile, they're making billions of profits

1 and giving that back to shareholders.

2 So I thank you for your work so far, I
3 thank you for the action items that you already said are
4 in place, and I hope going forward the State Legislature
5 will be able to give you more authority to really hold
6 the irons to the fire for these investor-owned utilities.
7 But right now I also ask for your consideration to
8 mandate stronger grid infrastructure improvement. I know
9 you can't tell them what do with their profits, but it's
10 pretty egregious that DTE, for example, can have 72
11 percent of their \$1 billion profits going to investors
12 and not to improving the infrastructure that they have.

13 Also, \$35 is just the start, the very
14 base floor, if that, and I think that there's space for
15 you to increase what these companies will have to pay in
16 the case of outages to each consumer.

17 There's also room to mandate improved
18 tree trimming. I know that a lot of people have concern
19 over just like willy-nilly tree rimming that has not only
20 like impacted the vegetation and landscape around their
21 own homes, but because it's not done very well, trees
22 grow back and end up harming like the substations, the
23 power lines, the particular like transformers in people's
24 backyards, which just continues to worsen in the problem.

25 And holistically, like this is an

1 environmental justice problem. I know that y'all try to
2 encourage them to, like encourage these companies to
3 reduce the amount of power people are using, and so DTE,
4 for example, has particular peak-hour time-of-day rates
5 where they're charging residences, consumers more for
6 these particular times, but I think that there's space to
7 really care about environmental justice and have them
8 focus on putting more of the energy on their grid using
9 renewable sources.

10 And so those are some ideas where we can
11 have a Michigan that has the lights on. So thank you all
12 so much.

13 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

14 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you. Up next we
15 have David Morris, and then Jace Bylenga. Mr. Morris.

16 DAVID MORRIS: Good afternoon. We live
17 in a subdivision in Summit Township, it's a newer
18 subdivision, we built a house there, it was about 28
19 years ago. All the wires and everything is underground.
20 We were losing power probably three-four times a year at
21 that time, so I called Consumers and they said, it was
22 funny because they had a plan drawn up where they would
23 correct this probably by 50 percent, which they did, the
24 power didn't go out as much. I did buy a second
25 generator, and I just looked at it yesterday; in five

1 years, I have 179.1 hours of power that I've lost, which
2 is 4 1/2 times -- 4 1/2 weeks, or one week a year we're
3 losing power. We lost power this last ice storm for over
4 a week, probably \$60 a day in gas. We finally got power
5 back, and then we lost it again for another three hours.

6 The people across the street, they're on
7 a different line. There was a Canadian crew that came
8 in, they were putting the power in there, then we found
9 out they didn't get all the power. I don't know anything
10 about electricity, I don't know if it's a 110 line, 220
11 line, or how it works, but they didn't get all their
12 power. They called Consumers and they came back out;
13 they didn't put up all the lines, they didn't do it
14 correct. Well, to me that's crazy.

15 Someone had mentioned about tree
16 trimming. That's probably the biggest thing that they
17 need to do. I presented a picture to someone here,
18 there's a tree laying on the power line or the cable line
19 right now. We had one across the street a couple years
20 ago, we called Comcast, we called Consumers, everybody
21 blamed each other, no one wanted to take charge and take
22 care of it. So right now we have another one down on
23 Browns Lake Road, it goes out to the college, we have
24 buses there taking the kids out, you have kids going
25 past, it was in the road, partially in the road, but now

1 they've trimmed parts off the road but it's still on
2 either a power line or a cable line.

3 But I also heard that Consumers, this is
4 from a Consumers employee, former, one of the reasons
5 that those transformers, they're not keeping as many
6 transformers in supply just because of the economy and
7 things like that. Those things were going off like
8 crazy, and I don't know if that's part of the issue or
9 not.

10 The other issue is, someone else
11 mentioned was -- we have a Consumers employee in our
12 neighborhood who's in Florida right now, and I texted him
13 to say we wanted to make sure you knew we were out of
14 power. He said, they informed me that I didn't lose
15 power; I said, yes, we did. And that's the same issue.
16 I went online probably three different times, your power
17 is back, or you didn't have power, you didn't lose power;
18 well, yes, we did, and I report it again, you report it
19 again. So they seemed to be very confused on what's
20 going on.

21 I know this was, like you said, in my
22 lifetime it's the worst ice storm I've ever seen, but
23 they got to get their act together, informing people of
24 what's going on, getting the trees trimmed, come by -- I
25 don't know, there should be a crew right now, I don't

1 know if the Township should be out, the cable people be
2 out, or Consumers, but south of town there's trees
3 everywhere, and they're all piled up and I don't know
4 who's going to take care of them, but hopefully you guys
5 can help out. Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

7 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Mr. Morris.

8 Jace Bylenga next, and then Amador Ybarra.

9 JACE BYLENGA: Hello. My name is Jace
10 Bylenga, I'm a west Michigan resident most of my life and
11 Consumers customer most of my life from Grand Rapids and
12 Kalamazoo, and I also work for the Michigan League of
13 Conservation Voters as a community organizer, so I'm out
14 talking to people all day about this issue. And one
15 thing I want to talk about that -- is the microphone low?

16 (Staff adjusting microphone.)

17 Great. Thank you. Is that a little
18 better?

19 CHAIR SCRIPPS: That's perfect.

20 JACE BYLENGA: O.K. So, you know, we
21 have some of the worst service here in Michigan for some
22 of the highest rates in the country, and that's also at
23 the same time we have huge profits for our utilities, and
24 I'm -- that's upsetting when some things that I worry
25 about on a daily basis are keeping insulin from going

1 bad. So I have family members who are type 1 diabetics
2 and you need insulin constantly to live, and without it,
3 you can lose body parts, like you might have to have a
4 foot amputated, and it's incredibly temperature
5 sensitive, it's recommended you keep it between 36 and
6 46 degrees constantly; and if it goes bad, it's not just
7 \$35, that's not going to fix it, you're going to need to
8 get a prescription from your doctor, you might have to
9 call your doctor, but let's say it's the weekend and now
10 you got to go to the emergency room, and that's going to
11 cost you another couple, you know, multiple hundreds of
12 dollars just to get your insulin filled for the weekend.

13 So if -- I shudder to think about folks
14 who have lost their insulin supply during these outages,
15 especially folks -- you know, I've visited homes in west
16 Michigan that don't have insulation, and I visited
17 somebody who, for an appointment and they had to cancel
18 my appointment, I was going to try to sell them windows,
19 it's for a different job, and they had to cancel my
20 appointment because they were having a diabetic
21 emergency, and they didn't have insulation in their home.
22 So it was the summertime at that time, it was really,
23 really hot, so if the power went out then, they would be
24 in a dire circumstances. So please consider things like
25 that when you're considering the profits that these

1 companies are making and their commitment to helping the
2 people here in west Michigan.

3 I urge you to continue to listen to the
4 voices of the people who are suffering from these
5 outages. Lots of people couldn't attend this hearing
6 today that I talked to, and there's lots of people that
7 can't attend the hearing tomorrow because they don't have
8 a computer or they don't know how to use it, or they just
9 don't know these hearings are happening. And also, I
10 urge you to move forward with Attorney General Dana
11 Nessel's recommendations to hold utility companies
12 accountable for their political and public spending and
13 increased transparency.

14 You know, I know DTE Energy has used some
15 of their dark money spending to discredit the COVID-19
16 pandemic, and that's another thing that is going to
17 impact my family greatly, and has impacted by family
18 greatly. You know, the type 1 diabetes is an immune
19 disorder, and so much more vulnerable to infections like
20 that. Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

22 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Mr. Bylenga.
23 We have Amador Ybarra, and then Joe LaRussa.

24 AMADOR YBARRA: Good afternoon.

25 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Good afternoon.

1 AMADOR YBARRA: Thank you all for your
2 time and attention to this very important matter today.
3 My name is Amador Ybarra, I live in Summit Township in
4 Jackson County. I live in a suburban neighborhood served
5 with overhead electrical transmission lines. Our
6 neighborhood is rich with a multitude of old growth
7 trees. Such is the case for a large portion of Jackson
8 County and the entire State. The very same trees which
9 provide such necessary ecological benefits to our
10 community and our neighborhoods have consistently caused
11 very large power outages when we have heavy snow, ice, or
12 windstorms breaking overhead utilities lines. The direct
13 correlation between winter weather, overhead utility
14 lines, and trees become glaringly apparent.

15 On February 22, we were comfortable and
16 warm in our home watching the storm break tree limbs on
17 the street when a tree, yes, a whole tree, across the
18 street fell and snapped the overhead utility lines. We
19 lost all utilities and internet. We were very fortunate
20 to have our power restored within 12 hours. That's not
21 the case for most of the people in Jackson County. We
22 got lucky.

23 It is incumbent on this Commission to
24 develop and implement plans which designate and regulate
25 all internet service providers as utilities, and putting

1 all utilities, which would be the power and the internet
2 service providers, in the ground. Please ask yourself
3 this question today. If a tree falls in the forest, does
4 it take out the utilities? Thank you very much for all
5 your time. I appreciate it. Have a wonderful day.

6 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

7 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Mr. Ybarra.
8 Joe LaRussa, and then Robert Wheeler.

9 JOE LaRUSSA: Good afternoon.

10 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Nice to see you again.

11 JOE LaRUSSA: It's good to see you again,
12 yes. The last time I appeared before the Commission was
13 August 11, 2021, and I think you may recall we had some
14 residents with us. So I'm here today as the mayor
15 pro tem in the City of Farmington, representing 11,000,
16 roughly 11,500 ratepayers and residents. I have some
17 updates and also some requests, some reiterated, some
18 new. I did bring a three-sheet packet for each
19 Commissioner to give you an update.

20 No. 1, I want to be even-handed and say
21 that in the past year and a half, DTE has become much
22 more transparent with the quality of service levels that
23 we see in our circuits. I have a copy for each of you of
24 SAIDI, SAIFI, and CAIDI metrics for each circuit serving
25 Farmington, all 11 of them. The challenge that we

1 continue to see is that despite being on cycle for tree
2 trimming and in spite of all of the stated upgrades that
3 have been made, we have two circuits that have actually
4 gotten worse on SAIFI, SAIDI, and CAIDI, and we have two
5 other circuits that have gotten worse on one or more of
6 those metrics. So for example, the circuit that I live
7 on, Farmington 5, has gone from a SAIFI or frequency of
8 outages of 6.07 to 6.83, so we're down almost 7 times a
9 year. When we're down, we're down longer. SAIDI's
10 increased from 2,074 minutes to 3,044 minutes. That's
11 from 35 hours to more than 50 hours down when we're down,
12 almost 7 times a year.

13 I also noticed that about ten days after
14 our appearance, last appearance before the Commission,
15 the Commission received a response from DTE with a
16 comparison chart showing CAIDI, SAIDI, and SAIFI metrics
17 for overhead plant versus underground. I've also
18 included an excerpt from that report, and as well as a
19 graphical representation showing that underground
20 circuits are the only ones that consistently meet
21 year-over-year the targets for CAIDI, SAIDI, and SAIFI
22 for all circuits.

23 Finally, the Commission received a letter
24 from the City of Farmington in December of 2022, I know
25 you've probably read it, but I wanted to spend this time

1 that I have reiterating some of the asks that we had in
2 there and give a voice to the words that appear on a
3 page, perhaps having a little bit more impact.

4 The City requests some Administrative
5 Rule changes, two in particular seems relevant to
6 Farmington's issues. Rule 460.517 sets forth a
7 requirement for the utility to bear the cost of
8 construction only where the utility decides to bury the
9 electric facility for its own convenience or where
10 underground construction is required by ordinance in
11 heavily congested business districts. It's time to
12 reconsider that limiting language because it allows
13 utilities like DTE to avoid having to look at the obvious
14 solution of undergrounding electric facilities in
15 communities or areas of communities where frequent
16 outages are occurring. Cities like Farmington cite that
17 this solution may in fact be the appropriate solution.
18 This rule also provides that a customer may request
19 burying of lines. The Commission should consider
20 amending this rule so that it allows burying to be
21 required by ordinance or where existing overhead
22 distribution and service lines are due for replacement
23 based on maintenance or asset planning requirements or
24 where the existing overhead distribution and service
25 lines are at the end of their useful life. We are very

1 rational actors in Farmington, we just want the
2 opportunity to understand the cost-benefit of burial when
3 the time comes. We're maintaining these facilities
4 already, they need to be addressed.

5 Finally, the last rule change we would
6 request is to Rule 460.721 or 460.724. The City suggests
7 the Commission include in its rules an annual outage
8 frequency metric that limits the number of frequencies
9 for an individual circuit to a certain number not to be
10 exceeded with a calendar year. Seven times a year for 50
11 hours on average is not acceptable. Thank you.

12 (Documents provided to the Commissioners.)

13 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you.

14 JOE LaRUSSA: Does the clerk take the
15 paperwork or should I hand it directly to you? May I
16 approach or --

17 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Either is fine. Not that
18 formal.

19 JOE LaRUSSA: Appreciate it.

20 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you so much.

21 JOE LaRUSSA: Thank you guys.

22 COMMISSIONER PERETICK: Thank you.

23 JOE LaRUSSA: Thanks for being here.

24 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you Mayor Pro Tem
25 LaRussa. Robert Wheeler, and Abby Barker.

1 ROBERT WHEELER: Hello. My name is Rob
2 Wheeler, I live in Napoleon, Michigan. This last storm,
3 I experienced an outage of seven days. Some of the areas
4 that were impacted by that outage were I have a small
5 business, I have an engineering firm that's just me, I
6 was unable to work for those full seven days because I
7 did not have power, so it impacted me that way. But the
8 worst of what I saw was actually my neighbors who are
9 upstream from me who live in a neighborhood where there's
10 trees everywhere, and when I drove through that area to
11 go to the gas station as I made that trip twice a day to
12 fill up my generator, it looked like a Third World
13 Country, it was very depressing. That was the worst
14 thing about this storm. Those people were without power
15 for seven days, and there was no one, no one coming for
16 help.

17 When we lost power on Wednesday, there
18 was -- I work in the power industry, so I have some
19 technical terms here -- but there were two three-phase
20 wire downs, four spans apart. There was, clearly the
21 wires were on top of a shed or something. The crews were
22 dispatched almost immediately. That was awesome. They
23 were out there working on the, on clearing it and fixing
24 it. They fixed that outage. Four spans away there's a
25 tree down across the same circuit. Those crews fixed

1 that circuit, and then they left. It left 800 people to
2 the north without power for seven days. So I know
3 because I used to work at Consumers, I understand how
4 storm priorities work and I understand how hectic it can
5 be for the folks working storm, but this last storm was
6 unacceptable on so many levels.

7 The power lines are supposed to be able
8 to withstand a half-inch of ice and a 40-mile an hour
9 wind, every component on that power line. It doesn't
10 matter if there's global warming, any of that stuff,
11 those weather events will never overcome what the base
12 level requirement is to design all the power lines. So
13 why are they falling down? Because our rate of
14 degradation of the system is accelerating; it's old and
15 it's falling down in front of us, and unless we get out
16 in front of that -- yes, we should do tree trimming, but
17 we should also be evaluating what requirement should we
18 be designing the lines for in the future. Why can't we
19 design the lines so that when a tree falls on it, it
20 doesn't fall down. Those are very easy solutions to come
21 up with as an engineer. I don't think that we're
22 considering what those impacts are when we're going
23 through this.

24 We talk about, you know, the rate case
25 and what we're going to do to spend all this money. The

1 money is not getting to the assets, it's just not. We
2 need to go back to the ground level of what is necessary
3 for us to get out of the hole that we're in in Michigan.
4 Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

6 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Mr. Wheeler.
7 I have Abby Barker, and then John Branstetter.

8 ABBY BARKER: Hello. My name is Abby
9 Barker. I just wanted to start by saying thank you for
10 hosting this hearing and taking public comments. I'm
11 from west Michigan actually, so I drove out here today.
12 I will keep my comments short because I'll really be
13 echoing a lot of what was already said.

14 But the frequency and duration of these
15 frequent power outages across Michigan are unacceptable.
16 While utility companies are bringing in record profits,
17 there are hundreds across our State, hundreds of
18 thousands, I should say, struggling to make ends meet. I
19 know for me when my power goes out, that means missing
20 work because I work from home or trying to find somewhere
21 else to go, or taking one of my vacation days and sitting
22 in a cold house, it's not a vacation; it's replacing all
23 the food in my fridge, and like many others, it's trying
24 to stay warm. I live in a house from the '50s, so when
25 it gets cold, it gets cold in there fast, and a lot of

1 air leaks right through those windows, and it's not
2 acceptable.

3 I also work for Michigan League of
4 Conservation Voters, so I spent a lot of time this last
5 few weeks talking to people who have experienced these
6 power outages. It's hard to hear those stories, people
7 who are trying to figure out how they're going to feed
8 their kids for the next few weeks because they lost food
9 in their fridge, people trying to figure out how they're
10 going to pay their utility bills, how they're going to
11 afford their medicine that was lost as another person
12 spoke about, and again, utility companies are bringing in
13 record profits while this happens. And it's obvious that
14 they're not going to hold themselves accountable, so
15 asking the Michigan Public Service Commission to do that.
16 The status quo is not working.

17 And I'd also like to just bring attention
18 to the need to allow people for public comment. I do
19 appreciate this opportunity today, I know there is a
20 hearing in Dearborn and then a virtual one tomorrow, but
21 not everyone can get work off, especially after a power
22 outage, at 12:00 o'clock on a Monday to make it out. So
23 I do want to thank you for these and just thinking about
24 how you can continue to make that more accessible for
25 people to make their voices heard. Thank you.

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1 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

2 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you very much,
3 Ms. Barker. John Branstetter, and then Mike Branigan.
4 Congratulations to your team on getting to the Sweet 16.
5 Congratulations on the Sweet 16. I say this as a
6 Michigan fan.

7 JOHN BRANSTETTER: Hey, bring it on. My
8 comments are -- well, I'll start with I'm from Hillsdale
9 County, Scipio Township, and I'm used to being without
10 power. It's normal. The part that isn't normal is that
11 Consumers did not do their job. They tried to power up
12 my line. I'm three houses from the last on the line, I
13 expect to be last to get my power, but they tried to
14 power it up. Boom. Then a minute later, boom. The
15 third time, they blew the lines right off the poles. And
16 then I said, well, we better be looking, watching,
17 because I could still hear it buzzing. The lines are on
18 the ground and I've got a fire in my backyard. So I
19 tried to call Consumers. We get robot calls, robot
20 answering machines, which is very poor. Because my phone
21 system is already down, I'm using a cellphone where I
22 have no service, so I couldn't get ahold of Consumers to
23 quit trying to put power on that. I ended up calling the
24 sheriff's department. They sent the fire department out.
25 The fire department sets in the middle of the road: We

1 ain't going out there, it's still frying. That's a good
2 choice. But just so happened that one of the fire crews
3 passed one of your Consumers crews just down the road
4 from me on another line, they went down there to get them
5 to come up and turn the power off. They did. Turned the
6 power off, got in their trucks and drove away. Two days
7 later I'm still without power. And then I -- at the end
8 of that two days, I spent two and a half-three hours
9 trying to get ahold of a human being at Consumers Power.
10 And this is one of my suggestions: When you're having
11 power problems, they need to have a person that can be
12 reached over the phone.

13 And after finally finding a person to
14 answer, I got a new work order. Up until then, it showed
15 I had power, which wasn't true, which happened several
16 times over the course of that week. But the lady took
17 down and placed a new work order. She said, we're
18 classifying this as an emergency, and we will have
19 someone out there in a couple hours. I said, good luck,
20 I'll be satisfied if it be by dark, and this is like 4:00
21 o'clock in the afternoon. By dark, nothing showed. But
22 the next morning they did, it only took them an hour to
23 fix it. But had Consumers done their job the way they
24 should do it in the beginning, they would have found that
25 tree on the line. That didn't happen. It wasn't a big

1 tree, just a small limb, but it was enough to blow them
2 lines. I thank you for your time.

3 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

4 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you,
5 Mr. Branstetter. Mike Branigan, and then Marguerite
6 Clevenger.

7 MIKE BRANIGAN: Well, thank you for
8 hosting this. I'm Mike Branigan from Spring Arbor
9 Township here in Jackson County. I'm not going to rehash
10 what everybody has said already because it, everybody
11 knows that.

12 But my main complaint is we've had
13 previous rate increases and it was supposed to help with
14 the trees, get rid of the trees so the lines don't go
15 down. Well, I've got trees, oak trees that have blue
16 dots from eight years ago approximately that still have
17 never been trimmed, and I don't know if there's any
18 followup on the tree trimming, if they just take their
19 word for it or what, because it's subcontractors usually.
20 And I just would like to see some, you know, followup to
21 make sure that that main issue gets taken care of. Thank
22 you.

23 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

24 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, sir. And I
25 will also just highlight, we do have customer assistance

1 professionals in the back for individual things like
2 that, we're taking notes as well, but often those folks
3 can help get answers and sort of chase down some of those
4 issues. So particularly, Mr. Branigan, on the issue of
5 the particular trees in your yard that were set to be
6 trimmed, have blue dots on them, haven't been trimmed,
7 that's something that our customer assistance folks can
8 help at least get some answers for you.

9 MIKE BRANIGAN: They're out here?

10 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Yes, yep. Sorry.

11 Marguerite Clevenger, and I hope I said that right.

12 MARGUERITE CLEVANGER: Yes. Marguerite
13 Clevenger, I live in the eastern edge of Spring Arbor
14 Township like the other gentleman. I'm not in a swamp,
15 I'm in a, you know, area that should not be suffering
16 from these kinds of issues like a lot of us are. Thank
17 you for the opportunity to comment, it's really
18 important, I was really surprised to see it. I'm also a
19 member of Michigan Sierra Club.

20 Please consider requiring automatic
21 hourly outage credits for customers. A flat \$35 just
22 doesn't do it, especially since considering that our
23 rates in Michigan are near the top of the U.S.

24 There's a few improvements that I believe
25 Consumers Energy could help with to avoid the three- to

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1 five-day outage and the ones -- the one that I had the
2 week before this big outage, and the smaller outages that
3 we or our family members suffer now about five to six to
4 seven times per year between two households. Of course,
5 the main thing is tree trimming. Also, the outage map of
6 Consumers was totally unusable. I tried to get on it
7 several times, and it just was not working.

8 Through all the outages, I've managed to
9 save my refrigerated food and a little bit of our home
10 heat. We have good insulation, we took advantage of
11 Consumers' offer to do that, that's made a big
12 difference, but you can only get a little bit of home
13 heat with a plug-in generator and you got to keep going
14 out in this bad weather, there's trees still falling down
15 and you got to go out and get gas. That doesn't make
16 sense. So now we are considering for us and the next
17 generation who lives in our home a solar array.

18 So while I appreciate the distributed
19 generation program, it's not quite as good as -- excuse
20 me -- it's not quite as good as net metering, but it
21 still enables solar owners to save money on their
22 electricity bills. That's good for you, it's good for
23 Consumers Energy, it's good for your clean energy goals
24 and your electric grid that serves ratepayers. Michigan
25 is going to need more electricity generation, it's become

1 obvious to all of us, and we don't even know the
2 electricity business. We need it, and we don't have
3 enough of it, it's not being handled properly. MPSC and
4 Consumers should be supporting solar for residential
5 customers and community solar for folks who live in
6 apartments like Lansing Board of Water & Light have done.
7 Figure it out, please, incentivize cleaner energy, and
8 help us avoid another major meltdown.

9 A couple questions I had. Do you
10 agree -- you don't have to answer this, but do you agree
11 that renewable energy storage, EVs, and other distributed
12 energy resources can increase resiliency for us, the
13 customers? If we can generate it ourselves, that makes
14 us more resilient.

15 Secondly, the feds will be making
16 billions of dollars available for clean energy, and
17 please tell us how you can use that more appropriately.
18 Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

20 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Ms. Clevenger.

21 I don't have any additional cards up
22 here, so I wanted to see if there were any folks who are
23 here today who have not filled out a card but who would
24 like to provide public comment, we'd love to hear from
25 you.

1 O.K. Just one thing that I wanted to
2 highlight, it came up a couple of times, I just wanted to
3 be clear on some of the changes that were being made that
4 Commissioner Peretick referenced at the beginning. As it
5 currently stands, and it has stood for the last several
6 years, the credit for outages is limited to 25, it is a
7 one-time credit, and you have to apply for it once you
8 reach eligibility. The changes that we've been working
9 on over the last several years and, as Commissioner
10 Peretick mentioned, will come into effect this Friday,
11 increases the base credit from \$25 to \$35. It actually,
12 it's not an hourly escalator, but it's then \$35, 35
13 additional dollars for every additional day that you
14 remain without power for -- once you're eligible. It's
15 indexed to the rate of inflation, which is obviously more
16 important now than it was even when we started the
17 rulemakings a couple of years ago, and maybe most
18 importantly, it's automatic, so instead of having to
19 track whether or not you're eligible and then apply to
20 the utility for the credit, they have that information,
21 they have that data, and so the credits become automatic.
22 But I just wanted to clear that up because it's -- there
23 are some voluntary credits that are \$25 or \$35 that the
24 utilities are making available after this storm, that's
25 different than what is going to be in the updated rules

1 that take effect on Friday where it's \$35 once you're
2 eligible and then \$35 for each additional day. It's
3 still not an hourly credit, it still doesn't cover the
4 cost of fuel for your generator or hospitals -- or hotel
5 stays or the cost of a freezer full of food, but it's
6 significantly better than what exists today.

7 I know -- so I know that Sydney from
8 Senator Shinks' office is in attendance, and I also know
9 that we've got one of our local state representatives, so
10 I -- O.K. So --

11 KATHY SCHMALTZ: Yeah, Kathy Schmaltz.
12 I'm -- thank you so much to the Public Service Commission
13 for coming down here. I am on the Energy Committee and
14 for the State House and we're hearing a lot of testimony
15 from DTE and also Consumers Energy, a lot of different
16 testimonies from people, and we understand the hardship
17 that everybody went through. So the Public Service
18 Commission is going around, I know you have another one
19 tonight in Detroit and then also one virtual, and so
20 we're getting all this feedback and hopefully we're going
21 to talk about and work on the reliability of the grid and
22 make sure that these kind of things don't happen again.
23 But I know everybody's been working really hard on this,
24 and we're sorry for all the hardship that everybody went
25 through. And again, I applaud the Public Service

Commission for being here and listening to everybody.

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you very much,
Representative Schmaltz.

SYDNEY: Hi. Thank you. I'm Sydney with
Senator Shinks' office. Just want to thank you all for
holding this hearing, it's been very informative. We had
several constituents reach out to us just kind of
detailing the issues that they had with the power
outages. The Senate Energy Environment Committee will be
holding a hearing Thursday of this week at 8:30, so we
will be speaking with MPSC, DTE Energy, and Consumers to
try and figure out how can move forward from this and not
have a repeat of this incident.

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Sydney.
Looking forward to that special committee on Thursday.

Anybody else want to make public comment,
otherwise we may recess for a couple of minutes?

GLENN FROBEL: I'd like to.

CHAIR SCRIPPS: Oh, yeah, please, please.

GLENN FROBEL: I'm Glenn Frobel, I'm the
Cambria Township Supervisor down in Hillsdale County.
And I really, I don't look at what happened as a
hardship, it's part of life.

1 I talked to many, many linemen from many
2 different states, and they were, the number one thing
3 they said that they were appalled at was the -- don't
4 they believe in cutting trees up here. That falls back
5 on Consumers Power, DTE, the road commissions, they do a
6 lousy job of it, too, in Hillsdale.

7 When the power goes out at my place, I
8 don't have internet, I don't have anything, which is
9 really nice because my meter is not spinning. And I
10 don't really understand how my bill's been \$200, \$250,
11 and how nine days, eight, nine days of power outage or
12 less and the bill's only 117. The farther into the month
13 you go, does it -- or the earlier into the month you go,
14 does it cost more, because I don't do anything different?
15 I've got the correct kind of bulbs, I've got the things
16 that burn 7,500 watts on a timer where they're on for an
17 hour and off for three, so I'm not just spinning. And I
18 get these emails and letters from the Consumers Power
19 telling me that I am the worst, I use the most power in
20 my neighborhood, and I am -- I should really look into
21 energizing my place to make it greener. Well, you know
22 what, I do, and I don't think they should complain until
23 they don't get the bill paid. If I can pay the power
24 bill, then I should be able to use the power, and I'm
25 using it as wisely as I can. It's not my problem that

1 green energy and the rest of it isn't going to keep up
2 with things. We're going to find a real resurgence for
3 coal here pretty soon because it's going to get really
4 brown really quick.

5 I can't stop the ice, that's just a
6 freakish thing when that happens that much, but that was
7 the biggest thing they pulled out that; guys that work on
8 the lines, don't they believe in cutting trees up here.
9 And I can take you right now, I can take you where the
10 lines, I can show you lines that trees are enclosed on
11 it, I can show you lines that are, got trees that are
12 leaning, and they're going to fall on them lines again,
13 there's no doubt about it. And it's, it's just, well, we
14 have this range, if it's six feet around, that we, we
15 don't have to cut that tree, we don't have to cut that
16 big dead tree by the transformer there either because
17 that's just too much work. Well, it's lot of work when
18 they come out and fix it.

19 So that's about all I got to say. I
20 appreciate your time.

21 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

22 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Mr. Frobel. I
23 think the next one is Norbert Freizel, and I hope that I
24 got that right, or close.

25 NORBERT FREITEL: Freitel.

1 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Freitel.

2 NORBERT FREITEL: I'm a Consumers Power
3 customer, and my complaint, issue is that any time we
4 have a power outage, it's the same general area. Here's
5 a -- (Document provided.)

6 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

7 NORBERT FREITEL: It may be larger than
8 that, or smaller, but that is consistently the same area
9 that is without power. My wife has created a spreadsheet
10 of, over the years of when we have power outages, and
11 it's nearly every month or every other month. It can be
12 a nice day such as today, we're out of power for a short
13 time, then we have the ice and snow storms. And if you
14 want that, I can give you a copy of the spreadsheet.
15 (Document provided.)

16 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

17 NORBERT FREITEL: And that's what I have
18 at the moment. Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

20 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, Mr. Freitel.

21 Is there anybody else who would --

22 JOE LaRUSSA: Any chance for round two,
23 or no?

24 CHAIR SCRIPPS: I think what we're going
25 to do is if there's nobody else that hasn't made a public
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1 comment that would like to, we'd like to hear from you,
2 otherwise we'll recess for a couple minutes and love to
3 have individual conversations.

4 All right. Well, let's take 15 minutes
5 and see if there are new folks who arrive, and that gives
6 us a chance to have some side conversations. We'll come
7 back between 1:20 and 1:25. And I think all three of us
8 are planning to stick around, we'd love to interact with
9 you sort of individually. But thanks again for being
10 here.

11 (Recess from 1:06 p.m. until 1:46 p.m.)

12 CHAIR SCRIPPS: O.K. I think we're going
13 to try and come back. It was a nice 40-minute 15-minute
14 break, and we do have at least one more individual who
15 wants to provide public comment, so we want to provide
16 that opportunity. So Mr. Bennett, I believe that's you.

17 KEITH BENNETT: Yep.

18 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Welcome you to the
19 microphone, appreciate you coming down here.

20 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

21 KEITH BENNETT: Thank you. Thanks for
22 showing up and offering up this opportunity. I've lived
23 in Manchester, which is relatively close to here, for
24 about 25 years now. The second year that we lived here,
25 I put a generator in the house, and I did that for

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1 multiple reasons, medical, but our power averages three
2 or four times a year it goes out. And so I think it's
3 stunning that a person needs to have backup power for
4 your business and for medical reasons. But, and I guess
5 you guys probably aren't really the ones that can hold
6 DTE's feet to the fire on this. I know you can control
7 their rates as far as what they're allowed to charge, but
8 it seems to me that there's got to be a way to force them
9 to improve their infrastructure. And I don't know enough
10 about it, I haven't been studying it, I know it's gotten
11 me more interested here the last few years, and so that's
12 my plan is to learn more.

13 I'm also a shareholder with that company.
14 And they're -- they pay great, you know, I don't have a
15 complaint with them there, but I'm sure quite a few of
16 the shareholders with this company are also customers,
17 and it's disappointing that they run their company the
18 way they do. The green energy side of it is fine, but if
19 they're not getting power to the people that are their
20 customers, seems to me that money should be being spent
21 on whatever it takes to improve the infrastructure.
22 That's what I'd like to see happen. And I, you know, how
23 much control you guys have over that probably isn't much,
24 but I think if you turn them down on a rate increase and
25 enough people come out and speak at these events, maybe

1 eventually they hear it and they start doing something
2 for their customers. So that's what I'm hoping happens.
3 And like I say, I appreciate you all offering up this
4 opportunity. Thank you.

5 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you very much,
6 Mr. Bennett.

7 COMMISSIONER PERETICK: Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

9 CHAIR SCRIPPS: If there's anybody else
10 that wants to make public comment at this time, I invite
11 you to do so.

12 GLENN FROBEL: Can I go again, just a
13 short, I'll be succinct?

14 CHAIR SCRIPPS: We'll even let repeats.

15 GLENN FROBEL: Just so it's not a reject.

16 COURT REPORTER: Please restate your
17 name, too.

18 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Supervisor Frobels, is
19 that right?

20 GLENN FROBEL: Yes, Glenn Frobels.
21 There's a couple things I thought about and I hadn't had
22 them written down. I understand that the energy
23 companies with these smart meters, they can actually shut
24 your power off. So when the power does go out, it would
25 seem to me they know the power is out, so why is it that

1 I have to fill out a form where, I don't know where the
2 forms are, but apparently there's some magic form in
3 internetville, and if you've been out for so many days,
4 then you have to fill out this form to get \$25. Really.
5 That doesn't make a lot of -- they should be taking care
6 of that internally I think.

7 And then back to the trees, I know our
8 road commission, they always tell us about, well, we
9 can't cut the trees now because there's a law we have to
10 protect the Indiana Brown Bat. O.K. Power companies
11 shouldn't have to worry about a brown bat when they cut
12 the trees because I know bats are pretty sharp, they'll
13 find their own -- they'll find someplace else to live,
14 they're not, you know, they're just not going to sit
15 there and lay horizontal in a tree, they're going to find
16 another one to hide in or a house or something. But the
17 Indiana Brown Bat is a fine little bat, it catches a lot
18 of mosquitoes in the swamps and in the cities, but I
19 think there's always going to be a place for the little
20 brown bat to live. So that's it. Thank you.

21 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Any others who would like
22 to offer public comment at this time?

23 SHATINA JONES: There's someone in the
24 back.

25 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Oop, come on down.

1 KARLA SMITH: Price is right. I'm a City
2 of Jackson resident, and I have noticed in the City when
3 you follow the Consumers Energy power lines, you see that
4 there are always trees in the parkway that the City has
5 planted, some probably over 70 years ago, always under
6 power lines. I'm lucky enough I didn't have a power
7 outage, and on my side of the street, the power line is
8 not on my parkway, but I did keep the City from planting
9 a third tree because they always put it under wires that
10 go to my house. If the City of Jackson and Consumers
11 Energy could copartner, I think you already do, with our
12 tree trimming services, Johnny's, Asplundh, or however
13 you say that name, why can't the two of them partner
14 together to go down where the Consumers Energy lines are
15 and just look to see, oh, my goodness, yep, that's a
16 really old tree and look at those branches that are
17 coming out over the lines, that are coming down on the
18 lines, can't we trim those up. I know there's got to be
19 a cost-effective way to do this. Somebody has to have
20 some -- it cost to Consumers Energy during this last
21 storm three bazillion dollars, it would have cost us a
22 million for Johnny's Tree Service to come prior to our
23 storms and our winds. There's got to be something until
24 we can get everybody underground. And I just think it's
25 a sensible solution, even though the Indiana Brown Bat

1 should go back to Indiana. And like you said, they're
2 going to find another home, believe me, we have all kinds
3 of pine trees where they can go. But that would be a
4 suggestion that I would like to put forth. Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER PERETICK: Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: What was your
7 name? I'm sorry?

8 KARLA SMITH: Karla.

9 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Karla.

10 KARLA SMITH: K-a-r-l-a, last name Smith.
11 Jackson resident in the city.

12 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Great. Thank you.

13 KARLA SMITH: Thank you.

14 CHAIR SCRIPPS: At this point I'm pretty
15 sure I know everybody else in the room, so if there's --
16 we're going to obviously be here until the stated time of
17 2:30, but we can again make this less formal if we've got
18 folks who come in between now and 2:30, we'll provide the
19 opportunity for them to make formal public comments. But
20 do we, just in case we don't get anybody else, do either
21 of you have any closing remarks that you want to make?

22 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: I don't believe
23 so.

24 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Well, I'll just say thank
25 you to all of you for being here, for our staff

1 certainly, for the logistics involved and the support of
2 this event, for our wonderful court reporter, who always
3 has to tell me to slow down even when I'm not wearing a
4 mask. But I -- and we will have a transcript of this,
5 that came up earlier, so this, there will be a transcript
6 of the comments that were made.

7 I will say we got, at least for me,
8 exactly what we had hoped out this in terms of an
9 opportunity to hear directly from the people most
10 affected by some of the recent outage events, including
11 some ideas on how to make the system better. It's been a
12 focus of ours for the last several years, but we also
13 know that we only know what we know, and so the
14 opportunity, often the best ideas come from the people
15 with, who were most directly affected by some of the
16 outage challenges that we've seen, and we've certainly
17 heard that today. So I think we have some concrete
18 takeaways to go back and work on and think about, and
19 we're just going to, I will say and pledge on behalf of
20 all three of us, we are not where we need to be in terms
21 of outage numbers, the duration of outages, the frequency
22 of outages, the number of people who are experiencing
23 multiple outages year in and year out, and it's been a
24 focus and will remain a focus until we get to a
25 distribution grid that the people of Michigan expect and

1 deserve.

2 And so again, appreciate the opportunity
3 to listen to you this afternoon. We will still be here
4 till 2:30, then we're off to Dearborn for the second of
5 these today. And again, if you've got folks that you
6 know who weren't able to participate today but are
7 interested in providing feedback, we'll have a written --
8 or a virtual public hearing Town Hall Meeting tomorrow
9 from 6:00 to 8:00, and information on that is available
10 on our website, michigan.gov/MPSC, and then also we're
11 always happy to hear from you through written comments,
12 and there's information in the back on how to submit
13 those. So again, we'll be here until 2:30, we'll
14 reconvene formally if we have more people who want to
15 make comment, but for now we'll suspend the Town Hall.

16 GLENN FROBEL: Let me add one more
17 comment, if I could, please.

18 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Sure.

19 COMMISSIONER PERETICK: Yeah.

20 GLENN FROBEL: So I know that you're
21 being asked for another rate increase, and I understand
22 that they've got to fund, you know, the work that they're
23 trying to do, but it seems to me that if you're going to
24 offer people refunds because their power was out, those
25 same people shouldn't be paying for that, like all -- the

1 fact that it's such a small amount to begin with when
2 you've lost food and everything else, but the fact that
3 they're going to raise rates to fund some of that along
4 with the infrastructure changes, that just seems totally
5 backwards thinking to me. It seems like they need to
6 find a way to handle their budget to make these things
7 work. And a rate increase just, you just gave them one
8 in November if I'm reading things right, so, you know,
9 we're only, you know, half a year out from that, a little
10 more, seems like it's a little bit early to be asking for
11 more money. So thank you again.

12 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you, sir.

13 (Recess from 1:58 p.m. until 2:15 p.m.)

14 CHAIR SCRIPPS: All right. We have one
15 more individual who has arrived and would like to share
16 their story with us. So Daveda Quinn.

17 DAVEDA QUINN: Yes.

18 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Welcome. Thanks for
19 being here.

20 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

21 DAVEDA QUINN: Well, thank you all. So
22 glad that you all are here. And this topic at hand today
23 is a very needed topic, the storm that happened here in
24 Jackson.

25 I am a case manager for Jackson Housing
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1 Commission, I am also one of the residents that do a lot
2 of work, we do resident-led work here in Jackson. I also
3 work for the Jackson ISD as a trusted advisor. That
4 means I'm boots on the ground, I'm underneath the
5 bridges, I work 24 hours a day. I'm that person that you
6 call when you need any form filled out or information
7 that you need. So I'm here today to tell you the
8 experiences that happened to us on not one Friday, but
9 two Fridays.

10 At Jackson Housing Commission, it is a
11 housing establishment for HUD, for low-income
12 individuals, we had 700 people without power for five
13 days and four nights. During that timeframe,
14 unfortunately one of our residents that was on oxygen
15 passed away, unfortunately. The other residents that was
16 on oxygen, we were able to save because they had a care
17 provider that let us know that they needed help, and so
18 we were able to get some help for them. We ourselves out
19 of our pockets purchased generators so that our residents
20 could come into the community room and charge their
21 phones, any equipment that they had, get them fed, all of
22 the above. We had to reach out to establishments to find
23 blankets upon blankets, people were so cold. Of course,
24 during that time people also lost their food in their
25 refrigerators. It was a travesty, it really was.

1 Seeing that Michigan's largest electric
2 company, Consumers Energy, is based right here in Jackson
3 Michigan, I would have thought that we were back into
4 power earlier than what we were. I would have thought
5 that there would have been some type of backup something,
6 sort of something that you would come that's mobile that
7 could come into the communities that people could plug
8 into, something like solar panels that you could drive up
9 and station around. Like during the pandemic, Jackson
10 Public Schools, they took their buses and equipped them
11 with WiFi and they parked those buses all around this
12 whole community and parents was able to get Wi-Fi. We
13 have to do better.

14 Also, we have residents in the hotel,
15 Travelodge, it's right on 94 right in the new build, and
16 they were out for seven days, six nights. Everything in
17 that hotel ran by electric, including the water pumps
18 because they had a well, so these people had no water, no
19 food, no electricity or anything. We have to do better.
20 So I hope you all will look into all those things and
21 take my concerns to consideration. I see the red flag.
22 Thank you so. God bless.

23 COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER PERETICK: Thank you.

25 CHAIR SCRIPPS: Thank you for being here.

(Off record at 2:19 p.m. No further comments made.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lori Anne Penn (CSR-1315), do hereby
certify that I reported in stenotype the proceedings held
at the Jackson, Michigan, Public Town Hall Meeting before
the Michigan Public Service Commission, at American 1
Credit Union Event Center, 128 W. Ganson Street, Jackson,
Michigan, on Monday, March 20, 2023; and do further
certify that the foregoing transcript, consisting of
pages 1-61, constitutes a true and correct transcript of
my stenotype notes.



Lori Anne Penn, CSR-1315
Penn Reporting, LLC
lori.penn@yahoo.com

Dated: March 24, 2023