BEFORE

THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF

SOUTH CAROLINA

DOCKET NOS. 2005-204-C AND 2006-99-C - ORDER NO. 2006-261

APRIL 26, 2006

IN RE: **Docket No. 2005-204-C** – Request for Extended Calling Area from Bluffton/Sun City Hilton Head Area to Hilton Head Island	)	ORDER CONSOLIDATING DOCKETS
AND	)	
Docket No. 2006-99-C – Petition of Bluffton Telephone Company and Hargray Telephone Company to Implement Extended Area Service (EAS)	)	

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the Commission) on the Motion to Hold Proceedings in Abeyance (the Motion) filed by Bluffton Telephone Company (Bluffton) and Hargray Telephone Company (Hargray) (collectively, the Companies). The Companies request that the Commission hold the proceeding in Docket No. 2005-204-C in abeyance pending review and resolution of the Petition filed by the Companies on April 3, 2006, requesting implementation of an Extended Area Service (EAS) plan (Docket No. 2006-99-C).

The earlier Docket was initiated by the filing of a request by a Bluffton customer for local calling from the Bluffton/Sun City Hilton Heard area (Bluffton's Bluffton exchange) to Hilton Head Island (Hargray's Hilton Head exchange). Cost studies were performed, and the Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) has recommended that Bluffton customers be balloted to determine whether they are in favor of EAS calling from

Bluffton to Hilton Head Island at a rate of $5.30, which, pursuant to ORS recommendation, would break out to $4.18 for residential customers and $8.36 for business customers.

The Companies subsequently examined cost data and customer calling patterns to determine whether another extended area calling plan could be ordered and implemented that would offer a simple, comprehensive, long-term solution to the needs and desires of both Bluffton and Hargray customers for expanded calling within the region. On April 3, 2006, the Companies filed an EAS plan which they believe accomplishes these goals. The EAS plan described in the Companies' EAS Petition would replace existing plans and would negate the need for EAS between Bluffton and Hilton Head. Therefore, in order to avoid customer confusion and to maximize the use of the Commission's and the Companies' resources, the Companies believe that it would be in the public interest for the Commission to consider the more comprehensive plan in Docket No. 2006-99-C prior to taking action on the more limited proposal in Docket No. 2005-2004-C to ballot customers with respect to a Bluffton-Hilton Head EAS route. Accordingly, the Companies request that the Commission grant this motion to hold the proceeding in Docket No. 2005-204-C in abeyance pending review and resolution of the EAS Petition filed by the Companies on April 3, 2006, and the subject of Docket No. 2006-99-C.

We have examined this matter, and believe that both dockets, i.e. Docket No. 2005-204-C and 2006-99-C, should be consolidated for consideration by this Commission, and that consolidation of these dockets renders moot the Motion to Hold Proceedings in Abeyance. We believe that consolidation of these Dockets is in the public

interest, and will allow us to examine the issues in the Dockets more efficiently. Accordingly, the Dockets are hereby consolidated for consideration. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further Order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:

Randy Mitchell, Chairman

ATTEST:

G. O'Neal Hamilton, Vice-Chairman

(SEAL)