

Canceling JEA sale may lead to higher rates

Steve Robinson

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Full disclosure: I am a former employee of Florida Power & Light (1991) and receive a fixed pension based on 18 years of service.

However, I have not had any contact with anyone associated with FPL, other than pension correspondence, since 1991.

I would echo the sentiments of Bill Spinner's recent letter, in that we may be throwing away a \$6.42 billion opportunity with the cancellation of the sale of JEA. We also could be locking ourselves into significantly higher electric rates for decades to come.

One cannot escape the fact that JEA's rates and Florida's largest investor-owned utility's rates are heading in opposite directions.

JEA's 1,000 kilowatt-hour rate stands at \$111.76, while the rate for FPL is at \$103.07, according to JEA's Quarterly Rate Survey.

While FPL recently announced a 2020 rate reduction of \$3.86, JEA's customers are facing a double-digit rate increase, estimated at \$16 to \$17 per 1,000 kilowatt hours, possibly coming as early as 2021 or 2022, as the Vogtle nuclear plants come online.

Certainly, a portion of the \$6.42 billion sale proceeds could have gone a long way toward meeting this obligation, keeping it from impacting our electric rates.

FPL as the apparent high bidder currently has 18 major solar power plant facilities statewide with more planned at essentially a zero fuel cost.

In addition, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission recently authorized a second 20-year license renewal for each of FPL's Turkey Point nuclear units, allowing continued electricity generation with cheaper nuclear fuel into 2052 and 2053.

FPL's rates have been on the decline since 2006 and the downward trend is likely to continue.

So, FPL's 1,000 KWH rate for 2020 will be below \$100, while JEA's post Vogtle charge could reach the upper \$120's.

Higher electric rates mean that many families living paycheck-to-paycheck will struggle even more to pay their electric bills.

And the next future large employer might decide to locate in a neighboring county to take advantage of lower electric rates.

Like Spinner, I would have liked to have seen more independent analyses of these issues before the sale was canceled.

Steve Robinson lives in Arlington.