



August 12, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Sherri L. Golden, Secretary
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 1st Floor
P.O. Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

RE: In the Matter of the Establishment of a Universal Service Fund Pursuant to
Section 12 of the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act of 1999.
BPU Docket No. EX00020091

In the Matter of the Petition of New Jersey Natural Gas Company 2024/2025
Annual Compliance Filing for the Universal Service Fund Program Factor within
the Societal Benefits Charge Rate
BPU Docket No. ER24070486

Dear Secretary Golden:

On behalf of New Jersey Natural Gas Company (“NJNG” or “the Company”),
attached please find the following documents in reference to the Virtual Public
Hearings in the above-captioned matter.

- Notice of Public Hearings
- Notice of Public Hearings to County and Municipal Clerks
- Affidavit and Proofs of Publication of the Notice of Public Hearings
in Asbury Park Press and Daily Record newspapers

In accordance with the Order issued by the Board in connection with I/M/O the
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities’ Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic for a
Temporary Waiver of Requirements for Certain Non-Essential Obligations, BPU
Docket No. EO20030254, Order dated March 19, 2020, this document is being
electronically filed. No paper copies will follow.

Please feel free to contact me at adembia@njng.com if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Andrew K. Dembia'.

Andrew K. Dembia
Regulatory Affairs Counsel

AKD:ss
Encl.
c: Service List

In the Matter of the Establishment of a Universal Service Fund
Pursuant to Section 12 of the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act of 1999
Docket Nos. EX00020091 and ER24070486

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In the Matter of the Establishment of a Universal Service Fund
Pursuant to Section 12 of the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act of 1999
Docket Nos. EX00020091 and ER24070486

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In the Matter of the Establishment of a Universal Service Fund
Pursuant to Section 12 of the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act of 1999
Docket Nos. EX00020091 and ER24070486

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In the Matter of the Establishment of a Universal Service Fund
Pursuant to Section 12 of the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act of 1999
Docket Nos. EX00020091 and ER24070486

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In the Matter of the Establishment of a Universal Service Fund
Pursuant to Section 12 of the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act of 1999
Docket Nos. EX00020091 and ER24070486

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July 19, 2024

Via Electronic Mail

To: The Office of the County Clerk, Municipal Clerk and County Administrator

RE: In the Matter of the Establishment of a Universal Service Fund Pursuant to Section 12 of the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act of 1999.
BPU Docket No. EX00020091

In the Matter of the Petition of New Jersey Natural Gas Company 2024/2025 Annual Compliance Filing for the Universal Service Fund Program Factor within the Societal Benefits Charge Rate
BPU Docket No. ER24070486

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-2-21 and 48:2-21.1, New Jersey Natural Gas Company (the “Company” or “NJNG”) made a compliance filing on June 28, 2024 with the Board requesting authority to implement an increase related to the statewide USF/Lifeline program component of the SBC, as described below, to be effective on October 1, 2024 (“Filing”). The current after-tax USF/Lifeline program charge for natural gas customers is \$0.0177 per therm. Based on the Filing, the proposed USF component would increase by \$0.0101 per therm and the proposed Lifeline component would decrease by \$0.0002 per therm. The proposed after-tax USF/Lifeline program charge would increase to \$0.0276 to recover approximately \$92.7 million for the statewide natural gas USF program and \$25.3 million for the Lifeline program. The above request will not result in any profit to the Company. The revenues received under the proposed USF/Lifeline charge are designed to recover only costs for the USF and Lifeline programs and are remitted to the State by the Company. Actual program costs will be reconciled with the revenues received through the USF/Lifeline program charge in the next annual filing scheduled to be made no later than July 1, 2025. Copies of NJNG’s Filing can be reviewed on the Company’s website, www.njng.com/regulatory in the “Filings & Updates” subsection of the “Regulatory Info.”

Please be further advised that the Company hereby serves upon you the attached Notice of Public Hearings in the above referenced matter. The virtual public hearings are scheduled for August 19, 2024 at 4:30 P.M. and 5:30 P.M. with the following Log-In instructions.

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Join by holding down control button and clicking on below link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2458136397?pwd=VUJpK1V0aDYxZDIIZUIwaElOWDFRZz09>

Meeting ID: 245 813 6397

Dial-In Phone Number: 1-646-876-9923

Access Code: 819208

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Andrew K. Dembia'.

Andrew K. Dembia, Esq.
Regulatory Affairs Counsel

AKD:ss
Attachments

NEW JERSEY NATURAL GAS COMPANY
NOTICE OF FILING AND PUBLIC HEARING

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND PURSUANT TO SECTION 12 OF THE ELECTRIC DISCOUNT AND ENERGY COMPETITION ACT OF 1999
BPU DOCKET NO. EX00020091

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF NEW JERSEY NATURAL GAS COMPANY 2024/2025 ANNUAL COMPLIANCE FILING FOR THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND PROGRAM FACTOR WITHIN THE SOCIETAL BENEFITS CHARGE RATE
BPU DOCKET NO. ER24070486

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that, pursuant to the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act, N.J.S.A. 48:3-49, et seq., the Universal Service Fund ("USF") program was established by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (the "Board"), to provide funds to assist qualifying low-income individuals in paying their energy bills. Pursuant to Board Orders dated April 30, 2003, July 16, 2003, and June 22, 2005, the State's electric and gas public utilities' Societal Benefits Charge ("SBC") includes recovery of funding for the USF program through uniform statewide rates. The SBC also includes funding for the Lifeline Program, which provides assistance with heating costs to qualifying elderly and disabled persons and incorporates funds for the Work First New Jersey program.

The State of New Jersey's Department of Community Affairs is the Administrator of the USF Program, and the New Jersey Department of Human Services is the Administrator of the Lifeline programs and authorizes the disbursement of benefits to eligible customers in the respective programs.

On June 28, 2024, New Jersey Natural Gas Company ("NJNG" or the "Company") made a compliance filing with the Board requesting authority to implement an increase related to the statewide USF/Lifeline program component of the SBC, as described below, to be effective on October 1, 2024 ("Filing"). The current after-tax USF/Lifeline program charge for natural gas customers is \$0.0177 per therm. Based on the Filing, the proposed USF component would increase by \$0.0101 per therm and the proposed Lifeline component would decrease by \$0.0002 per therm. The proposed after-tax USF/Lifeline program charge would increase to \$0.0276 to recover approximately \$92.7 million for the statewide natural gas USF program and \$25.3 million for the Lifeline program. The above request will not result in any profit to the Company. The revenues received under the proposed USF/Lifeline charge are designed to recover only costs for the USF and Lifeline programs and are remitted to the State by the Company. Actual program costs will be reconciled with the revenues received through the USF/Lifeline program charge in the next annual filing scheduled to be made no later than July 1, 2025. Copies of NJNG's Filing can be reviewed on the Company's website, www.njng.com/regulatory in the "Filings & Updates" subsection of the "Regulatory Info."

The proposed statewide charges for natural gas customers are as follows:

Universal Service/Lifeline Fund Components of Societal Benefits Charge				
	Present	Present (Incl. Sales and Use Tax)	Proposed	Proposed (Incl. Sales and Use Tax)
USF- per therm	\$0.0108	\$0.0115	\$0.0203	\$0.0216
Lifeline- per therm	\$0.0058	\$0.0062	\$0.0056	\$0.0060
Total USF/Lifeline	\$0.0166	\$0.0177	\$0.0259	\$0.0276

If approved by the Board, the impact of the proposed changes in the USF/Lifeline Charge on typical natural gas bills is illustrated below:

Customer Type	Therm Level	Rates		Increase	
		Bill as of June 1, 2024	Proposed Bill as of October 1, 2024	Amount	Percent
Residential Heat Sales	100	\$150.04	\$151.03	\$0.99	0.7%
Residential Non-Heat Sales	25	\$44.43	\$44.68	\$0.25	0.6%
General Service Small	100	\$170.13	\$171.12	\$0.99	0.6%
General Service Large	1200	\$1,675.16	\$1,687.04	\$11.88	0.7%

Based on this Filing, a typical residential heat natural gas customer using 100 therms per month would see an increase in their monthly bill from \$150.04 to \$151.03, or \$0.99 or approximately 0.7 percent.

The Board has the statutory authority to establish the USF and Lifeline charges at levels it finds just and reasonable. Therefore, the Board may establish the USF and Lifeline charges at levels other than those proposed by NJNG.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that virtual public hearings will be held on the following date and times so that members of the public may present their views on the Filing:

VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

Date: August 19, 2024

Hearing Times: 4:30 pm and 5:30 pm

LOCATION: Zoom Virtual Webinar

Join: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2458136397?pwd=VUJpK1V0aDYxZDZlZUlwaiEwQWFRZz09>

Meeting ID: 245 813 6397

Passcode: 819208

Dial-In Number: +1 646 876 9923

Representatives of the Company, Board's Staff and the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel will participate in the virtual public hearings.

Members of the public are invited to participate and express their views on the Petition by utilizing the Zoom Virtual Webinar link or the Dial-In Number set forth above. All comments will become part of the final record in this proceeding to be considered by the Board. In order to encourage full participation in this opportunity for public comment, please submit any requests for accommodations, such as interpreters, or listening assistance, 48 hours prior to the above hearing to the Board Secretary at board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov.

The Board is also accepting written and electronic comments. Comments may be submitted directly to the specific docket number listed above using the "Post Comments" button on the Board's Public Document Search tool at <https://publicaccess.bpu.state.nj.us/>. Comments are considered public documents for purposes of the State's Open Public Records Act. Only documents that are intended to be public should be submitted using the "Post Comments" button on the Board's Public Document Search tool. Any confidential information should be submitted in accordance with the procedures set forth in N.J.A.C. 14:1-12.3. In addition to hard copy submissions, confidential information may also be filed electronically via the Board's e-filing system or by email to the Secretary of the Board, Sherri L. Golden. Please include "Confidential Information" in the subject line of any email. Instructions for confidential e-filing are found on the Board's webpage at <https://www.nj.gov/bpu/agenda/efiling/>.

Emailed and/or written comments may also be submitted to:

Sherri L. Golden, Secretary of the Board

44 South Clinton Ave., 1st Floor

PO Box 350

Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Phone: 609-292-1599

Email: board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov

New Jersey Natural Gas Company
Andrew K. Dembia, Esq.


AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

Order Number : 10387448

STATE OF WISCONSIN
Brown County

Of the **Asbury Park Press**, a newspaper printed in Freehold, New Jersey and published in Neptune, in State of New Jersey and Monmouth/Ocean Counties, and of general circulation in Monmouth/Ocean Counties, who being duly sworn, depose and saith that the advertisement of which the annexed is a true copy, has been published in said newspaper in the issue:

07/19/2024



Legal Clerk



Notary Public State of Wisconsin County of Brown

4-6-27

My commission expires

DENISE ROBERTS
Notary Public
State of Wisconsin

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

Order Number : 10387532

STATE OF WISCONSIN
Brown County

Of the **Daily Record**, a newspaper printed in Freehold, New Jersey and published in Parsippany, in State of New Jersey and Morris County, and of general circulation in Morris County, who being duly sworn, deposeth and saith that the advertisement of which the annexed is a true copy, has been published in said newspaper in the issue:

07/19/2024



Legal Clerk



Notary Public State of Wisconsin County of Brown

4-6-27

My commission expires

DENISE ROBERTS
Notary Public
State of Wisconsin

Brick rec director charged with theft and forgery

Jenna Calderón

Asbury Park Press

USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

TOMS RIVER — The Brick Township director of recreation has been charged after using funds for himself instead of depositing them into township accounts, Ocean County Prosecutor Bradley D. Billhimer and Brick Township Police Chief David Forrester announced Thursday.

Daniel Santaniello, 46, of Brick, was charged with theft and uttering a forged instrument related to his position as di-

rector of recreation for the township, authorities said.

These charges are the result of a joint investigation. As part of his job, Santaniello issued permits to private organizations to use the township's recreational facilities, including the township's various softball fields, Billhimer said. Private organizations that wanted to use the fields were charged fees.

The investigation revealed that Santaniello required certain organizations wishing to use the township's fields to pay him directly in cash, rather than issuing checks to the township, the prose-

cutor said. Instead of depositing the cash into the township's accounts, Santaniello kept the money for himself. In order to conceal his theft, he provided the private organizations who paid him in cash with fraudulent permits.

On July 17, Santaniello was taken into custody at his residence without incident, Billhimer said. He was processed and served with the charges via summons pending an upcoming first appearance in Ocean County Superior Court. The investigation remains active and ongoing.

Billhimer said anyone with addition-

al information concerning Santaniello's conduct should contact Detective Joseph Mitchell of the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office Economic Crime Squad at (732) 929-2027, extension 3532, or Lieutenant Paul Catalina of the Brick Township Police Department at (732) 262-1100.

Jenna Calderón covers breaking news and cold cases in Monmouth and Ocean counties. Before coming to the Press, she covered The Queen City for Cincinnati Magazine in Ohio. Contact her at 330-590-3903; jcalderon@gannett.com

Evidence

Continued from Page 3A

the search in the first place.

The search yielded the body of Gonzales, the ex-girlfriend of Vilcatoma-Correjo, 28, of Edison.

Police found the corpse in a plastic bag underneath piles of clothing and other bags in the back seat of the defendant's silver Honda Accord. It was bloodied and missing an eye, which police later found in the car.

In issuing his ruling, the judge said he took into consideration the totality of the circumstances during what he described as "a fast-breaking and chaotic situation."

He said that included the testimony last month of the three officers involved in the search, which he deemed credible, as well as video from the body-worn cameras of two of them. The third officer's camera wasn't working, he noted.

Despite a language barrier with a Spanish-speaking 911 caller, the officers believed the caller was reporting a medical emergency, the judge noted.

When they reported to the location, they were met by four Spanish-speaking people in a car who were "in a state of panic and distress," the judge said.

They were crying and frantic, Butehorn said.

Despite the language barrier, "It was clear they were trying to get help," he said.

However, the officers testified the person they were seeking medical help for wasn't there.

A woman in the car showed one of the officers a location-services tracking application on her phone indicating the person they were looking for was in the area of East Avenue.

Patrolman Joseph LaBella testified he followed them to the location and saw a Honda Accord swerve and run a stop sign, so he pulled it over, thinking the driver was suffering from a medical episode.



Jordan J. Vilcatoma-Correjo is shown in Superior Court Judge Henry P. Butehorn's courtroom at the Monmouth County in Freehold June 18 during a motion hearing. He is charged with the murder of his ex-girlfriend, Sonia Gonzales, whose body was found in Atlantic Highlands.

THOMAS P. COSTELLO/ASBURY PARK PRESS

But even after it was determined that the driver, Vilcatoma-Correjo, was not in need of medical assistance, the family in the other car continued with their panicked and frantic behavior, the judge noted.

Butehorn said the four people were "crying, yelling, grabbing at their faces" and pointing to the back seat of the defendant's car, in "a clear indication of concern directed at the back seat of the Accord."

At one point, LaBella thought he heard one of the people say, "baby," and peered inside to see if there was an infant car seat there, but didn't see one, the judge noted.

When LaBella said he heard the Spanish word for dog, he said he asked about that, to which one of the family members replied, "No, wife," the judge said.

The four people continued to panic and point to the vehicle, the judge said.

Some of them started jumping up and down, he said.

"The video speaks for itself," Butehorn said. "There was a reasonable belief there could be a person, baby or child in the vehicle."

The officers couldn't dispel that belief by simply looking into the vehicle because it was cluttered with bags, clothing and other items, the judge said.

"They were stacked high enough that they could be covering a person or a baby," Butehorn said.

One of the officers reached into the back seat and removed a duffel bag, "but the commotion continued as family members continued to point to the rear seat," the judge said.

At that point, Lt. Michael Zedonyi testified he touched one of the plastic bags in the back seat and felt what he believed to be a body inside it.

That there was no response from the person inside indicated even more the need for emergency medical assistance, the judge said.

But, when paramedics arrived on scene, they opened the plastic bag and determined the person inside was already deceased, he said.

With that, the emergency responders "stopped all further intrusion into the vehicle," roped it off as a crime scene and sought a warrant to search the car further, the judge said.

Defense attorney Carlos Diaz-Cobo argued at the hearing on June 18 that because the language barrier prevented the police officers from understanding

what the frantic family was trying to tell them, they should have waited for a Spanish-speaking officer to arrive on scene.

Butehorn noted, however, that the Atlantic Highlands Police Department's Spanish-speaking officer was not on duty at that time, and the department had to reach out to police in neighboring Middletown to see if they could send a Spanish-speaking officer.

"There could not be any knowledge of when or even if such an officer would be available," Butehorn said. "For the Atlantic Highlands officers to stop and wait for what would be an unknown period of time until a Spanish-speaking officer arrived would be something contrary to what the situation indicated and what was required — immediate action to find and address that medical emergency."

"The overall circumstances would lead any reasonable person to believe there was some type of emergency involving another person and that emergency was in the rear seat of the defendant's vehicle," the judge said.

Vilcatoma-Correjo has been held without bail at the Monmouth County Jail since his arrest that day.

Additional pre-trial hearings in the case are expected later this month.

Kathleen Hopkins, a reporter in New Jersey since 1985, covers crime, court cases, legal issues and just about every major murder trial to hit Monmouth and Ocean counties. Contact her at khopkins@app.com.

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**NEW JERSEY NATURAL GAS COMPANY
NOTICE OF FILING AND PUBLIC HEARING**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND PURSUANT TO SECTION 12 OF THE ELECTRIC DISCOUNT AND ENERGY COMPETITION ACT OF 1999
BPU DOCKET NO. EX00020091**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF NEW JERSEY NATURAL GAS COMPANY 2024/2025 ANNUAL COMPLIANCE FILING FOR THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND PROGRAM FACTOR WITHIN THE SOCIETAL BENEFITS CHARGE RATE
BPU DOCKET NO. ER24070486**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that, pursuant to the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act, N.J.S.A. 48:3-49, et seq., the Universal Service Fund ("USF") program was established by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (the "Board"), to provide funds to assist qualifying low-income individuals in paying their energy bills. Pursuant to Board Orders dated April 30, 2003, July 16, 2003, and June 22, 2005, the State's electric and gas public utilities' Societal Benefits Charge ("SBC") includes recovery of funding for the USF program through uniform statewide rates. The SBC also includes funding for the Lifeline Program, which provides assistance with heating costs to qualifying elderly and disabled persons and incorporates funds for the Work First New Jersey program.

The State of New Jersey's Department of Community Affairs is the Administrator of the USF Program, and the New Jersey Department of Human Services is the Administrator of the Lifeline programs and authorizes the disbursement of benefits to eligible customers in the respective programs.

On June 28, 2024, New Jersey Natural Gas Company ("NJNG" or the "Company") made a compliance filing with the Board requesting authority to implement an increase related to the statewide USF/Lifeline program component of the SBC, as described below, to be effective on October 1, 2024 ("Filing"). The current after-tax USF/Lifeline program charge for natural gas customers is \$0.0177 per therm. Based on the Filing, the proposed USF component would increase by \$0.0101 per therm and the proposed Lifeline component would decrease by \$0.0002 per therm. The proposed after-tax USF/Lifeline program charge would increase to \$0.0276 to recover approximately \$92.7 million for the statewide natural gas USF program and \$25.3 million for the Lifeline program. The above request will not result in any profit to the Company. The revenues received under the proposed USF/Lifeline charge are designed to recover only costs for the USF and Lifeline programs and are remitted to the State by the Company. Actual program costs will be reconciled with the revenues received through the USF/Lifeline program charge in the next annual filing scheduled to be made no later than July 1, 2025. Copies of NJNG's Filing can be reviewed on the Company's website, www.njng.com/regulatory in the "Filings & Updates" subsection of the "Regulatory Info."

The proposed statewide charges for natural gas customers are as follows:

Universal Service/Lifeline Fund Components of Societal Benefits Charge				
	Present	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed
	(Incl. Sales and Use Tax)	(Incl. Sales and Use Tax)	(Incl. Sales and Use Tax)	(Incl. Sales and Use Tax)
USF- per therm	\$0.0108	\$0.0115	\$0.0203	\$0.0216
Lifeline- per therm	\$0.0058	\$0.0062	\$0.0056	\$0.0060
Total USF/Lifeline	\$0.0166	\$0.0177	\$0.0259	\$0.0276

If approved by the Board, the impact of the proposed changes in the USF/Lifeline Charge on typical natural gas bills is illustrated below:

Customer Type	Therm Level	Rates		Increase	
		Bill as of June 1, 2024	Proposed Bill as of October 1, 2024	Amount	Percent
Residential Heat Sales	100	\$150.04	\$151.03	\$0.99	0.7%
Residential Non-Heat Sales	25	\$44.43	\$44.68	\$0.25	0.6%
General Service Small	100	\$170.13	\$171.12	\$0.99	0.6%
General Service Large	1200	\$1,675.16	\$1,687.04	\$11.88	0.7%

Based on this Filing, a typical residential heat natural gas customer using 100 therms per month would see an increase in their monthly bill from \$150.04 to \$151.03, or \$0.99 or approximately 0.7 percent.

The Board has the statutory authority to establish the USF and Lifeline charges at levels it finds just and reasonable. Therefore, the Board may establish the USF and Lifeline charges at levels other than those proposed by NJNG.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that virtual public hearings will be held on the following date and times so that members of the public may present their views on the Filing:

VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARINGS
Date: August 19, 2024
Hearing Times: 4:30 pm and 5:30 pm

LOCATION: Zoom Virtual Webinar
Join: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2458136397?pwd=VlUjK1V0aDYxZDZlUWwEQU9DZFRzO9>
Meeting ID: 245 813 6397
Passcode: 819208
Dial-In Number: +1 646 876 9923

Representatives of the Company, Board's Staff and the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel will participate in the virtual public hearings.

Members of the public are invited to participate and express their views on the Petition by utilizing the Zoom Virtual Webinar link or the Dial-In Number set forth above. All comments will become part of the final record in this proceeding to be considered by the Board. In order to encourage full participation in this opportunity for public comment, please submit any requests for accommodations, such as interpreters, or listening assistance, 48 hours prior to the above hearing to the Board Secretary at board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov.

The Board is also accepting written and electronic comments. Comments may be submitted directly to the specific docket number listed above using the "Post Comments" button on the Board's Public Document Search tool at <https://publicaccess.bpu.state.nj.us/>. Comments are considered public documents for purposes of the State's Open Public Records Act. Only documents that are intended to be public should be submitted using the "Post Comments" button on the Board's Public Document Search tool. Any confidential information should be submitted in accordance with the procedures set forth in N.J.A.C. 14:1-12.3. In addition to hard copy submissions, confidential information may also be filed electronically via the Board's e-filing system or by email to the Secretary of the Board, Sherri L. Golden. Please include "Confidential Information" in the subject line of any email. Instructions for confidential e-filing are found on the Board's webpage at <https://www.nj.gov/bpu/agenda/efiling/>.

Emailed and/or written comments may also be submitted to:
Sherri L. Golden, Secretary of the Board
44 South Clinton Ave., 1st Floor
PO Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350
Phone: 609-292-1599
Email: board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov

**New Jersey Natural Gas Company
Andrew K. Dembla, Esq.**

Officials offer more insight on shooter

John Bacon
USA TODAY

The gunman who shot Donald Trump wrote an ominous warning on a gaming platform days before the shooting rampage that left one man dead and authorities struggling to determine a motive for the carnage.

Secret Service and FBI officials told U.S. senators during a briefing Wednesday that Matthew Thomas Crooks posted on Steam that “July 13 will be my premiere, watch as it unfolds,” multiple media outlets including Fox News and the Daily Mail reported.

Steam is a popular platform where millions of gamers communicate and gain access to 30,000 games, according to the website. Crooks, who had an associates degree in engineering, also spent time on the gaming platform Discord, but the company said it found no evidence Crooks used the platform to “plan this incident, promote violence, or discuss his political views.”

Meanwhile, a review of Crooks’ phone by the Federal Bureau of Investigation found he had searched for images of both President Joe Biden and Trump, as well as other famous figures, in the days before the shooting, the New York Times reported on Wednesday, citing U.S. lawmakers briefed on the law enforcement investigation. Other search targets included the FBI director, Christopher Wray; Attorney General Merrick Garland; and a member of the British royal family, according to two officials who spoke to the Times on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter publicly.

Fox News said investigators reviewing Crooks’ laptop also found searches for Trump, Biden, when is the DNC convention and the July 13 Trump rally.

Crooks also looked up “major depressive disorder” on his phone, the Times said.

Trump was speaking Saturday – July 13 – before throngs of supporters at the Butler Farm Show grounds in Pennsylvania when Crooks opened fire from the roof of a nearby building. Trump, his face bloodied, was hustled off the



Authorities say Thomas Crooks searched pictures of well-known political figures before Saturday’s shooting at a Donald Trump rally in Butler, Pa. SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

stage by Secret Service personnel. Trump supporter Corey Comperatore, 50, was killed and two other rallygoers were critically wounded before a sniper fatally shot the gunman, identified as Crooks.

A group of U.S. senators confronted and then chased Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle at the convention on Wednesday, demanding answers about the shooting.

Cheatle told the senators that she was “happy to answer questions,” but would “do it in an appropriate format.”

Butler Township Manager Tom Knights issued a statement Wednesday saying its police officers were on traffic control duty when several of them were sent to respond to a call regarding a suspicious man near the AGR building, in the general area of the rally.

Knights’ statement confirmed earlier reports that one of the officers was hoisted to the building’s roof by his partner and was holding to its edge when he made eye contact with the shooter, who pointed his rifle at him. The officer dropped down to safety and promptly reported the gunman’s location shortly before Crooks began firing.

Contributing: Tom Vanden Brook, Josh Meyer, Aysha Bagchi, Karissa Waddick and Savannah Kuchar, USA TODAY



President Joe Biden has flown to his home in Rehoboth, Del., where he will continue to work. MANDI WRIGHT/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Biden tests positive for COVID, will self-isolate

Amaris Encinas
USA TODAY

President Joe Biden tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday but will continue to work, the White House said – a development that comes as Biden is facing increasing pressure to drop his reelection effort.

“He is vaccinated and boosted, and he is experiencing mild symptoms,” according to a statement from press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

Biden, 81, took to X to confirm the news, writing that he is “feeling good” and wanted to “thank everyone for the well wishes.”

“I will be isolating as I recover, and during this time I will continue to work to get the job done for the American people,” the post says.

He has returned to his home in Rehoboth, Delaware, where he will self-isolate and continue to fully carry out all his duties. The White House said it will continue to provide updates on Biden’s status.

Biden traveled Tuesday to Las Vegas, where he spoke at the NAACP National Convention. The White House said it learned of Biden’s illness the day after.

Biden’s doctor, Kevin O’Connor, said the president was dealing with “upper respiratory symptoms,” including a runny nose, cough and fatigue.

“He felt okay for his first event of the day, but given that he was not feeling better, point of care testing for COVID-19 was conducted, and the results were positive for the COVID-19 virus,” said a statement from O’Connor.

Biden’s symptoms are mild, and his respiratory rate, temperature and pulse oximetry are all within the normal level, O’Connor said, adding that the

president had received his first dose of antiviral medication Paxlovid.

Biden has now tested positive for COVID-19 three times, reporting “mild symptoms” each time, according to prior USA TODAY reports.

In July 2022, he tested positive twice within the span of nine days – July 21 and July 30 – with O’Connor attributing the cause of the second positive result as a “virus rebound,” which sometimes occurs in patients treated with Paxlovid.

Older adults face the “highest risk” for severe illness from COVID-19; more than 81% of deaths occur in people over age 65, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Deaths in those over age 65 are 97 times higher than among those ages 18-29, according to the CDC.

The CDC reported recently that “COVID-19 levels have increased in most states” based on wastewater sample data.

Wastewater viral activity level for COVID-19 is “high” and “very high” in 26 states across the country, with the West and South having shown the largest increase of COVID-19 levels, according to the agency.

“More than 70% of the illnesses stem from the highly contagious JN.1 strain, which grew more prevalent over the winter. These COVID-19 variants are known as FLiRT variants,” the CDC previously told USA TODAY.

The prevalence of JN.1 has steadily declined since May, while cases of other variants, including KP.3 and KP.2, have increased. For the two weeks from June 22 to July 6, the leading variant in the country was KP.3, accounting for 31.3% of infections, according to a previous USA TODAY report.

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**NEW JERSEY NATURAL GAS COMPANY
NOTICE OF FILING AND PUBLIC HEARING**

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BPU DOCKET NO. EX00020091

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Join: <https://usjgweb.zoom.us/j/2458136397?pwd=VUJkMTV0aDZlZUlvvaEiQWdFRzZ09>
Meeting ID: 245 813 6397
Passcode: 819208
Dial-In Number: +1 646 876 9923

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Emailed and/or written comments may also be submitted to:
Sherri L. Golden, Secretary of the Board
44 South Clinton Ave., 1st Floor
PO Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350
Phone: 609-292-1599
Email: board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov

**New Jersey Natural Gas Company
Andrew K. Dembia, Esq.**