

In the Matter of:

SPIRE MISSOURI INC. ' s d/b/a SPIRE REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY, etc.

GR-2021-0108, VOL. IV

June 21, 2021



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BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

STATE OF MISSOURI

* * * * *

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Public Hearing

June 21, 2021

Jefferson City, Missouri

WebEx

Volume 4

In The Matter of Spire)
Missouri Inc.'s d/b/a)
Spire Request for)
Authority to Implement a) File No. GR-2021-0108
General Rate Increase for)
Natural Gas Service)
Provided in the Company's)
Missouri Service Areas)

CHARLE HATCHER:
Presiding REGULATORY LAW JUDGE
RYAN A. SILVEY, CHAIRMAN

JASON R. HOLSMAN
SCOTT T. RUPP
GLEN KOLKMEYER
COMMISSIONERS

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1 PROCEEDINGS 6:44 p.m.

2 JUDGE HATCHER: Let's go on the record.
3 first, I would ask that everyone please
4 mute themselves unless speaking. That will cut down
5 on the noise level and it will also help reduce
6 audio feedback.

7 Today is June 21st, 2021. The Missouri
8 Public Service Commission has set this time for a
9 local public hearing in Case Number GR-2021-0108,
10 which is captioned as: In The Matter of Spire
11 Missouri, Inc., d/b/a Spire's Request For Authority
12 to Implement a General Rate Increase for Natural Gas
13 Service Provided in the Company's Missouri Service
14 Areas. The Commission has scheduled this local
15 public hearing to give members of the public a
16 chance to comment about Spire's application.

17 The Missouri Public Service Commission
18 regulates the charges by public utility companies in
19 Missouri to insure that those rates are just and
20 reasonable. The Commission also regulates the
21 quality of service and safety of the operations of
22 public utilities.

23 The Commission is made up of five
24 commissioners. The Commissioners are appointed by
25 the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The

1 commissioners employee a staff of engineers,
2 accountants, attorneys, financial analysts, and
3 other specialists in the field of utility
4 regulation.

5 My name is Charles Hatcher. I'm the
6 Regulatory Law Judge and will preside over this
7 hearing. With me tonight, as I mentioned earlier,
8 are Chairman Ryan Silvey, Commissioner Rupp,
9 Commissioner Coleman, Commissioner Holsman, and
10 Commissioner Kolkmeyer.

11 This is an official hearing of the
12 Missouri Public Service Commission, and the
13 statements and testimony of witnesses will be
14 recorded by the court reporter and must be given
15 under oath.

16 I'll begin by asking counsel to enter
17 their appearance for the record. We do have quite a
18 few counsel. I don't expect all of them to be in
19 attendance tonight, but we do have a list to go
20 through. This is going to take just a minute.

21 First, for Spire? .

22 MR. MATT APPLINGTON: Good evening, Judge
23 Hatcher. Matt Applington, counsel for Spire
24 Missouri 700 Market Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

25 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Applington.

1 And for Commission staff.

2 MR. BOB BERLIN: Thank you, Judge.

3 Appearing on behalf of the staff of the Missouri
4 Public Service Commission is Bob Berlin at 200
5 Madison Street, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

6 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Berlin.

7 And Mr. Clizer?

8 MR. DON CLIZER: Don Clizer appearing on
9 behalf of the Missouri Office of the Public Counsel.
10 Business address Suite 650, 200 Madison Street, PO
11 Box 223, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

12 Thank you.

13 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Clizer.

14 And Midwest Energy Consumer's Group.

15 Let the record reflect we do not have
16 counsel for that entity.

17 Consumers Counsel of Missouri?

18 Let the record note no one answered.

19 Missouri Industrial Energy Consumers?

20 No answer.

21 National Housing Trust?

22 No answer.

23 Renew Missouri?

24 No answer.

25 Legal Services of Eastern Missouri?

1 No answer.

2 Missouri School Boards Association?

3 And Vicinity Energy Kansas City?

4 Okay. And for everyone's information,
5 that's not unusual.

6 MR. LEWIS MILLS: Judge, can you hear me?

7 JUDGE HATCHER: These parties -- we need
8 to --

9 MR. LEWIS MILLS: I'm sorry. Judge, this
10 is Lewis Mills on behalf of Vicinity Energy.

11 JUDGE HATCHER: Oh, thank you, Mr. Mills.
12 I appreciate that.

13 MR. LEWIS MILLS: I was having a little
14 trouble with my microphone.

15 My business address is 221 Bolivar Street,
16 Suite 101, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101.

17 Thank you.

18 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, sir. I
19 apologize.

20 And for everyone's information, that's not
21 unusual. Those parties are intervenors, and I just
22 want to make sure that we offer them the opportunity
23 to announce that they are here and participating.

24 The process that we're going to use
25 tonight would be to call the names that I have

1 listed on the sign up sheet in the order that they
2 appear. When I call your name, please go ahead and
3 unmute and then state your name. I will place you
4 under oath. And then I will ask you to, again,
5 state and spell your name. And that will be for the
6 court reporter. And then please offer your comments
7 to the commission. Right now we do not have a long
8 list of witnesses for this evening.

9 And what I will do is for anyone who is
10 not signed up, I will be calling for any witnesses
11 that have not yet signed up at the end of our
12 preregistered witnesses.

13 So, first, our first witness I have is
14 Habte Berhe. And I apologize for my pronunciation.
15 The last name is spelled B-E-R-H-E and the first
16 name is H-A-B-T-E.

17 Okay. We'll come back to that person.
18 They might still be unmuting.

19 Roxanne Putney? Last name is spelled
20 P-U-T-N-E-Y.

21 Okay. That is all of the witnesses that I
22 have registered.

23 Are there any persons in the audience who
24 would like to give comments to the Missouri Public
25 Service Commissioners?

1 I do see we have a caller that just
2 joined. And I have called our first two witnesses,
3 just for everyone's update.

4 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Yes.

5 JUDGE HATCHER: I called Habte --
6 Yes. Who's this?

7 MS. PEGGY NELSON: I -- I didn't know how
8 to register, so I hope you're speaking to me.

9 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes.

10 MS. PEGGY NELSON: So I would like to
11 speak, if I may.

12 JUDGE HATCHER: Absolutely. Please, if
13 you could give me your name first. And then I'm
14 going to swear you in and then ask you to state your
15 name. So if you could give me your name, ma'am?

16 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Peggy Nelson. And it's
17 spelled Peggy P-E-G-G-Y. Nelson N-E-L-S-O-N.

18 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Miss Nelson.

19 PEGGY NELSON,
20 having been first duly sworn, testified:

21 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Yes, I do.

22 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. And,
23 Miss Nelson, please go ahead with your comments to
24 the Commissioners.

25 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Okay. Usually

1 inflation is at 5 percent a year, and what they're
2 wanting is 5.6, which exceeds that. These people
3 who are getting social security are getting only a
4 2.5, I think, percent increase yearly. So that's
5 like running them down into the ground even further.

6 And somebody also asking for 7. --
7 Scott -- rate I believe? Or Scott Lifell or
8 Lifall -- (Phonetic) wanted a return of 7.2 percent.
9 That's outrageously high. We're just coming out of
10 COVID. Everything has taken inflationary jumps on
11 everything. Spire was not shut down. They got my
12 money continuously. So adding 65 million and
13 37 million is excessive, in my opinion.

14 So because of these jumps in what they
15 want, I don't think they should have an increase
16 because they have a monopoly. A more reasonable
17 rate of 2 percent which would be normal for working
18 adults exempting seniors who are on a fixed income,
19 or people who no longer can work like disabled
20 people should be exempt from having any kind of an
21 increase if you think it's something they deserve,
22 which I think it's too high already.

23 They do have profit. They're not hurting
24 to where they just can't go on. They have profit.
25 So an additional case by case individuals who just

1 can't come up with more money, I think they should
2 be exempt from an increase too.

3 So -- but please, don't allow them to
4 increase our rates because I think it's too
5 excessive.

6 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Miss Nelson.

7 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Thank you.

8 JUDGE HATCHER: And can you tell me what
9 part of Spire service area you receive service in?

10 MS. PEGGY NELSON: I'm in St. Louis
11 County.

12 JUDGE HATCHER: Okay. Thank you, ma'am.

13 MS. PEGGY NELSON: I didn't want -- okay.
14 Go ahead.

15 JUDGE HATCHER: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

16 MS. PEGGY NELSON: I was going to say that
17 I looked, there was a grandfather clause on the
18 47 million for infrastructure improvements? But
19 nine years, that puts it at 2030. So that's, you
20 know, really far in the future that we have to keep
21 paying. I just really don't think everybody should
22 have to pay. Some people can afford, but there are
23 a lot that can't. They're out of work and they're
24 asking for assistance. I'm worried about our
25 economies collapsing as it is because it's so

1 stressed. I don't know where all this stimulus
2 money's coming from.

3 But, you know, it sure did help me. I
4 paid my credit cards off. I paid up my incidentals.
5 And even though I paid them, I'm getting repeat
6 bills from the same thing as if I never paid. I'm
7 receiving bills from 2020 for stuff that was never
8 done. And it's really annoying that this stuff gets
9 done. People have been stealing right and left.

10 We all know that the Black Lives Matter
11 and Me Too stuff has been in the media a lot. But
12 the stealing has got to stop. This is creating a
13 Civil War from everybody that lives here. So to ask
14 us for more money is just putting a bind on
15 everybody. I don't think they should get it.

16 And if they do, if you do approve it, then
17 it should be much less than as high as 7.2 percent.
18 That's way too high. Thank you.

19 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Miss Nelson.

20 Did we have any commissioners who'd like
21 to ask Miss Nelson any questions?

22 CHAIRMAN SILVEY: No questions, Judge.

23 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Not at this time,
24 Judge.

25 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: No questions,

1 Judge.

2 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Thank you for your
3 testimony, ma'am.

4 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Thank you.

5 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Miss Nelson.
6 You are excused. Of course please stay on the line
7 for the rest of the hearing if you'd like.

8 I would like to --

9 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Thanks for having me.

10 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Judge, did you get
11 Commissioner Holsman is on?

12 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, Commissioner. I sure
13 did.

14 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Okay. Perfect.
15 Thank you.

16 JUDGE HATCHER: Not a problem.

17 MS. PEGGY NELSON: There is one more thing
18 I would like to add.

19 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, Miss Nelson. Go
20 ahead.

21 MS. PEGGY NELSON: When we had question --
22 there was a question and answer period prior to the
23 beginning of the testimony as someone was saying
24 don't touch her. I don't think anybody should be
25 bullied and have to give anything up that is really

1 rightfully theirs. There's just way too much
2 stealing going on and bullying. Bullying has got to
3 stop. There are laws against that, and the people
4 need to stand up and stick up for themselves in
5 these cases, just like they need to testify tonight,
6 that not more money be charged for something that
7 was continuously given to a monopoly situation.

8 We don't have another choice for natural
9 gas other than to just not use it at all and replace
10 everything with electric if they want to keep
11 charging.

12 JUDGE HATCHER: Okay. I appreciate your
13 comments, Miss Nelson. Thank you very much.

14 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Thank you.

15 JUDGE HATCHER: Our next witness is Habte
16 Berhe. The last name is spelled B is in boy,
17 E-R-H-E.

18 Okay. That is the only witness I have
19 signed up for tonight. And Miss Nelson has
20 testified. Were there any other witnesses that
21 would like to testify this evening? Otherwise we'll
22 be closing --

23 MR. SHAUGHN DOYEL: Yes, Judge, I'd like
24 to --

25 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes.

1 MR. SHAUGHN DOYEL: Yes, Judge, I'd like
2 to comment if you can hear me.

3 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes. I can hear you just
4 fine. Could you give me your name please?

5 MS. PEGGY NELSON: Yes. My name is Sean
6 Doyel. First name's spelled S-H-A-U-G-H-N. Last
7 name D like David O-Y-E-L. And I live in the city
8 of St. Louis.

9 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Doyel.

10 SHAUGHN DOYEL,
11 having been first duly sworn, testified:

12 MR. SHAUGHN DOYEL: Yes, I do.

13 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, sir. And
14 please go ahead and give your comments to the
15 Commissioners.

16 MR. SHAUGHN DOYEL: Okay. I would like to
17 make a comment really based on timing of the request
18 more than anything else. For this particular
19 company, the request was officially made public
20 almost one month after a previous public statement
21 making the comment of how the board of directors of
22 the company had decided to increase the dividends
23 for the shareholders. And then the following month,
24 the company now asks the customers to pay even more
25 money.

1 Those two things should not ever be that
2 close together. Rewarding your shareholders and
3 then asking your customers to pay more.

4 The second part of my comment, again, goes
5 to timing. We are still in a pandemic. I hope that
6 the commissioners keep that thought in mind. We are
7 not out of the pandemic yet. And consumer prices
8 across the board for everything is increasing. The
9 last thing that Missouri customers need is an
10 additional increase in a utility.

11 With food prices going up, utility grocery
12 prices, lumber prices, commercial prices, retail
13 prices, everything else is going up because of
14 trying to come out of the pandemic. And I
15 understand that. A public utility such as this one
16 is a monopoly. Customers do not have the option to
17 go to a different store for a cheaper price. They
18 have no choices. You pay what Spire says to pay or
19 you don't have a gas utility. It's that simple.

20 My question on timing is for the
21 commissioners. I hope that they do take into
22 consideration the economic impact currently in
23 Missouri -- the fact that we are still in a
24 pandemic; it is not over yet -- and perhaps wait one
25 year. Revisit this rate increase question one year

1 from today.

2 I think with things going in a positive
3 direction, one year's wait will make a huge
4 difference to the point that an increase one year
5 from now will not have the impact on households and
6 businesses that it would have if it were to go into
7 effect this summer as opposed to next summer.

8 That is my comment. Thank you.

9 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Doyel.

10 Do any of our commissioners have a
11 question for Mr. Doyel?

12 CHAIRMAN SILVEY: No questions, Judge.
13 Thank you for your testimony, sir.

14 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: No questions,
15 Judge. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: No questions,
17 Judge. Thank you for your testimony.

18 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you all. Mr .
19 Doyel, you are excused from the proverbial witness
20 stand. You are of course welcome to stick around.
21 The hearing is just about completed. I'll give one
22 more call for any witnesses who would like to speak
23 up.

24 MR. DON CLIZER: Your Honor, Don Clizer
25 with the Missouri Office of Public Counsel.

1 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes.

2 MR. DON CLIZER: I just want to remind
3 anybody who has called into the Webex platform from
4 their phone, that they might be muted from our end
5 and they need to hit Star 6 (*6) in order unmute
6 themselves from the application side.

7 And I would further ask, Judge, if it's
8 within reason, that you might unmute all before
9 polling -- unmute all and poll the call-ins just
10 once to make sure that nobody's been accidentally
11 unable to call in or talk as a result.

12 If that's not too much trouble. I
13 apologize.

14 JUDGE HATCHER: No, you are fine. I
15 appreciate the reminder.

16 Once again, that is Star 6 for any call-in
17 users. If you're on a computer you can just press
18 unmute. And I know that our tech person is taking
19 care of your request on the -- on the tech side.

20 So once again, are there any witnesses who
21 would like to testify before the Public Service
22 Commission?

23 MS. LESLIE MILLER: I would like to make a
24 comment.

25 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes. If you could give me

1 your name, please?

2 MS. LESLIE MILLER: My name is Leslie
3 L-E-S-L-I-E, Miller M-I-L-L-E-R.

4 LESLIE MILLER,
5 having been first duly sworn, testified:

6 MS. LESLIE MILLER: Yes.

7 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. And one
8 question before your comments. Could you tell me
9 what area of Spire service area you receive service
10 in?

11 MS. LESLIE MILLER: I actually am a
12 St. Louis city resident. However, I am calling in
13 on behalf of a nonprofit agency. I'm the senior
14 director of the LIHEAP Program and weatherization
15 for the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis.

16 And I just wanted to speak on a little bit
17 the partnership between Spire and our agency, and
18 what that partnership means to low-income programs
19 that supports the community.

20 JUDGE HATCHER: Yes. Please go ahead.

21 MS. LESLIE MILLER: So with that being
22 said, Spire has been a great partner in helping us
23 to serve the low-income community of St. Louis. The
24 programs that they also support, again,
25 weatherization, the LIHEAP program, in addition to

1 their support through the Dollar Help Program.

2 So I would just like for those
3 partnerships to be recognized and given some credit
4 because they are indeed a great partner in helping
5 us meet the needs of the community that we serve.

6 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.

7 Are there any questions for Mrs. Miller?

8 Any commissioners have questions for
9 Miss Miller?

10 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Judge,
11 Commissioner Kolkmeier. I don't have a question. I
12 just have a comment, that I want to commend
13 Miss Miller for what she does for the LIHEAP Program
14 and community. That's all.

15 MS. LESLIE MILLER: Thank you very much.

16 JUDGE HATCHER: Indeed.

17 MS. LESLIE MILLER: Thank you.

18 JUDGE HATCHER: With that, Miss Miller,
19 you are excused from our virtual witness stand.

20 MS. LESLIE MILLER: Thank You.

21 JUDGE HATCHER: Are there any other
22 witnesses who would like to testify to the
23 commissioners this evening?

24 Okay. We are at the end of our hearing
25 then.

1 For our commissioners, are there any
2 commissioners who would like to give any closing
3 remarks this evening?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: No remarks, Judge.

5 MS. LESLIE MILLER: No questions, Judge.

6 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you all.

7 I would like to thank all of your
8 participants today for their testimony. If you do
9 have additional comments or someone could not be
10 present who would like to make a comment, you may
11 make written comments by contacting either the same
12 email address that you used to register for this
13 hearing, or the Office of Public Counsel at
14 MOPCO@OPC.mo.gov. Or you can go to the PSC's web
15 page.

16 Please make sure and use this case number
17 for any communications. That's GR-2021-0108. This
18 hearing is now adjourned. We're off the record.

19 * * * * *

20 (Whereupon, the public hearing concluded
21 at 7:08 p.m.)

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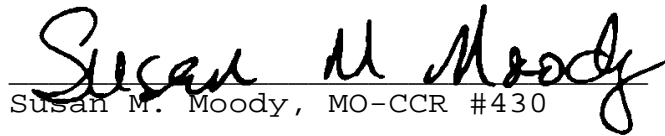
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REPORTER CERTIFICATE

I, Susan M. Moody, MO-CCR #430, Certified Court Reporter in and for the State of Missouri, with the Firm of Tiger Court Reporting, LLC, do hereby certify that I appeared virtually via Webex conferencing at the proceedings had in the above-entitled cause at the time and place set forth in the caption sheet thereof; that I then and there took down in Stenotype the proceedings had; and that the foregoing is a full, true and correct transcript of such Stenotype notes so made at such time and place.


Susan M. Moody, MO-CCR #430

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