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STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing
June 19, 2014
Gallatin Public Library
Gallatin, Missouri

Volume 1

In the Matter of Summit)
Natural Gas of Missouri,)
Inc.'s, Filing of Revised) File No. GR-2014-0086
Tariffs to Increase Its)
Annual Revenues for Natural)
Gas Service)

DANIEL JORDAN, Presiding
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

Reported by: Judy K. Moore, RPR CCR CSR

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1 APPEARANCES:

2

For Summit Natural Gas:

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Brydon, Swearngen & England, P.C.

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MR. MARC POSTON

State of Missouri Office of the Public Counsel

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For the Public Service Commission:

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 JUDGE JORDAN: Good evening, everyone. The
3 Missouri Public Service Commission is calling the
4 action in File Number GR-2014-0086. That is the
5 general rate action of Summit Natural Gas of
6 Missouri, Incorporated, the tariff filings include
7 a request for a rate increase.

8 My name is Daniel Jordan. I am the Regulatory
9 Law Judge in this action. My purpose today is to
10 conduct a local public hearing to collect testimony
11 on the proposed rate increase. My job in this is
12 to conduct an orderly proceeding. Eventually, I
13 will recommend a decision to the Commissioners who
14 will take a vote on the final decision.

15 I will now take entries of appearance from the
16 parties. We will start with the Applicants.

17 MS. CARTER: Diana Carter with Brydon,
18 Swaengen & England for Summit Natural Gas of
19 Missouri.

20 JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. For Staff?

21 MR. OPITZ: Tim Opitz, Staff of the Public
22 Service Commission.

23 JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. For the Office of
24 Public Counsel?

25 MR. POSTON: Marc Poston for the Office of

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1 Public Counsel.

2 JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. And I see we have a
3 representative from at least one entered vendor.

4 MR. JARRETT: Good evening, Judge. On behalf
5 of the Missouri Gas -- Propane Gas Association,
6 Terry Jarrett.

7 JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. Are there any other
8 vendors which I haven't introduced yet? Okay.

9 And if you wish to testify, here are some
10 brief instructions for you: When I call your name
11 from the list, please come up and have a seat here
12 at this table. Please speak clearly so that
13 everyone can hear you, especially our court
14 reporter.

15 This will be transcribed for the Commissioners
16 to review. That's why we conduct these hearings.

17 Be considerate of the time of other people.
18 Be concise. Say what you have to say, but do be
19 considerate. If you have expressed an opinion
20 during the presentation earlier and still hold to
21 that opinion and want the Commissioners to hear it,
22 say it now. This is what's going to be on the
23 record for the Commissioners to read.

24 If there is something that someone has already
25 said that you agree with, you can just say that you

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1 agree with them. You don't have to repeat the
2 whole thing. But by all means, come and tell us
3 that you agree with that position.

4 I have described your statements as testimony,
5 and that is what it will be. I will administer an
6 oath; or, if you prefer, let me know, I will
7 administer an affirmation. I may start you off
8 with a few questions like, state your name, spell
9 it if it is unclear, and to get your perspective.

10 And when you are done with your testimony, the
11 parties have the right to clarify by asking
12 questions. I may also have some clarifying
13 questions for you.

14 And I'll tell you what I'd like to do with the
15 parties. I will just go through the witnesses
16 since there are several that wish to speak tonight,
17 and if someone does have some questions for the
18 witness, let me know when they're done speaking.
19 Otherwise, I will simply dismiss them. Okay?

20 Do remember that you also have the right to
21 file written comments with the Commission. The
22 Commission will look at those as well. Tell your
23 neighbors about that, too, in case they weren't
24 able to make it to this meeting because the
25 Commission wants to hear what you have to say.

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1 In particular, this is a good time to raise
2 issues related to the quality of service, billing
3 issues, issues like that, things that Staff tries
4 to find out about. I'm sure you've figured out
5 Staff works very hard to do the right thing. They
6 audit these companies; they inspect their
7 facilities and they investigate service issues, but
8 of course they can't be everywhere at once, they're
9 mostly in Jefferson City, so if there are service
10 problems you want the Commission to know about,
11 this would be a really good time to do that.

12 Any further questions before I start taking
13 testimony? I'm not hearing any, so I will call the
14 first name on my list, and that is William E.
15 Walker. Mr. Walker, please have a seat.

16 WILLIAM E. WALKER,
17 of lawful age, was duly sworn and testified as follows:

18 JUDGE JORDAN: William E. Walker, just like it
19 sounds.

20 Mr. Walker, are you a customer of Summit
21 Natural Gas.

22 MR. WALKER: Yes, and I am the Mayor of
23 Pattonsburg, one of the communities served.

24 JUDGE JORDAN: Go ahead and tell us why you're
25 here.

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1 MR. WALKER: Well, part of the question I
2 basically had, with some comment I brought up
3 before, the aspect of we've been with the company
4 since 2008. By and large, the service has been
5 better than average. At the same time, my concern
6 is that the increase over an eight-year period was
7 roughly 60 percent. Now, that's a 10 percent
8 increase per year in the cost of doing production.

9 I'm a retired school administrator, and I
10 spent over 20 years chasing school budgets, and if
11 I missed by 10 percent every year, I'd have been
12 looking for a job. So I understand that there are
13 variables that can be handled and those that can't,
14 but 10 percent seems to be kind of a quality issue
15 for a company that this is their major business.

16 So I guess that part of it seems to be a
17 little over and above what seems to be some
18 reasonable numbers.

19 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. That's it? All right.
20 Questions? Not seeing any. Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 The next name on my list is Barry Bartlett.
23 That's Bartlett with three T's total. Two are at
24 the end.

25

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1 BARRY BARTLETT,
2 of lawful age, was duly sworn and testified as follows:

3 JUDGE JORDAN: Mr. Bartlett, are you a
4 customer of Summit?

5 MR. BARTLETT: Yes, I am.

6 JUDGE JORDAN: Go ahead.

7 MR. BARTLETT: We live in Jamesport. I
8 actually have a lot riding on this decision
9 because, personally, I'm actually the branch
10 president for the Trenton branch of the Church of
11 Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and as such, my
12 congregation resides everywhere from Highway 6
13 going north of -- or sorry -- Highway 13 north of
14 Highway 6, all the way to the Iowa border and
15 scoops in a large area, and on a regular basis, a
16 weekly basis, I am asked to help people with paying
17 bills as a leader of that congregation. And as I
18 do so, in the winter months, we are stretched to
19 our limit, absolutely stretched to our limit, so
20 much so that there's other congregations down in
21 Kansas City who have more affluent members who
22 actually help us stay afloat because, on an
23 average, we spend about 125 percent of our
24 allocated donations towards paying out for
25 utilities and such for members of my congregation.

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1 For me personally, just in the winter months
2 alone -- I have a house, I have six children, and
3 so we have to have enough room to live. For me
4 personally, it would be almost an \$80 increase per
5 month in the winter alone. That would probably
6 almost break us because right now, with a large
7 family, my ministry work for the church is not
8 paid, I work a full-time job, I work in Kansas City
9 and I drive 80 miles one way just to get to work
10 and turn around and drive home so that I can afford
11 to support my family.

12 This would make it -- I won't say unbearable
13 but pretty darn close. There's almost no extra
14 when my paycheck is done.

15 The other thing is that other action agencies
16 in the area -- Green Hills is actually one that's
17 active in this area in helping people pay for their
18 bills -- they are constantly maxed out, constantly.
19 And with this kind of increase, it's going to put
20 people that are in poverty to below that.

21 In Jamesport, I think, alone, the median
22 average income is less than \$20,000 a year.
23 Whenever you're stacking 20 -- between 20 to \$80 a
24 month on top of a monthly bill, sometimes that's
25 more than people can afford. And I can tell you

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1 right now that's more than -- there's multiple
2 people that I know of personally who will not be
3 able to afford any increase because of my dealings
4 with signing checks on a weekly basis to try to
5 help pay utilities. Even during the summer months
6 when their utilities are lower, they still can't
7 afford it. So this kind of increase, I think, is
8 gonna be more of a tax than they believe.

9 The other thing is a 7.5 percent increase on
10 any investment I would have to say at this point in
11 time would be a healthy increase. So going from
12 a -- you know, if I put money in the bank, I'm not
13 going to get a 7 percent increase on my money.
14 That's the reason why people go other places to put
15 it other places, so that they can have a bigger
16 return. I believe 7 1/2 percent is plenty because
17 the only thing that we're doing by doing this rate
18 increase, we're not covering more costs, we're just
19 raising their profit margins is all we're doing.
20 So I don't see any purpose in doing that.

21 So they're going to tax the little people so
22 that they can make more money, and they're trying
23 to say that they're going to lose investors. I'm
24 sorry, if anybody can get a guaranteed 7 1/2
25 percent on their investment, I would consider that

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1 a good investment because that's a pretty large
2 increase.

3 That's pretty much all I have to say.

4 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. No questions?

5 MR. POSTON: Actually, I do. I just want to
6 have you explain where that 7 1/2 percent number
7 came from.

8 MR. BARTLETT: The gentleman from the gas
9 company previously had spoke of they currently make
10 around 7 1/2 percent profit and they want to
11 increase that to 12 1/2 percent and that's the
12 reason they're trying to change their rate. So
13 that was -- from my understanding from all that
14 question and answer, that's what he indicated they
15 made currently and what they will make.

16 MR. POSTON: Thank you. That's all.

17 JUDGE JORDAN: Does that raise any questions?

18 Thank you for your testimony.

19 The last name I have on my list is Chris Ford.

20 MR. FORD: Well, people have heard too much
21 from me today, probably, already, but I'd like to
22 summarize it.

23 The gentleman there did a wonderful job. I
24 would like to get a couple of licks at this.

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CHRIS FORD,
of lawful age, was duly sworn and testified as follows:

MR. FORD: First of all, the information provided to us was not complete, was it? Something that hasn't been mentioned too much is the 33 percent increase in the monthly charge. They now charge us most places \$15 a month just because we're there and hooked up to their facility. I assume that that is towards maintenance. They want to add \$5 to it. That's 33 percent. That's a pretty good increase right there. My Social Security check didn't go up 33 percent in the last two or three years.

And on the mystical whatever it is here, which if I understand this correctly -- and I seem to be having a lot of misunderstanding lately -- the 62 percent has nothing to do with the purchase of gas or the provision of gas; it has to do with their maintenance of their facilities and the maintenance of their overhead and their profit. It doesn't have anything to do with the price of gas. That's what the man said. Am I wrong? I don't think so. So if the price of gas goes up, then what?

Now, a 62 percent increase in today's climate of anything, for anything, is just unbelievable.

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1 And the man from the company indicated that he
2 thought that 7 1/4 percent was not suitable. Well,
3 a 7 1/4 percent return on an investment in this day
4 and age is pretty good money. You better take it
5 and like it. Okay? Or he can go to the bank and
6 get 2 1/2 or 3 percent like we do with our CD's at
7 the city. 7 1/2 looks pretty good. Okay?

8 That's all.

9 JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. Questions?

10 MR. POSTON: Just real quick, do you know how
11 much your Social Security has gone up over the last
12 six years?

13 MR. FORD: Uh-huh.

14 MR. POSTON: Like, percentage-wise?

15 MR. FORD: Percentage-wise, about 4 percent,
16 maybe 4 1/2.

17 Anyone else? Okay.

18 JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you for your testimony.

19 All the other names on my list are scratched
20 out, but if someone does want to testify, this
21 would be the time to do it.

22 Come forward. Have a seat.

23 LORI FISHER,

24 of lawful age, was duly sworn and testified as follows:

25 JUDGE JORDAN: Please state your name and

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1 spell it for our court reporter.

2 MS. FISHER: Lori Fisher, F-I-S-H.

3 Okay. I guess the thing I want to say is, we
4 are in the midst of some really severe -- and I
5 mean severe -- economic times. When this gentleman
6 said his Social Security went up 4 percent, mine
7 didn't even go up that much. A 20 dollar raise is
8 not going to make the difference on paying for my
9 gas company that -- for the gas that they are going
10 to be charging me, and I think we all have to make
11 sacrifices at this point, and that's why I think
12 Summit Gas needs to make some, too, and I think
13 their investors can also make some sacrifices also.
14 We're all going to have to make some really severe
15 sacrifices, and it's going to get -- it's not going
16 to get better.

17 So when you come up with 7 percent, I think
18 that's really high in the midst of the economic
19 downturn that we're in. I'm on a fixed income,
20 like the other people who have testified. I don't
21 know -- I was glad that the other gentleman said
22 the mean income for this area is 20,000. I don't
23 know what the unemployment rate is. I wish I did.
24 I'd like to have those figures. I'd like to have
25 the figures of the amount of people in this area

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1 that are on food stamps, which says this is a
2 depressed area.

3 I'm really sorry, Summit, that you chose a
4 depressed area to enlarge your company in. I feel
5 bad for you. This was -- maybe it was a bad move
6 for Summit, I don't know, but we cannot afford this
7 raise.

8 JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. Questions?

9 You are dismissed.

10 Would anyone else like to testify? Step
11 forward.

12 MS. WARNER: My name is Debra Warner,
13 W-A-R-N-E-R.

14 DEBRA WARNER,
15 of lawful age, was duly sworn and testified as follows:

16 MS. WARNER: I want to agree with what
17 Mr. Bartlett and Ms. Fisher stated. This is a
18 community of single parents, elderly people,
19 disabled people. I'm a caregiver for disabled
20 people. It's a community of widows and widowers.

21 In the winter, you go into people's homes, and
22 they have plastic taped over their windows and
23 doors. It's also common to go into people's home,
24 and they will ask you to step into a small bedroom
25 because it's the only thing they're heating and

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1 they're heating it with a small space heater and
2 they and their children are living in that little
3 space.

4 People are going without food trying to keep
5 their utilities on. Any increase in this community
6 is devastating, any increase in utility costs is
7 devastating. There is no room for people to take
8 that money from.

9 I'm done.

10 JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. Any questions for
11 this witness?

12 Who else would like to speak at the moment?
13 Anyone?

14 Very well. Then I want to remind you that
15 what has been said will be transcribed and it will
16 be reviewed by the Commissioners. It will be part
17 of the record of this case. The Commissioners are
18 grateful for your appearance tonight because it is
19 a way that they gather information on the real life
20 impacts on the decisions that they make.

21 Rate making cases dominate the docket of the
22 Commission. The statutes require that they be put
23 ahead of every other matter. So when anything
24 comes in on this, this becomes my priority and the
25 Commission's priority, and that's why we come to

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1 listen to you and that's why we encourage you to
2 speak.

3 So on behalf of the Public Service Commission,
4 I thank you for coming out. Thank you for
5 testifying, or simply for listening and learning
6 more about our process. And with that, I will
7 adjourn this hearing, and we are off the record.

8 (Hearing concluded at 7:30 p.m.)

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I N D E X

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DEBRA WARNER	15

EXHIBITS:
(None marked.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JUDY K. MOORE, a Certified Court Reporter of the State of Missouri, do hereby certify:

That prior to testifying the witnesses were duly sworn;

That said testimony was taken down by me in shorthand at the time and place hereinbefore stated and was thereafter reduced to writing under my direction;

That I am not a relative or employee or attorney or counsel of any of the parties, or a relative or employee of such attorney or counsel or financially interested in the action.

WITNESS my hand and seal this _____ day of _____, 2014.

JUDY K. MOORE, RPR CCR #1121

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[& - commissioners]

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[common - heater]

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