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STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

October 3, 2017

Harris-Stowe State University
Early Childhood Development Center
Professional Development Auditorium - Room 204
3026 Laclede
St. Louis, MO 63103

Volume 8

In the Matter of Laclede)
Gas Company's Request to)
Increase Its Revenues) File No. GR-2017-0215
for Gas Service)

In the Matter of Laclede)
Gas Company d/b/a)
Missouri Gas Energy's) File No. GR-2017-0216
Request to Increase Its)
Revenues for Gas Service)

NANCY DIPPELL, Presiding
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

STEPHEN M. STOLL,
SCOTT T. RUPP,
MAIDA J. COLEMAN,
Commissioners.

Court Reporter:
Georgia B. Long, CSR/CCR
Missouri CCR #622
Illinois CSR #084-004742
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St. Louis, Missouri 63101

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A P P E A R A N C E S

For Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission:

Ms. Marcella Forck
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For Laclede Gas, d/b/a Missouri Gas Energy:

Mr. Rick Zucker
720 Olive Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63101

1 PROCEEDINGS

2

3 MS. DIPPELL: Good evening. We can go ahead and
4 go on the record. Today's date is October 3rd, 2017.
5 And the Missouri Public Service Commission has set this
6 time for the local public hearing in files number
7 GR-2017-0215 and 0216, which are captioned: In the
8 Matter of Laclede Gas Company's Request to Increase Its
9 Revenues For Gas Service; and In the Matter of Laclede
10 Gas Company, doing business as Missouri Gas Energy's
11 Request to Increase Its Revenues For Gas Service.
12 Most of you probably know Laclede Gas has since changed
13 its name. It's now Spire.

14 My name is Nancy Dippell. I'm the Public Service
15 Commissioner and the Regulatory Law Judge, and my job is
16 to conduct this hearing and make sure things run
17 smoothly tonight. With me, I have three of our
18 commissioners. I want to introduce to you Commissioner
19 Stoll to my right. Would you like to say anything?

20 MR. STOLL: Yeah. I just wanted to take a minute
21 just to thank everybody for being here tonight. We look
22 forward to hearing your comments and/or concerns.

23 And I wanted to let you know, too, that this is
24 really the beginning of this case. We have multiple
25 public hearings later in December. We have what we call

1 the evidentiary hearings in Jefferson City. We're just
2 beginning the case at this point.

3 I also -- if you know someone who couldn't be
4 here tonight, you can file comments with the Commission,
5 and I'm sure that the young lady at our desk out in the
6 hall can explain how to do that. You can go online,
7 which that can be difficult, but there are other ways to
8 do that. If you would like to take one of these papers
9 home with you, feel free to do so. And thank you for
10 being here tonight.

11 MS. DIPPELL: Also with me on my left is
12 Commissioner Rupp and Commissioner Coleman, on my far
13 right.

14 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you for being here.

15 MS. DIPPELL: So the process tonight is going to
16 be that I'm going to call -- start with the people that
17 signed up on the list to testify. And when I call your
18 name, I'd ask you to -- if you're able to come up to
19 this microphone over here, I will swear you in as we
20 take comments under oath.

21 And the transcript -- the court reporter will
22 transcribe your comments, and that transcript will then
23 go into the record and become part of the evidence in
24 this case.

25 So when you come to the microphone, I'm going to

1 ask you to state your name and spell it. Then I'm going
2 to ask you to take an oath or affirmation that you're
3 going to tell the truth.

4 If you have any questions along the way, or if
5 you didn't get your questions answered in the
6 pre-question and answer, then the staff and Laclede Gas
7 will be here after the hearing and be happy to continue
8 to have that discussion with you.

9 So I'm going to begin by having the attorneys
10 that are present make their entries of appearance. So
11 I'll start with the staff attorney.

12 MS. FORCK: For the staff of the Missouri Public
13 Service Commission, my name is Marcella Forck. My
14 information is on file with the court reporter.

15 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you. And for the companies.

16 MR. ZUCKER: Rick Zucker, here on behalf of
17 Laclede Gas Company, now -- and Missouri Gas Energy, I
18 guess Laclede Gas Company in this case, now known as
19 Spire Missouri, Inc.

20 MS. DIPPELL: And for the Office of Public
21 Counsel.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Hampton Williams. I'm
23 the Acting Director of the Office of Public Counsel. I
24 have submitted my contact information to the reporter.

25 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you. I'll go ahead and then

1 begin with the first person on my list, which is Floyd
2 Jackson. Is Mr. Jackson still here? I'm not seeing
3 Mr. Jackson.

4 How about Herman Johnson? Are you able to come
5 down, Mr. Johnson?

6 MR. WALLACE: Yeah. I can do that. Just getting
7 a little adjusted. I'm Eugene Wallace, representing
8 Herman Johnson tonight.

9 MS. DIPPELL: All right. Can you please raise
10 your right hand.

11 (Witness sworn)

12 MS. DIPPELL: All right. And would you go ahead
13 and spell your name.

14 MR. WALLACE: E-U-G-E-N-E, W-A-L-L-A-C-E.

15 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you. Go ahead with your
16 comments, sir.

17 MR. WALLACE: Well, my comment is about the
18 budget billing process. And I'm elated -- or I feel
19 great about the statements that were made. The cold
20 weather rule was implemented as a part of the
21 legislation in Missouri. But the people I've spoken to,
22 that I have witnessed, the budget billing process is
23 unfair. And I don't know if you're -- it's stated that
24 they make an adjustment, but you know, I don't
25 understand that.

1 I know they don't read the meters anymore. The
2 billing is done through the local utility company --
3 gas, electric, especially the gas. So I'm wondering
4 what can be done about budget, budgeting billing
5 process.

6 MS. DIPPELL: Go ahead.

7 MS. COLEMAN: So Mr. Wallace, would you explain
8 the exact problem that you feel exists with the budget
9 billing? Is it the a amount that's required to pay, or
10 what is the exact issue?

11 MR. WALLACE: Well, you're talking about a rate
12 increase. That's going to increase the budgeting
13 process, and it states that it can go up and down on the
14 budgeting process. Well, there's a problem before this
15 is ever implemented.

16 MS. COLEMAN: Okay. So I am to understand that
17 your concern that a person that's currently on budget
18 billing, you feel that a rate increase would possibly
19 increase the amount that a person pays in budget
20 billing; is that what you're asking?

21 MR. WALLACE: Yes. That's true.

22 MS. COLEMAN: Just trying to understand.

23 MR. WALLACE: Okay.

24 MS. COLEMAN: Other concerns?

25 MR. WALLACE: No.

1 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you, sir, for your time.

2 MR. STOLL: Thank you.

3 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you.

4 MS. DIPPELL: Peggy Nelson. Would you raise your
5 right hand.

6 (Witness sworn)

7 MS. DIPPELL: Go ahead and give us your name and
8 spell it.

9 MS. NELSON: Peggy -- do I have to spell my first
10 name? P-E-G-G-Y. Nelson, N-E-L-S-O-N.

11 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you.

12 MS. NELSON: I have four points I wanted to make.
13 First, talking about the costs. What I wanted to say
14 under oath is the costs of switching names from Laclede
15 Gas to Spire, I wanted to know, when they will come up
16 with a complete study of what those exact charges would
17 be, and whether or not they would cease to be charging
18 us for that continuously; if some of those prices will
19 come down once the acquisition was made and the
20 switchover to the new company would take place.

21 The second point I wanted to make is that all of
22 our utilities have increased. 100 years ago, MSD put in
23 sewers, which reduced death from cholera. We have an
24 aging sewer system because it's 100 years old, and we
25 have to replace it. A lot of people are losing their

1 homes because they cannot afford to pay their bills.
2 They cannot afford to put in a new sewer, and they've
3 lost their homes. They just can't keep up with all the
4 expenses, and I see this happening and also just adding
5 to the burden to those people.

6 Ameren has hiked their rates. My bill went up
7 \$15.00, and you're asking for another 3 every month.
8 There are people who are doing things to use less, which
9 was one of the things suggested that we do to afford our
10 bill.

11 I know a woman that complained that she was
12 washing dishes with combat boots and a scarf on so she
13 could stay warm while she was wet and washing dishes. I
14 have no -- another guy who wasn't turning his heat on.
15 He would have slushy ice in his toilet because he didn't
16 want to have the heat on. There are people who lose
17 their homes and spend all day in fast food restaurants
18 to stay warm. You need to come up with some kind of
19 solution for these people, and to just ask for more
20 money is asking too much from them.

21 The minimum wage has not gone up. And they're
22 still on fixed incomes and cannot not have more income
23 to pay for these increases.

24 The third point -- okay. The next thing I wanted
25 to point out, I wanted to say is your insulation, the

1 offer for a 3 percent interest rate that Spire would
2 offer to people to give them the money to insulate their
3 home. That's a good offer. A mortgage is 3.500 percent
4 right now. That's all a mortgage is. So that's not
5 that much of a cost effective thing for people. Only
6 some people are going to be able to afford to take on
7 another expense for their homes and buy cost effective
8 appliances and furnaces.

9 So I don't know. I don't think that's something
10 that they should use as a point to say that they should
11 have an increase. And I would like to recommended that
12 you not go give the increase to us. I don't think that
13 it's merited. Thank you.

14 MR. STOLL: Thank you for your testimony.

15 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you, ma'am.

16 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you.

17 MS. DIPPELL: I didn't actually have anybody else
18 on the list. Would anyone else like to testify? Ma'am.

19 MS. WILEY: Yes.

20 MS. DIPPELL: Could you raise your right hand.

21 (Witness sworn)

22 MS. DIPPELL: Could you please give us your name
23 and spell it for the court report.

24 MS. WILEY: Linda Wiley. L-I-N-D-A, W-I-L-E-Y.

25 MS. DIPPELL: Come just a little closer to

1 microphone. I was having a hard time hearing you.

2 MS. WILEY: Linda Wiley. Okay. My concern at
3 this point is with the question that I asked earlier
4 about the chemicals leaching from the plastic pipes into
5 the ground. I didn't exactly get the answer to my
6 question I asked. I asked, were there any chemicals
7 that would be leaching into the ground. The reply
8 referred to it being the safest plastic. Okay. And I
9 would like to be reassured, since I do gardening at my
10 home, that I'm not going to have harmful chemicals
11 leaching into my vegetables. That's the main thing at
12 this point.

13 I also would like to comment on the fact that
14 Laclede -- Spire, is already making a decent profit.
15 And I really don't see a need for us to pay more money
16 when they are already making a profit. Those are my two
17 questions, or concerns.

18 MS. DIPPELL: Ms. Wiley?

19 MR. STOLL: Just one comment. I think somebody
20 from the company would like to address your concerns or
21 question. And if you would like to speak to anybody
22 with our staff or the Office of Public Counsel, maybe
23 they could help you, too.

24 MS. WILEY: Yes. Yes, I would.

25 MR. STOLL: Take the time to do that. Thank you

1 very much.

2 MS. WILEY: All right. Thank you.

3 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you, Ms. Wiley.

4 MS. DIPPELL: Someone in the back? Would you
5 like to come on up.

6 MS. CHANDLER: Hello.

7 MS. DIPPELL: Can I get you to raise your right
8 hand. Thank you.

9 (Witness sworn)

10 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you. If you could give us
11 your name and spell it, please.

12 MS. CHANDLER: Danielle, D-A-N-I-E-L-L-E. Last
13 name is Chandler, C-H-A-N-D-L-E-R.

14 MS. DIPPELL: And can you also speak up just a
15 little bit? There's just a little bit of background
16 noise or something, makes it a little hard to hear.

17 MS. CHANDLER: Do you need me to repeat anything?

18 MS. DIPPELL: No. That's fine.

19 MS. CHANDLER: I have two questions. One, who is
20 going to help pay for these furnaces that they've
21 suggested for high efficiency? The financial cost for
22 most people, they can't even afford to buy one. My next
23 question is, when Laclede Gas had the current proposal
24 four years ago with the rate increase, they had a
25 proposal of how much they needed. Well, now they're

1 saying they're out of money. So they've obtained four
2 new plans. Do they have proposals and appraisals set
3 with the work for the repairs that they are saying they
4 need? Are there plans? Are they going to need more, or
5 are they going to come back to us and say, "I need more
6 money" in three years? That's all I have.

7 MR. STOLL: Did you ask any of those questions in
8 the question and answer at the beginning?

9 MS. CHANDLER: I asked the gentlemen before about
10 the people that were on lower incomes, if you're going
11 to do a hike increase on the gas, are you going to
12 change the level of what the assistance is? Because
13 most people that are on set incomes are one-family
14 household incomes. They can't afford to have multiples
15 across the boards. And he said something to the effect
16 of that, there's programs. Well, yeah. But most people
17 can't get into these programs already.

18 MR. STOLL: You might talk to the Office of
19 Public Counsel, the gentleman sitting right here, just
20 to be able to answer those -- that question for you and
21 any others you might have. Okay.

22 MS. CHANDLER: All right.

23 MR. STOLL: That's the best way to do it.

24 MS. CHANDLER: Thank you.

25 MR. STOLL: Thank you for your testimony.

1 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you.

2 MS. DIPPELL: Is there someone else?

3 (Witness sworn)

4 MS. DIPPELL: Can you give us your name and spell
5 it, please.

6 MS. MASIULIS: Jennifer, J-E-N-N-I-F-E-R. Last
7 name Masiulis, M-A-S-I-U-L-I-S. Some of the concerns
8 that I have that were partially addressed in the
9 question and answer, but not fully addressed, involved
10 the comment -- or I guess the strategy to raise the
11 rates per therm based on usage.

12 One of the concerns I have that I think is shared
13 with others is that some people may not be able to use
14 less and still be comfortable in their household. So I
15 think there's a concern that the rate increase will only
16 take heat away and not allow folks who are trying to,
17 yes, save on costs, but be comfortable in their homes;
18 similar to what I think another person mentioned about
19 doing dishes with a coat on.

20 We talked in the question and answer about
21 expansion of territory of Spire. And I already know
22 that I share with my neighbors a concern of
23 quote/unquote the monopoly that Laclede Gas currently
24 has over the area; that if we do have gas in our home,
25 we have no other place from which to choose to purchase

1 gas. With the expansion of the territory, I think that
2 our neighbors and myself who are concerned that that
3 monopoly only gets bigger, and I see a lot of cons with
4 that.

5 We obviously have the Public Service Commission
6 to help on our behalf, but there's not a lot of control
7 that we have with regard to a choice of where we receive
8 our gas.

9 I have a concern that I haven't voiced yet that
10 has happened twice to me over the last two years. I
11 think the -- don't get me wrong, I think the Dollar Help
12 Program is excellent. However, there seems to be some
13 administrative issues with Laclede Gas currently
14 because, I've been unwillingly and unknowingly enrolled
15 in Dollar Help Program without my knowledge. And I have
16 called twice to customer service in two years to get
17 that fixed. I can only imagine how many customers have
18 been enrolled unwillingly without even checking their
19 bill to see that this is only up by a dollar and haven't
20 made those calls like I have.

21 But there's something in my mind, some serious
22 concerns with either the call center or the accounting
23 department, or the administration because there's no
24 reason why a customer should see themselves enrolled in
25 a program for which I did not sign up. Thank you.

1 MS. DIPPELL: Wait just a moment.

2 MR. STOLL: Same suggestion that I made before;
3 you might want to talk to both someone from the company,
4 the gentleman here will have somebody, or from the
5 Office of Public Counsel right here. They would like to
6 know more about this, too. This gentleman right here.

7 MS. MASIULIS: Okay. That's fine.

8 MR. STOLL: Thank you.

9 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you for bringing that to the
10 Commission's attention.

11 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you.

12 MS. DIPPELL: Is there anyone else that wanted to
13 testify?

14 MS. COLEMAN: Ms. Masiulis?

15 MS. DIPPELL: Ms. Masiulis, before you sit down
16 Ms. Coleman wanted to ask you one more thing.

17 MS. COLEMAN: What was the resolution of your
18 contact with Laclede Gas regarding your being registered
19 for the Dollar Help Program?

20 MS. MASIULIS: In 2015, I only noticed that I was
21 enrolled after six months of it occurring. So when I
22 called customer service, they assumed that I had
23 enrolled myself and I had to repeatedly state I did not
24 check the box on my paper bill. And actually I received
25 paperless billing, so it wasn't possible for me to check

1 a box that's not available in the paperless billing.

2 So they promised to get back to me, and they did
3 get back to me, and they did give me what would equate
4 to \$6.00 back for the six or so months that I was
5 charged that unknowingly.

6 Most recently, this year, I noticed it
7 immediately because I have been checking diligently ever
8 since that happened. Diligently ever since. And I
9 noticed immediately that I had two totals on my bill.
10 One was exactly a dollar higher.

11 So I immediately called customer service, and I
12 said, I'm seeing what I think was an amount due and a
13 paid due. There was two different totals. And so I
14 asked why one was a dollar higher. It was because you
15 were enrolled in the dollar help. I said, no, I'm not.
16 I'm not enrolled in dollar help.

17 Their resolution to that was to just pay the
18 lower amount, which I was actually not satisfied with,
19 because there shouldn't be an error on my bill to begin
20 with.

21 So I did pay the lower amount, and I didn't see
22 it on the subsequent bill. But I wasn't satisfied with
23 that response, to just pay the lower amount. I should
24 not be having to call because of an error on a bill for
25 a program that I didn't opt into.

1 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you.

2 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you, ma'am.

3 MS. JENNINGS: Good evening.

4 MS. DIPPELL: Good evening.

5 MS. COLEMAN: Good evening.

6 MS. DIPPELL: If you would please raise your
7 right hand.

8 (Witness sworn)

9 MS. DIPPELL: Did you give us your name? Spell
10 it, please.

11 MS. JENNINGS: My name is Elizabeth Jennings.

12 E-L-I-Z-A-B-E-T-H, J-E-N-N-I-N-G-S. My comment is, as I
13 mentioned to the attorney, that Laclede Gas has gone
14 through a lot of lengths to reduce their costs. One of
15 the main things that they have done is to reduce what
16 they are paying their personnel. They have reduced --
17 or let's say -- got rid of is kind of rough -- but the
18 personnel that were in the higher pay scales, and
19 they've hired new people at a much lower pay scale.

20 So I'm thinking that they have saved significant
21 amounts of money by reducing their employee pay
22 structure. So I'm thinking, some of that savings can go
23 towards the need for an increase that's coming to us,
24 who have not had pay increases for the last few years.

25 Also, there are people that they have released

1 that probably have problems with their Laclede Gas bill
2 at this point. I think that was my major point today.
3 And I don't think that we should be paying for that.

4 I don't think we should be have any increase, not
5 at this point. As I said before, Ameren, the water
6 bill, sewer bill, the trash bill, everybody has gone up
7 within the last six months or so. And we're being
8 bombarded here in the St. Louis region.

9 MR. STOLL: Thank you for your testimony.

10 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you.

11 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you for your comments. Is
12 there anyone else that would like to testify? Sir?

13 (Witness sworn)

14 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you. Go ahead and state your
15 name and spell it.

16 MR. SCHROEDER: Peter Schroeder. P-E-T-E-R,
17 S-C-H-R-O-E-D-E-R.

18 MS. DIPPELL: Go ahead.

19 MR. SCHROEDER: I just wanted to start by saying
20 I've always felt a little weird about essentially a
21 monopoly advertising, advertising without trying to
22 convince someone to choose you over someone else. And
23 in a monopoly situation like this, we can't really
24 choose anyone else to get our gas from. So I feel weird
25 anytime I see Laclede Gas billboards.

1 Earlier this summer, I saw the billboard
2 campaign, how they were replacing the infrastructure. I
3 appreciated that they were telling us how they were
4 using our money, and being shown that they were being
5 responsible stewards with the money that we were giving
6 then.

7 Then I started seeing about how they were
8 changing their name, and that just felt very strange
9 because then, a name change -- they can't get any more
10 customers in St. Louis by having a different name or a
11 different logo or something fancy looking or a new
12 color. They already have the customers that they have.

13 And for them to be spending the money on however
14 many hours of consulting and planning and meetings and
15 whatever, to decide to change their name and then to
16 pick all of those things, and then also the money to
17 change every logo on every truck, and every uniform, and
18 every tool, and every thing, and then on top off that to
19 have billboards, showing that they have spent all this
20 money to have a new favorite color, honestly just feels
21 kind of offensive.

22 And I'm not an easily offended person. And then
23 to ask for a rate increase on top of that, feels almost
24 as if they're trying to cash in on the goodwill of
25 upgrading their infrastructure, which is, at the end of

1 the day, doing their job that they get paid for anyway
2 and have already had an infrastructure increase to be
3 able to help them pay for that.

4 MR. STOLL: I'll just mention, you might talk
5 again to one of the aforementioned folks from the
6 company or from our staff. There's some advertising
7 that is paid by the ratepayers, and then there's other
8 advertising that is paid by the stockholders of the
9 company. So they can explain that to you.

10 MR. SCHROEDER: Thanks.

11 MR. STOLL: Thank you for your comments, though.

12 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you.

13 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you. Ma'am?

14 (Witness sworn)

15 MS. DIPPELL: If you would please give us your
16 name.

17 MS. DYSON: Beverly Dyson. B-E-V-E-R-L-Y, Dyson,
18 D-Y-S-O-N. Like the vacuum cleaner, but I don't get the
19 money. Couple of comments. In our earlier session, I
20 was informed that the staff as well as the shareholders
21 receive the bonus for their performance, or for doing a
22 good job.

23 I'm opposed to the rate increase because if we
24 have staff that are receiving a bonus for doing what
25 they should be doing anyway, based upon their salary,

1 but now you're going to pass the pay increase to me as a
2 consumer and having the shareholders receiving a bonus
3 at the end of the year, I'm opposed to the rate
4 increase.

5 The other comment that I have to make is my
6 understanding is that Laclede has received -- or has
7 been in the black for the last several years; that they
8 have had a surplus. And again, if you're operating on a
9 surplus, why are you asking for a pay increase from your
10 consumers? I feel that that pay increase, or that
11 increase that you have every year, should be enough to
12 run your company, and to do the infrastructure without
13 passing that cost on to the consumer, who is myself and
14 everybody else who is sitting in this room.

15 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you.

16 MR. STOLL: Thank you.

17 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you.

18 MS. DIPPELL: Is there any other comments? Okay.
19 I'm not seeing any comments.

20 Again, we really appreciate you all being here
21 this evening. Well take your comments very seriously
22 and you become a part of our record. And with that, we
23 can close this hearing and go off the record. Thank
24 you.

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF MISSOURI)
) ss.
CITY OF ARNOLD)

I, Georgia Beth Long, a Certified Court Reporter (MO),
Certified Shorthand Reporter (IL), do hereby certify
that the meeting aforementioned was held on the time and
in the place previously described.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and
seal.



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