

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

In the Matter of The Empire District Gas     )  
Company's d/b/a Liberty Request to File     )  
Tariffs to Change its Rates for Natural Gas   )  
Service   )

Case No. GR-2021-0320

**OPC'S LOCAL PUBLIC HEARINGS AND NOTICE RECOMMENDATIONS**

COMES NOW the Office of Public Counsel ("OPC") and, in response to the Commission's November 10, 2021, order directed the parties to, "[n]o later than November 19, 2021, . . . file a pleading recommending the number, locations, dates and times for local public hearing," recommends to the Commission that it hold four local public hearings in this case at the following locations, dates, and times that follow below.

Before making specific recommendations, OPC offers that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission should conduct its local public hearings with appropriate protocols in place to protect all present from exposure to COVID-19, ideally while giving members of the public the opportunity to appear in person to testify and offer any writings or other evidence, and also provide the option for members of the public to participate virtually.<sup>1</sup>

- (1) Due to the geographic scope of Liberty's service area and that this is the first rate case for Liberty for over a decade and the first since Algonquin Power and Utilities Corp. acquired it, the Commission should hold four local public hearings—one each at **Sedalia, Maryville, Chillicothe, and Nevada, Missouri**. To maximize public participation, but also balance the risk of exposure to COVID-19, in order of declining preference, the Commission should conduct those hearings as follows:           At each

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the parties do not agree on the importance to the public of the Commission hearing directly from the public at live in-person hearings.

hearing members of the public have the opportunity to appear in person to testify and offer any writings or other evidence, or to appear virtually, at their option;

(2) At specified hearings members of the public have the opportunity to appear in person to testify and to offer any writings or other evidence, and at a different specified hearing they only may appear virtually; and

(3) At all local public hearings members of the public only may appear virtually.

Based on Liberty's last general case (Case No. GR-2009-0434), but without confirming their availabilities on the dates and at the times suggested, OPC recommends the local public hearing schedule that follows:

**Maryville**

6:00 P.M., Thursday, February 17, 2022  
Room 214 of the Everett W. Brown Education Hall,  
Northwest Missouri State University,  
800 University Drive, Maryville, Missouri

**Chillicothe**

6:00 P.M., Tuesday, February 22, 2022  
ITV Lab, Grand River Technical School  
1200 Fair Street, Chillicothe, Missouri

**Sedalia**

6:00 P.M., Wednesday, February 23, 2022  
Distance Technology Training Program Classroom of the US Army National Guard  
Armory,  
2001 Clarendon Road, Sedalia, Missouri

**Nevada**

6:00 P.M., Thursday, February 24, 2022  
Cafeteria of the Nevada TeleCenter,  
2015 N. West Street, Nevada, Missouri

Should the Commission decide not to hold local public hearings where members of the public have the opportunity to appear in person to testify and offer any writings or other evidence, OPC does not oppose Staff and Liberty's recommendation that the Commission hold two virtual local public hearings, one at 6:00 P.M., Thursday, February 17, 2022, and one at noon, Tuesday,

February 22, 2022.

OPC also recommends that the Commission order Liberty to mail to its customers a local public hearing notice similar in form to the following. It is OPC's understanding that for Liberty to distribute such a customer notice to all of its customers as a bill insert, it would need to know the final form of the notice on or about the end of this calendar year.

### **NOTICE OF LOCAL PUBLIC HEARINGS ON LIBERTY'S GAS RATES**

On August 23, 2021, The Empire District Gas Company d/b/a. Liberty filed a general rate request with the Missouri Public Service Commission ("Commission"). Liberty is seeking in this proceeding to increase its annual gross revenues by approximately \$1.36 million, or approximately 4.16%, or 6.64% excluding gas revenues. As part of this proceeding, Liberty is proposing to increase its fixed residential customer charge from \$16.50 per month to \$18.10 per month. For a residential customer using 54 CCF of natural gas a month, Liberty's proposed increase is approximately \$2.71 each month, or 9.9% percent. Liberty estimates that the proposed rate increase will have the following annual bill impacts:

Residential	10.1% (600 CCF/year)
SGS	1.8% ((1,000 CCF/year)
SCSM	10.4% (7,000 CCF/year)
SCSL	-23.2% (10,000 CCF/year)
LGS	6.4% (100,000 CCF/year)

### **LOCAL PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, for public safety, the Commission will hold in-person local public hearings where social distancing and mandatory face masks will be observed. The Commission is holding question and answer sessions followed by local public hearings where members of the public may participate in-person, by WebEx video, or by telephone. The Commission has scheduled question and answer sessions to begin at 6:00 P.M., Thursday, February 17, 2022, Tuesday, February 22, 2022, Wednesday, February 23, 2022, and Thursday, February 24, 2022. Each will be followed by in-person, WebEx video, and telephone conference local public hearings where anyone may appear, testify, and/or provide documents to the Commission for its consideration in this general electric rate case. To facilitate an orderly hearing, any member of the public who wishes to testify at a local public hearing should register to do so by sending his/her first and last name to [pscinfo@psc.mo.gov](mailto:pscinfo@psc.mo.gov), or by calling (800) 392-4211 by 5:00 p.m. no later than the last business day before the hearing.

<b>Local Public Hearing date</b>	<b>Register by date</b>
Thursday, February 17, 2022	Wednesday, February 16, 2022
Tuesday, February 22, 2022	Monday, February 21, 2022
Wednesday, February 23, 2022	Tuesday, February 22, 2022
Thursday, February 24, 2022	Wednesday, February 23, 2022

To attend one of the local public hearings in person, please refer to the following chart:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Start Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
Thursday, February 17, 2022	6:00 P.M	Room 214 of the Everett W. Brown Education Hall, Northwest Missouri State University, 800 University Drive, <b>Maryville</b> , Missouri
Tuesday, February 22, 2022	6:00 P.M	ITV Lab, Grand River Technical School 1200 Fair Street, <b>Chillicothe</b> , Missouri
Wednesday, February 23, 2022	6:00 P.M	Distance Technology Training Program Classroom of the US Army National Guard Armory, 2001 Clarendon Road, <b>Sedalia</b> , Missouri
Thursday, February 24, 2022	6:00 P.M	Cafeteria of the Nevada TeleCenter, 2015 N. West Street, <b>Nevada</b> , Missouri

To attend one of the local public hearings virtually by Webex or by telephone, please refer to the following chart:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Start Time</b>	<b>At the time of the hearing, dial 1-855-718-6621 and enter the Access Code/Password</b>
Thursday, February 17, 2022	6:00 P.M	Access Code: Password: 0320
Tuesday, February 22, 2022	6:00 P.M	Access Code: Password: 0320
Wednesday, February 23, 2022	6:00 P.M	Access Code: Password: 0320
Thursday, February 24, 2022	6:00 P.M	Access Code: Password: 0320

Anyone wishing to comment on Liberty's requests may also do so by submitting them electronically through the Commission's Electronic Filing and Information System at <https://www.efis.psc.mo.gov/mpsc/Comments.html> (Please reference Case No. GR-2021-0320). **Do not include any information in a public comment that you do not wish to be made public.** Anyone also may contact the Staff of the Commission and/or



**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that copies of the foregoing have been mailed, hand-delivered, transmitted by facsimile or electronically mailed to all counsel of record this 19<sup>th</sup> day of November 2021.

/s/ Nathan Williams