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STATE OF MISSOURI  
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing

February 18, 2014

Joplin, Missouri

Volume 4

In the Matter of Missouri )  
Gas Energy, A Division of ) File No. GR-2014-007  
Laclede Gas Company )

KIM BURTON, REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

WILLIAM P. KENNEY, COMMISSIONER

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A P P E A R A N C E S

For Missouri Gas Energy:

Mr. Todd J. Jacobs  
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 JUDGE BURTON: Let's go ahead and go on the  
4 record, please. Missouri Public Service Commission  
5 has set this time for a local public hearing in Case  
6 No. GR-2014-0007 in the matter of Missouri Gas Energy,  
7 Incorporated's, filing of revised tariffs to increase  
8 its annual revenues for natural gas. I'm Kim Burton;  
9 I'm the Regulatory Law Judge who's been assigned to  
10 preside over this local hearing.

11 Now, I'm sure you've already had a chance during  
12 the Q and A session to understand a little bit about  
13 what the Public Service Commission does. And we have  
14 with us here today Commissioner Kenney. At this time,  
15 I'm going to let him offer a few statements.

16 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Thank you very much.  
17 Folks, I'd like to welcome you and I'd like to thank  
18 our staff for the excellent work you do in preparing  
19 for these and the information you provide.

20 My name is Bill Kenney. I've been on the Public  
21 Service Commission going into my second year now. I  
22 live in Lee's Summit and am also a Missouri Gas Energy  
23 user.

24 We will have, just like this hearing, we're  
25 scheduled to have five more hearings in the other

1 areas, which is mainly in the Kansas City area. These  
2 public forums are so that we can hear from you on the  
3 issues that are going to be before us.

4 The other four Commissioners -- we currently have  
5 three Commissioners; we have one vacancy -- they  
6 will -- they have an opportunity to read the reports  
7 from our court reporter. Everything is being  
8 recorded. And they will also make sure that they look  
9 at all the information, because it's just sometimes  
10 difficult for all of us to be in one place at the same  
11 place.

12 But, anyway, I just wanted to thank you very much  
13 for your involvement today and thank you for coming  
14 out here.

15 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you. Now, this is an  
16 official hearing of the Missouri Public Service  
17 Commission, and so statements and testimony of the  
18 witnesses and those who are going to be offering  
19 testimony today will have to be under oath, and we do  
20 have a court reporter here.

21 So I will be calling you up one at a time based on  
22 the list and those who have designated their names,  
23 and if there's any other individuals at the end who  
24 wish to make any comments for the record, please feel  
25 free to let me know at that time.

1           At this time I'm going to go ahead and ask the  
2 attorneys to go ahead and enter their appearance.  
3 We'll go ahead and start with the company  
4 representative.

5           MR. JACOBS: Todd Jacobs, J-A-C-O-B-S, on  
6 behalf of Missouri Gas Energy.

7           JUDGE BURTON: Thank you, Mr. Jacobs. And  
8 then for the Office of Public Counsel.

9           MR. POSTON: Thank you. Marc Poston  
10 appearing for the Office of Public Counsel.

11           JUDGE BURTON: All right. Thank you. And  
12 for the staff of the Missouri Public Service  
13 Commission.

14           MR. ANTAL: Thank you. Alex Antal for the  
15 staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission, P.O.  
16 Box 360, Jefferson City, 65102.

17           JUDGE BURTON: Okay. Now, at this time I'm  
18 going to be calling you up based off of the list, and  
19 I ask that you please come up here to provide your  
20 testimony. I will swear you in at that time and I ask  
21 that you state your name and spell it for the court  
22 reporter, and please speak clearly.

23           After that, after you've provided your testimony,  
24 I'm going to allow the attorneys an opportunity to  
25 question you, if they have any questions based off of

1 your testimony, and Commissioner Kenney will also have  
2 an opportunity to ask you any questions if he has any.

3 Attorneys, I'm going to go ahead and assume that  
4 you don't have any questions unless you indicate  
5 otherwise, okay? All right, then. At this time I'll  
6 go ahead and have John Joines.

7 Now, Mr. Joines, would you please raise your right  
8 hand.

9 JOHN JOINES, CCAP,  
10 being first duly sworn by the Regulatory Law Judge,  
11 testified:

12 JUDGE BURTON: Would you please state your  
13 name and spell it for the record.

14 MR. JOINES: I will. My name is John,  
15 J-O-H-N, Joines, J-O-I-N-E-S.

16 JUDGE BURTON: Okay, and would you please  
17 state your address.

18 MR. JOINES: It's 1956 South Shamrock Lane,  
19 Carthage, Missouri.

20 JUDGE BURTON: All right, thank you.

21 MR. JOINES: First off, I'd just like to  
22 say that I am very disappointed in the number of  
23 people that have shown up when MGE has 500,000 people  
24 that they actually serve. And if my math did me right  
25 tonight, that's .000023 percent of the people that

1 have actually shown up to provide testimony. What a  
2 disaster that is, and I apologize for that.

3 Next, I would just like to say, Thank you,  
4 Mr. Kenney. I want to also say thank you to the  
5 Public Service Commission itself, to MGE, and to  
6 Laclede for showing up this evening and being a part  
7 of this. In addition, we have been so well served by  
8 the Office of Public Counsel, and I would be remiss if  
9 I didn't thank them for all the service they do on  
10 behalf of the people that we serve.

11 I serve as the Chief Executive Officer for the  
12 Jasper County Public Housing Administration, and we  
13 serve Barton, Jasper, Newton, and McDonald Counties in  
14 Southwest Missouri.

15 In addition to that, I also serve in the capacity  
16 of Chief Executive Officer for Economic Security  
17 Corporation of the Southwest Area. We're the local  
18 Community Action agency that serves low income  
19 individuals in those four counties, as well.

20 I come here tonight just to share with you that we  
21 understand. We understand the need for additional  
22 capacity. We understand the need for distribution  
23 lines for pipes, whatever it might take to be able to  
24 transport a product. So, you know, this happens.  
25 It's not the end of the world. It is an

1 inconvenience, and for those that I serve, it's a  
2 major inconvenience.

3 Out of the 6,021,988 people that live in the State  
4 of Missouri, 947,792 of them are at or below the 100  
5 percent poverty income guideline. On average, low  
6 income households spend about fourteen percent of  
7 their annual income just on energy costs; whereas,  
8 middle and upper income individuals usually pay only  
9 three to six percent. It wouldn't matter if MGE were  
10 asking for an increase of one dollar a month. It's  
11 just a dollar a month that these individuals don't  
12 have, and somewhere they've got to come up with that.

13 As an advocate for these individuals, we just want  
14 you to understand that every time there is a rate  
15 increase, it has a negative impact upon these  
16 individuals.

17 Having said that, I want to tell you that this is  
18 about as good a system as there could possibly be. It  
19 allows for everybody to be heard, whether they decide  
20 that they may do so or not, but it also gives fair  
21 representation for all class of people and we applaud  
22 you for that.

23 I just also would say that our experience with  
24 MGE -- we've not had much experience with Laclede yet,  
25 but I am familiar with their service around the state.



1 And I'd just like to say that for MGE, we're a fan of  
2 yours and we appreciate the wonderful service that you  
3 provide on our behalf. And I know on those days when  
4 it's cold and where there's disasters and whatever it  
5 may be, it's not pleasurable to get outside and go to  
6 work and try to fix issues. But they do it and they  
7 do it, I'd say, very, very well, and I compliment them  
8 for that.

9 So I will leave this evening having told you of  
10 the need of low income people. But I would encourage  
11 in the future that when we talk about increases, that  
12 there be benefits for those less fortunate. When I  
13 talk of MGE or Laclede, they are both very generous in  
14 their weatherization program that they provide through  
15 tariffs that have been decided upon by the Public  
16 Service Commission. What a wonderful way to be able  
17 to take a problem and resolve it with a good solution.  
18 And I would encourage that type of involvement in  
19 future rate cases. Thank you.

20 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you, Mr. Joines.

21 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Mr. Joines, on your  
22 four-county area with the Jasper County Housing  
23 Authority, how many individuals do you probably work  
24 with on a given year?

25 MR. JOINES: Oh, we serve well over a

1 thousand. We have 500 Section 8 vouchers that we  
2 serve, but in addition to that, we provide all sorts  
3 of homeless programs, what we also refer to as  
4 transitional housing programs, which are programs for  
5 homeless families with children. And we serve well  
6 over a thousand individuals just within our own  
7 organization.

8 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: We all know the  
9 problems you've gone through after the tornado and  
10 during that area, the homelessness, and we appreciate  
11 all the work you do.

12 I will tell you this, one of the issues from a  
13 national standpoint with the National Association of  
14 Regulatory Utility Commissioners that we are focusing  
15 on is what you just talked about, is how to get a  
16 little -- we have conferences and we have seminars on  
17 how to try to manage the rate-making process to help  
18 the less fortunate.

19 MR. JOINES: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: And that's pretty  
21 much on the national front. We have a lot of  
22 information going on around that. So I appreciate  
23 your testimony.

24 MR. JOINES: Thank you very much.

25 JUDGE BURTON: Seeing no questions, you're

1 excused. Thank you very much, Mr. Joines.

2 MR. JOINES: Thank you, ma'am.

3 JUDGE BURTON: Next the Commission will  
4 hear from Mr. Todd Steinmann. Would you please raise  
5 your right hand.

6 TODD STEINMANN,  
7 OACAC Weatherization Director,  
8 being first duly sworn by the Regulatory Law Judge,  
9 testified:

10 JUDGE BURTON: Okay. Would you please  
11 state your name for the record and spell it, please.

12 MR. STEINMANN: Todd, T-O-D-D, Steinmann,  
13 S-T-E-I-N-M-A-N-N.

14 JUDGE BURTON: All right. And your  
15 address.

16 MR. STEINMANN: 2643 West College Road,  
17 Springfield, Missouri.

18 I, too, also work for Community Action, as does  
19 Mr. Joines. I'm the Weatherization Director for  
20 OACAC. And perhaps a solution to the low income is  
21 maybe more money going to the weatherization program,  
22 and that's what my statement is about this evening.

23 As one of the sub-grantees who administer the  
24 Missouri Gas Energy Low-Income Weatherization Program,  
25 the Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation

1 Weatherization Program is requesting that Missouri Gas  
2 Energy continue to allow the maximum amount of dollars  
3 spent per home average to continue to be the same as  
4 the Department of Economic Development/Division of  
5 Energy. OACAC Weatherization Program is also  
6 requesting that all rules and regulations in the  
7 performance of the MGE Weatherization Program also be  
8 the same as DED rules and regulations in the  
9 implementation of the Department of Energy  
10 Weatherization Program in the State of Missouri.

11 OACAC would also like to thank MGE for all the MGE  
12 customers that these funds have helped over the years  
13 by reducing their utility bill and helping to ensure  
14 the safety of their gas appliances through the  
15 Weatherization Program.

16 On average, a customer that gets a weatherization  
17 service saves \$400 per year, which goes a lot towards  
18 any kind of increase that might occur. That's all I  
19 have.

20 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: I have a question.

22 JUDGE BURTON: Yeah.

23 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Does your  
24 organization have an annual day that you get out and  
25 do -- that you include the rest of the community to

1 participate?

2 MR. STEINMANN: Well, we do.

3 Weatherization day is October 30th.

4 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Okay.

5 MR. STEINMANN: That's nationwide. Of  
6 course "participate" is kind of a, you know --

7 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Understood. Because  
8 I know in Kansas City, we have a deal called  
9 "Christmas in October," and a lot of it's  
10 weatherization.

11 MR. STEINMANN: Right.

12 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: And that takes place  
13 during -- oh, usually late September, mid-October, and  
14 it's an amazing process, the businesses that get  
15 involved and the corporations. Like Leggett & Platt,  
16 here, would be a great participant, I'm sure.

17 MR. STEINMANN: Right.

18 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: I'm just curious.

19 MR. STEINMANN: And we do have events where  
20 the public and certain politicians come and attend and  
21 we can give --

22 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: The politicians just  
23 come. I'm a former politician. They just come to  
24 show up.

25 MR. STEINMANN: -- give more knowledge

1 about the program to them, yes.

2 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: All right.

3 MR. STEINMANN: But as far as having people  
4 participate in delivery of the service, unfortunately  
5 insurance has ruled the world and our liability would  
6 be too great in order to do that.

7 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Okay. Thank you.

8 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you, Mr. Steinmann.  
9 You're excused. Is this something that you'd like to  
10 have admitted to the record?

11 MR. STEINMANN: Yes. That's my statement I  
12 just made.

13 JUDGE BURTON: Okay. If this is just your  
14 statement of your testimony, it was taken in the  
15 record, and all Commissioners will have an opportunity  
16 to review that as part of the record.

17 MR. STEINMANN: Thank you.

18 JUDGE BURTON: Next we'll hear from Tammy  
19 Walker. Would you please raise your right hand.

20 TAMMY WALKER,  
21 being first duly sworn by the Regulatory Law Judge,  
22 testified:

23 JUDGE BURTON: Okay. Would you please  
24 state your name for the record.

25 MS. WALKER: Tammy Walker, T-A-M-M-Y

1 W-A-L-K-E-R.

2 JUDGE BURTON: And your address?

3 MS. WALKER: 101 Schimm Circle Drive, Carl  
4 Junction.

5 JUDGE BURTON: Could you spell Schimm,  
6 please.

7 MS. WALKER: S-C-H-I-M-M.

8 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you.

9 MS. WALKER: I'm the Director For Community  
10 Development, and I also work for Economic Security  
11 Corporation, and we are the local Community Action  
12 agency. We operate the Energy Assistance Program and  
13 the Energy Crisis Intervention Program, which are the  
14 largest utility programs in the four-county area.

15 Energy Assistance helps low income customers who  
16 qualify with a one-time payment towards their primary  
17 heat source during the winter months. This year, so  
18 far, 45,680 natural gas customers have already been  
19 helped statewide with this particular program.

20 Last year our agency processed 6,054 applications  
21 from October to March during a six-month period of  
22 time. Forty-eight percent of those households that  
23 applied were elderly and/or disabled. This year, so  
24 far, we've processed 5,597 applications, and 46  
25 percent of them are elderly and/or disabled.

1 Fifty-eight percent of those households have incomes  
2 under 75 percent of poverty. For a one-person  
3 household, this is \$718 a month. The average  
4 household size right now this year is 2.44.

5 I'd like to highlight three families who received  
6 assistance from our program this year. I've changed  
7 their names. "Jane" is in her 40s and disabled.  
8 She's a homeowner and her primary heat source is  
9 natural gas. Her home has been weatherized. She  
10 receives \$652 per month in Social Security and \$78 per  
11 month in SSI. She does receive some food stamps.

12 "Jan" is in her 50s and disabled. She's a renter  
13 and her primary heat source is natural gas. Her home  
14 has not been weatherized. She receives \$639 per month  
15 in SSI. She does receive some food stamps.

16 "Sue and Sam" are married. He's 65 years old and  
17 she's 58 years old. They are both disabled. They're  
18 renters. Their primary heat is natural gas, and their  
19 home has not been weatherized. He receives \$1,088 a  
20 month in Social Security, and she receives \$522 in  
21 SSI. They do not qualify for food stamps.

22 The rising costs of basic needs is a huge  
23 challenge for our customers who struggle each month to  
24 make ends meet. Any rate increase for the  
25 economically disadvantaged and our most vulnerable



1 populations, which are elderly and disabled  
2 households, is too much.

3 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Thank you.

5 JUDGE BURTON: Have a seat. Next, the  
6 Commission will hear from Mr. Gary Sheets. Please  
7 raise your right hand.

8 GARY SHEETS,  
9 being first duly sworn by the Regulatory Law Judge,  
10 testified:

11 JUDGE BURTON: Okay. Would you please  
12 state your name and spell it for the record.

13 MR. SHEETS: Gary Sheets, G-A-R-Y  
14 S-H-E-E-T-S.

15 JUDGE BURTON: And your address?

16 MR. SHEETS: 1729 Glenwood Place, Carthage,  
17 Missouri.

18 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you.

19 MR. SHEETS: Before coming here this  
20 evening, I reread the notice for the public hearing,  
21 and I notice that in the first paragraph of this, that  
22 MGE last received their general rate increase in  
23 February of 2010. So that's right at four years since  
24 they've had a rate increase, and for that I do say  
25 thank you, as well. MGE, as I stated earlier, I've

1 had a great working relationship with MGE and we are  
2 an MGE customer personally.

3 But what I did, I just took some simple math here  
4 on the difference between the base rate that I pay  
5 right now and what is proposed for the five months of  
6 cold weather, because I, as this lady back here in the  
7 back, I also shut mine off during the summer. The  
8 only utility that we have is a gas furnace that runs  
9 off of gas and everything else is total electric.

10 So we found a long time ago that by shutting the  
11 gas off for the seven months, I'm still money ahead by  
12 paying the \$45 that it is for a reconnect fee and I  
13 still save money.

14 So, with that being said, the 26.88 times 12  
15 months comes to a total of 322.56. And with the  
16 proposed rate increase of 40.95 for five months and  
17 22.31 for seven months, that brings that total of  
18 those two to \$360.92 a year.

19 We're actually only talking about a difference of  
20 \$38.36. I took that, divided by 12, and actually MGE  
21 is only asking for a rate increase of \$3.20. In the  
22 last four years, I think that's more than fair, to ask  
23 for \$3.20.

24 What I don't think is fair is the five months that  
25 it would go to the 40.95 for those that would not have

1 gas on for the seven months. It's like they're  
2 penalizing us for using gas, is how I see it. And I  
3 realize that's not it. I've heard the other  
4 testimonies from the representatives. I know that's  
5 not it, but that's what it looks like to me.

6 And so by taking that \$3.20 and adding it to the  
7 base rate that I now pay of 26.88, I would pay a base  
8 charge of \$30.08 a month for whatever time I use it.  
9 If I use over the seven months, then that's up to me  
10 to pay the reconnect fee, or if I use it less than  
11 seven months, then I get a lower reconnect fee. And  
12 that's -- mine was very simple math, just as a public  
13 user, and I just want to make that known.

14 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you. Any other  
15 questions?

16 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: No. Thank you.

17 JUDGE BURTON: You're excused. Next we'll  
18 hear from Vicki Dvorak. Could you please raise your  
19 right hand.

20 VICKI DVORAK,  
21 being first duly sworn by the Regulatory Law Judge,  
22 testified:

23 JUDGE BURTON: Okay. Would you please  
24 state your name and spell it for the record.

25 MS. DVORAK: Yes. Vicki Dvorak; it's

1 V-I-C-K-I D-V-O-R-A-K.

2 JUDGE BURTON: All right. Could you please  
3 state your address.

4 MS. DVORAK: 3428 Ridge Drive, Joplin,  
5 Missouri.

6 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you.

7 MS. DVORAK: I read you are planning a \$23  
8 million rate increase by increasing the, quote, fixed  
9 fee you charge each user. I understand that this  
10 fixed fee is for operation and maintenance of your  
11 lines.

12 I have been a Joplin resident for the past  
13 twenty-five years, working for a local manufacturer  
14 twenty-one of those years. Unfortunately, the status  
15 quo with many companies are to let their aging  
16 employees and those making good money go in lieu of  
17 hiring younger, cheaper employees. They offer  
18 severance packages which can only last a few years at  
19 best.

20 In 1980, I made \$11.85 per hour, and my gas bill  
21 was a mere \$14 per month.

22 In 1989, after moving to Joplin, I took a pay  
23 decrease to move here and made \$8.63 per hour.

24 Now, in 2014, twenty-five years later, I make -- I  
25 net \$8.69 per hour, a whole six cents more than

1 twenty-five years ago. I work for the largest  
2 employer in Joplin.

3 As you all are aware, the entire economic climate  
4 has changed over the past several years. All  
5 utilities have drastically increased, not only  
6 utilities but gasoline, freight cost caused by higher  
7 gasoline prices, and groceries caused by higher  
8 freight costs, et cetera, et cetera. These are basic  
9 needs. These affect our basic needs. These are not  
10 frivolous costs. Unfortunately wages have not kept up  
11 with these drastic increases, as I have already  
12 spoken.

13 I find it very difficult to choke down another  
14 fixed rate increase of any amount in order to offset  
15 your cost of distributing gas. You received an  
16 increase in your, quote, fixed rate in 2007 and again  
17 in 2010. Your consumers, including myself, are  
18 struggling with the fee you charge on top of our gas  
19 consumption.

20 Please do not ask the working poor and the elderly  
21 to pay for another \$23 million rate increase. I  
22 strongly agree that the \$36 spread over several months  
23 is not a lot of money, but as the first gentleman  
24 spoke, even a dollar is another dollar out of our  
25 pockets that we can't afford.

1 I know that you have suggested this tiered, I  
2 think that they used a different term, but a tiered  
3 price increase. If this should go through, I have an  
4 issue with this tiered price increase, so much per  
5 winter months and lesser in the summer months.

6 I have a problem with this simply because there is  
7 not enough money. And I keep my furnace at 65 degrees  
8 during the winter months, and I put on flannel PJs and  
9 cover up with a throw in order to stay warm.

10 I do believe that in the letter that I have read  
11 from Marc Poston, the Office of Public Counsel, where  
12 he is suggesting that maybe we go -- if you have to  
13 pass an increase, that maybe we go to one where you  
14 actually decrease the cost for consumption and then  
15 add a volume-based rate for every CCF that we use.

16 And that by doing this volume-based rate increase,  
17 that it would be a little more fair; that a person who  
18 uses the less gas then has the ability to turn down  
19 the thermostat even more, if they cannot afford, for  
20 heat. And then if the person who can afford to heat  
21 their house at 72 and be comfortable, if they can  
22 afford to pay for it, that's wonderful.

23 That's all I have. Thank you very much for your  
24 time.

25 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Thank you.

1 JUDGE BURTON: Thank you, Ms. Dvorak.

2 You're excused.

3 That is all the individuals that have been listed  
4 previously. Is there anyone else who would like to  
5 make a comment for the record?

6 All right. Seeing no hands, I just want to go  
7 ahead and thank Missouri Southern State University for  
8 the use of their facilities tonight, and just state  
9 that any of the comments that were stated tonight or  
10 expressed tonight are not those of the University.  
11 Thank you, everyone, for coming, and we'll go ahead  
12 and go off the record.

13 (Local Public Hearing concluded at  
14 6:54 p.m.)

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I N D E X

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E X H I B I T S

(No Exhibits)



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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

3

4 STATE OF MISSOURI )

5 ) ss.

6 COUNTY OF GREENE )

7

8

I, Christine Richele, Certified Shorthand

9

Reporter, Registered Professional Reporter, Certified

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Court Reporter #385, Certified Realtime Reporter (Mo),

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within and for the State of Missouri, do hereby

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certify that I was personally present at the public

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hearing as set forth in the caption sheet hereof; that

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I then and there took down in stenotype the

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proceedings had at said time, which were thereafter

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transcribed by me and is a true and accurate

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reproduction of the proceedings, set forth in the

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preceding pages.

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Christine Richele, CSR, CRR, CCR #385

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Registered Professional Reporter

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