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STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing
June 30, 2014
Sikeston, Missouri
Volume 7

In The Matter of Liberty Utilities (Midstates
Natural Gas) Corp. D/B/A Liberty Utilities Tariff
Revisions Designed to Implement A General Rate
Increase For Natural Gas Service in the Missouri
Service Areas of the Company

File No. GR-2014-0152

RONALD D. PRIDGIN, Presiding
DEPUTY CHIEF REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

ROBERT KENNEY, Chairman
SCOTT RUPP, Commissioner

Reported By: Tina Ewbank

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DEPUTY CHIEF REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

ROBERT KENNEY, Chairman
SCOTT RUPP, Commissioner

PUBLIC HEARING HELD, on June 30, 2014,
between the hours of six o'clock in the afternoon
and eight o'clock in the afternoon at the Clinton
Building, 501 Campanella Drive, Sikeston, Missouri,
before Tina R. Ewbank, a Certified Court Reporter
on behalf of the Missouri Public Service
Commission.

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1 (Start time 6:38 p.m.)

2 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Good evening and welcome to
3 the Sikeston hearing for Liberty Utilities in Case
4 Number GR-2014-0152. I am Ron Pridgin. I'm one of
5 the judges at the Commission. And with me this
6 evening are two of the five commissioners. On my
7 left is Commissioner Rupp. On my right is Chairman
8 of the commission, Commissioner Kenney. Before I
9 go any further, let me ask if they have any opening
10 remarks. Mr. Chairman?

11 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Good evening everybody.
12 Thank you for taking time out of your Monday busy
13 schedule to come down to participate in this
14 process. This is the portion of the local public
15 hearing where you will have an opportunity to
16 testify, you'll be sworn in, and the court reporter
17 will take down your testimony, and it will be
18 transcribed and there will be a record of your
19 testimony here. As the judge indicated, there are
20 five commissioners on the commission.
21 And only two of us were able to be here today, but
22 please rest assured that they will have the
23 opportunity to read the transcription of this local
24 public hearing, and they will have an opportunity
25 to take into account the comments and the remarks

1 that you provide here today. Your testimony and
2 your comments here are an important part of the
3 process, and we appreciate you taking the time to
4 be here. Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Thank you for being
6 here. This is also a great opportunity for you
7 guys to let us know anything maybe that doesn't
8 have to do with the rate case, but can deal with
9 customer service, billing, any issues or any
10 complaints or any positive things you would like us
11 to know about the company and how they interact
12 with you. This is also a good time for you to let
13 us know that so we can take those matters into
14 consideration as well.

15 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Commissioner, thank you.
16 Let me get oral entries of appearing counsel,
17 please, beginning with the company?

18 MR. DORITY: Thank you, Judge Pridgin. On
19 behalf of Liberty Utilities, my name is Larry
20 Dority with the firm Fischer & Dority. Our address
21 is 101 Madison Street, Suite 400, Jefferson City,
22 Missouri, 65101.

23 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Mr. Dority, thank you. On
24 behalf of the Staff Commission, please?

25 MR. KEEVIL: Yes, Judge. Appearing On

1 behalf of the Missouri Building Service Commission
2 staff, Jeffrey Keevil. My address is 200 Madison
3 Street, Post Office Box 360, Jefferson City,
4 Missouri, 65102.

5 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Mr. Keevil, thank you. On
6 behalf of the office of public counsel?

7 MR. POSTON: Thank you. Mark Poston,
8 attorney for the Office of Public Counsel and the
9 public.

10 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Mr. Poston, thank you.
11 Does anyone else wish to enter an appearance?
12 All right. The commission as we said earlier has
13 five commissioners. They are appointed by the
14 governor and confirmed by the senate. They also
15 employ a staff of engineers, accountants, attorneys
16 financial analysts and other specialists in the
17 field of utility regulation. This is an official
18 hearing of the Commission, and the statements and
19 testimony will be recorded by the court reporter
20 and must be given under oath. Again, as the
21 Chairman said, the purpose of the hearing is to
22 hear from you. The company will not present
23 witnesses this evening and will not answer
24 questions during this portion of the hearing. When
25 your name is called, if you will please take the

1 oath, and I will ask you a few preliminary
2 questions such as your name, and I'll ask you to
3 spell your name for the court reporter so she can
4 get it in the record correctly, and I'll ask if
5 you're a customer of Liberty Utilities, and then
6 I'll ask you to make your statement for the
7 Commission. When you're finished, if you'll please
8 stay at the microphone in case the commissioners
9 have any questions for you.

10 If there is someone who wishes to testify, but for
11 religious reasons does not wish to take an oath,
12 please let me know, and I'll ask your testimony be
13 affirmed instead. Does anyone have any questions
14 before I call the first witness? All right.

15 Seeing none, I hope I read this name correctly, is
16 it Jack Fletcher? Yes, sir. Will you come forward
17 to be sworn please?

18 WITNESS: JACK FLETCHER

19 (Sworn in by Judge Pridgin)

20 JUDGE PRIDGIN: If you would please state
21 your name and spell it for the court reporter?

22 MR. FLETCHER: Jack Fletcher, J-a-c-k,
23 F-l-e-t-c-h-e-r.

24 JUDGE PRIDGIN: And are you a customer of
25 Liberty Utilities?

1 MR. FLETCHER: Yes, I am.

2 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Okay. What is your
3 statement, sir?

4 MR. FLETCHER: Couple of them. I noticed
5 that you're asking for a rate increase from 316 in
6 my area to 905. That's awfully close to 200
7 percent, and I think that's just utterly
8 ridiculous. I noticed in their brochure that they
9 have spent 16 million dollars. Well, it takes that
10 to run a business and obviously in the old rate the
11 had some type of set aside for that and surely they
12 don't expect to get it all back at one time. With
13 that big of an increase, as I've said earlier, a
14 dollar a customer, 55,000 customers, they're going
15 to recover pretty fast, and I know they're going to
16 get more than a dollar increase from each customer.
17 I mean being a businessman, I don't expect to
18 recover my costs all in one year. So I think that
19 it's just completely ridiculous. And I have a
20 second statement.

21 JUDGE PRIDGIN: When you're ready.

22 MR. FLETCHER: The second statement is I
23 know from -- I didn't know this, but I know it now
24 from what they said earlier, that the rate increase
25 is based more on operating costs than it is from

1 the purchase of gas. But I spend a lot of time in
2 Colorado, and I just got back from spending a month
3 there. And I know the area between New Castle and
4 Grand Junction pretty well. And about five or six
5 years ago, they started drilling gas wells out
6 there like you wouldn't believe. Everywhere you
7 looked they were drilling gas wells. And I'm sure
8 it went into the hundreds. And when I was out
9 there this time, I saw three more. But the local
10 people tell me that the gas companies have shut
11 some wells down, laid off a lot of people, and the
12 reason is there's a fleck of natural gas. So I
13 would think that that would benefit other local gas
14 company in their profit.

15 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Mr. Fletcher, thank you.
16 If you'll stay at the microphone, we might have
17 some questions. Mr. Chairman, do you have any
18 questions?

19 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Mr. Fletcher, thank you
20 very much for your testimony and thanks for being
21 here tonight. Let me just ask you if you could
22 share any thoughts or comments or concerns that you
23 have regarding the quality and caliber of the
24 service that you've received from the company, if
25 you have any thoughts about that or anything you'd

1 like to share about the service that you received?

2 MR. FLETCHER: No, not one way or the
3 other. It's just there.

4 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Well, thank you very much
5 for taking the time out to be here tonight.

6 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Thank you, sir. We
7 appreciate your testimony. And I apologize if I
8 don't read this next name correctly. Is it Autry
9 Thurman? I hope I'm somewhere close.

10 MR. THURMAN: It's Anthony Thurman.

11 JUDGE PRIDGIN: I'm very sorry.

12 WITNESS: ANTHONY THURMAN

13 (Sworn in by Judge Pridgin)

14 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Thank you, sir. And if
15 you'll state your name and spell it for the court
16 reporter?

17 MR. THURMAN: My name is Anthony Thurman,
18 A-n-t-h-o-n-y, T-h-u-r-m-a-n.

19 JUDGE PRIDGIN: And are you a customer of
20 Liberty Utilities?

21 MR. THURMAN: Yes.

22 JUDGE PRIDGIN: All right. What is your
23 statement, sir?

24 MR. THURMAN: I believe that the consumer
25 should get some kind of statement from the company

1 as far as operating cost increase and upgrades that
2 have been made that we see and don't see. That way
3 we know we're paying for something that's
4 benefiting us and not just because somebody bought
5 the company, they knew what they were buying when
6 they bought it, and they want more money out of it.
7 Because at my house, my grandmother, not Atlas, but
8 the company that had the gas company before them,
9 she had copper pipes in her house because her house
10 is older too, and they gave her a certificate for
11 \$500.00 to have them switched to the iron pipes so
12 it was up to code, and I found out at my house that
13 I had to do the same thing this last year, and I
14 was refused such, you know, any kind of
15 compensation for having to switch to iron pipe. As
16 far as any kind of improvements, I have to pay for
17 them myself, so I'd like to see proof of what I'm
18 having to pay for. That's it.

19 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Thank you, Mr. Thurman.

20 Mr. Chairman, any questions?

21 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Just to follow up on that
22 last point that you made. Have you had an
23 opportunity to talk with anybody at the company
24 about the difference between what your mom received
25 and what you received for the improvements and the

1 replacement of the pipe?

2 MR. THURMAN: They just told me they
3 wouldn't do that.

4 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: I would encourage maybe
5 if you would like further explanation maybe to
6 visit with some of the employees of the company
7 that are here tonight. As Commissioner Rupp said,
8 this is a good opportunity to address those types
9 of customer service concerns that you have.

10 MR. THURMAN: My meter has been changed
11 twice in the last two years, and whenever they
12 changed the meter, I went ahead and let them in.
13 That's whenever he told me I had the copper pipes
14 and I needed to have an upgrade or they wouldn't,
15 you know, they weren't up to code.

16 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: And just to follow up on
17 that as well, have you had any other types of
18 customer service interactions with the company that
19 you can reflect on or that you care to offer an
20 opinion about?

21 MR. THURMAN: Just that.

22 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Well, thanks, Mr. Thurman
23 for being here. I appreciate you taking the time.

24 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Commissioner Rupp?

25 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Just real quick, ball

1 park, what was the out of pocket cost you had to
2 put out to switch over?

3 MR. THURMAN: About 650 labor and parts.

4 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Thank you.

5 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Mr. Thurman, thank you very
6 much. I don't have anybody else who has signed up.
7 Does anyone else wish to testify?

8 MR. FLETCHER: Can I say one more thing?

9 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Yes, sir. You're still
10 under oath. Come on up.

11 MR. FLETCHER: The reason that I'm here
12 primarily, and I said this earlier, so I want to
13 say it now again to get it on record, I come from
14 New Madrid County, Missouri. We probably got more
15 people below poverty level or one of the lowest in
16 the state. And this will affect them immensely.
17 We have a town full of people who are on Social
18 Security, disability, welfare and whatever. And my
19 purpose is because I'm concerned about them. The
20 city used to have a flat rate for utilities, cost
21 me about \$34.00 a month. Now it's 200 and
22 something because of an improvement, so forth and
23 so on, that sort of thing. And so this is another
24 reason I'm very concerned about this.

25 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Mr. Fletcher, thank you

1 very much. Does anyone else wish to testify?

2 Anything from counsel, closing remarks from the
3 commissioners? Mr. Chairman?

4 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: No. Just to say thank
5 you again for being here. This is one portion of
6 the process that culminates in a hearing that will
7 occur in Jefferson City, and testimony and evidence
8 will be taken into the record and the commission
9 will deliberate. So this is definitely a very
10 important part of the process. Thank you again for
11 being here.

12 JUDGE PRIDGIN: Commissioner?

13 COMMISSIONER RUPP: No.

14 JUDGE PRIDGIN: And I will take those
15 comments and thank everyone for coming out tonight.
16 If there's nothing further, we will go off the
17 record. That concludes the hearing proceeding in
18 GR2014-0152. Thank you. We are off the record.

19 (End time 6:52 p.m.)

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NOTARIAL CERTIFICATE

I, Tina Ewbank, Certified Shorthand Reporter for the State of Missouri, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages was taken by me to the best of my ability and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this hearing was taken, and further that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

Tina Ewbank, CCR

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