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STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing
September 19, 2017

Missouri Southern State University
Mill-Anderson Justice Center
3950 East Newman Road
Joplin, Missouri 64801

Volume 3

In the Matter of Laclede Gas)
Company's Request to Increase)
Its Revenues for Gas Service) File No. GR-2017-0215
In the Matter of Laclede Gas)
Company d/b/a Missouri Gas)
Energy's Request to Increase) File No. GR-2017-0216
Its Revenues for Gas Service)

NANCY DIPPELL, Presiding
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: This is September 19th,
3 2017, and the Missouri Public Service
4 Commission has set this time for a Local Public
5 Hearing in Files GR-2017-0215 and GR-2017-0216,
6 which are captioned as In the Matter of Laclede
7 Gas Company's Request to Increase Its Revenues
8 for Gas Service and in the matter of Laclede
9 Gas Company Doing Business as Missouri Gas
10 Energy's Request to Increase Its Revenues for
11 Gas Service. The company has since changed its
12 name, some of you may have gotten notice of
13 that, and is known as Spire.

14 My name is Nancy Dippell, and I'm the
15 Regulatory Law Judge assigned to preside over
16 this hearing tonight. And I'm going to begin
17 by asking the counsel present to go ahead and
18 make their entries of appearance. So Spire?

19 MR. PENDERGAST: Michael C. Pendergast,
20 counsel with Fischer & Dority. My business
21 address is 413 East Main Street -- South Main
22 Street, St. Charles, Missouri 63301.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Commission Staff?

24 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Judge. Mark
25 Johnson on behalf of the Staff of the Public

1 Service Commission. And I've provided you my
2 information.

3 JUDGE DIPPELL: And the Office of Public
4 Counsel?

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Judge. Hampton
6 Williams with the Office of Public Counsel, 200
7 Madison Street, P.O. Box 2230, Jefferson City,
8 Missouri 65102.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. And do we have
10 intervenors present that wanted to make an
11 entry? All right. Thank you.

12 So this is the public's opportunity to
13 make comments to the Commission about the
14 proposed rate change. Counsel is present and I
15 may have some clarifying questions for you, but
16 we are not here, at this point, to answer
17 questions. If you have additional questions
18 that you didn't get answered in the question
19 and answer part you're welcome to stay after
20 and the people here will stay as long as you
21 need them to to answer your questions.

22 Unfortunately, the Commissioners themselves
23 could not be here tonight, so I am representing
24 the Commission. However, that's the reason we
25 have a court reporter present. They are going

1 to read your comments. They do take your
2 comments very seriously and they'll read all
3 the comments in the transcript. And if you
4 have additional comments, you're always welcome
5 to make those.

6 (There was a brief technical interruption.)

7 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. Okay. I
8 didn't know what to do there. I am technically
9 challenged. All right. Let's try that again.
10 So your comments will become part of the
11 official record tonight. The process this
12 evening is going to be that I'm going to call
13 the names in the order that you signed in. If
14 you want to speak, I'll ask you come down, if
15 you're able, to this table so the court
16 reporter can hear you well and speak into that
17 microphone, hopefully it won't go off on us
18 like that again, but. So when I call your
19 name, please come down and I will administer an
20 oath or affirmation for your testimony.

21 Previously, there were time limits set for
22 testimony, but I don't think we have enough
23 people here to worry about that. But, you
24 know, just be considerate of your neighbors who
25 are here tonight. I think that's all. So I

1 will ask the attorneys just to get my attention
2 if you have questions for the witness.
3 Otherwise, if you'll stay seated until I excuse
4 you, that way if there are any clarifications
5 we can get those in as well.

6 We can go ahead then and get started. The
7 first person on the list is Nancy Richardson?

8 (Witness sworn.)

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. If you could
10 state your name and spell it for the court
11 reporter?

12 THE WITNESS: Nancy Richardson.

13 N-A-N-C-Y, R-I-C-H-A-R-D-S-O-N. I live in Webb
14 City, Missouri.

15 NANCY RICHARDSON testifies as follows:

16 A My statement is that I'm a widow and I'm
17 on a fixed income. I've always been able to pay my
18 bills, I'm very fortunate in that. I've not been
19 late. MGE had adjusted my rate from \$60 down to
20 \$40, which was a real pleasant surprise. But then,
21 of this year in July to August it was raised, when
22 it was Spire, to \$15. And then I got a statement
23 that you all want to raise it another \$5. That just
24 scares me to death, because I don't have anything
25 but social security. All of the incidents -- all --

1 my social security payment pays all my bills with
2 the exception of incidentals, like gas for the car
3 and minor things, and eating. I'm not eating very
4 well because I don't have the money to do that. And
5 I've been trying to find ways of meal planning that
6 is not so expensive. Now, one of the ladies said
7 Wal-Mart prices. Well, I worked at Wal-Mart for
8 nine and a half years and they tried very hard to
9 keep the prices down. But I -- since I've retired,
10 I'm shopping around. I don't go just to Wal-Mart.
11 I go to Aldi's and I go to the Dollar Store and I go
12 to a lot of places. But I'm still concerned.
13 Usually when gas prices raise, electric raises. And
14 that's going be putting me in a crimp and I'm very
15 concerned. Thank you.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. Just one
17 moment, Ms. Richardson, before you leave. Were
18 there any questions from any of the attorneys
19 for Ms. Richardson? Mr. Pendergast?

20 QUESTIONS BY MR. PENDERGAST:

21 Q Yes. Thank you very much for your
22 testimony.

23 A Sure.

24 Q And we do have, as I said before, some
25 customer service people back there. So if you'd

1 **like a fuller explanation of why --**

2 A I know, talk to Sherry --

3 **Q You have talked to Sherry?**

4 A No. I'm going to.

5 **Q Okay. Good. Great. I recommend you do**
6 **that. Thank you.**

7 A Thank you.

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: Anything else? Thank you
9 for being first to share.

10 THE WITNESS: Sure.

11 JUDGE DIPPELL: I apologize in advance for
12 mispronouncing people's names. Barbara Rugar?

13 (Witness sworn.)

14 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. And if you
15 could spell your name for the court reporter?

16 THE WITNESS: Barbara, B-A-R-B-A-R-A,
17 Rugar, R-U-P-A-R.

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead?

19 BARBARA RUPAR testifies as follows:

20 A Okay. My main concern is for the older
21 people with all these increases that's happening to
22 them. And someone mentioned some assistance that
23 can be given to them. I don't really know how much
24 that would be, if it would be helpful at all. And I
25 would like to just see that the older people who've

1 worked all their lives can get better food and just
2 go about their life without worrying about all these
3 increases. That's all.

4 MR. PENDERGAST: Thank you. Any questions
5 from Counsel? Thank you, ma'am. Thank you for
6 your testimony.

7 Lloyd Housh?

8 (Witness sworn.)

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: And did I mispronounce
10 your name?

11 THE WITNESS: Housh.

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: Oh, very good. If you
13 could spell that for the court reporter,
14 please?

15 THE WITNESS: H-O-U-S-H.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: And then go ahead and give
17 us your comments?

18 LLOYD HOUSH testifies as follows:

19 A I'm a little bit -- I'm a little bit more
20 fortunate than some of these senior ladies. I'm
21 60 -- be 62 this year. I'm retired Navy, so I have
22 one fixed check coming in every month. And I'm on
23 disability. Have a bad back and bad neck and bad
24 shoulder. Some of it's service-related and some of
25 it's job-related. You know, I've been thrown

1 around a lot. Some of the information that I'm
2 gonna bring up is looked at on the internet. Their
3 quarterly report for Spire, United States Census on
4 the demographics of Jasper County, Missouri, and
5 some stock quote information, and some general
6 country boy mathematics. I received in the mail a
7 notice for this Public Hearing and it was on MGE's
8 estimate that they were going to do an increase of
9 the \$5.09 per month for a typical residential
10 customer. Typical customer impact is based upon an
11 average gas usage of 64 CCFs per month. Now, that
12 statement says "an average," that's not springtime,
13 that's not summer running the attic fan, that's just
14 an average over the 12 months. So if your CCFs go
15 up in the wintertime, December, January, which is
16 the hardest hit times of a month, your bill could go
17 up on the average \$20 a month. So don't -- this
18 \$5.09 on the average is very misleading. Because
19 the average home use conservatively is around 214
20 CCFs if you have a 15 SEER home heating unit. Which
21 I have and I did get a rebate for it. If you have a
22 larger home than I have, which I have 900 cubic feet
23 of living space, if your home is larger than mine,
24 your heating cost will be higher. It all depends on
25 how well your home is insulated, how drafty it is,

1 on what your energy cost is going to be and how cold
2 the cold snap is going to be. Now that I kind of
3 covered that point, I wanted to bring up about the
4 average rate increase.

5 Now, what I wanted to testify about is the
6 U.S., United States Census for 2010 and 2016
7 for Jasper County, Missouri. The growth rate
8 from 2010 to 2016 for Jasper County was 1,707,
9 that's all ages. From 2010 to 2016 on the
10 65-plus age group, there was an increase of
11 1,539. So that is telling me that the age
12 group in Jasper County is getting older. So
13 more are going on to a fixed income basis,
14 that's another point I wanted to bring forth.
15 It actually went up between the two census
16 times, the two years, it actually went up 1.1
17 percent.

18 Today I printed out the stock price of
19 Spire. From 2013 to 2016 they had a growth on
20 their price per share from approximately \$48 to
21 over \$75. So the value of the company has
22 doubled. Congratulations, again, to Spire. I
23 wonder sometimes how they do it. In regard to
24 that, I've printed out a copy of their third
25 quarter quarterly report results, I would like

1 that to be entered in for information to be
2 looked at. Because of -- every company has a
3 bottom line, every company has dividends that
4 they want to pay to their shareholders, and
5 it's gonna be people like us, the older,
6 maturing demographics that are paying for this.
7 You know, I'm not saying that we're paying all
8 of it, but when we have a major corporation
9 trying to spread the cost they're also reaping
10 in the revenue.

11 So we need to look at, in one of the, I
12 don't know. I don't know if I can mention this
13 in testimony, but it was learned, a learned
14 statement of what the cost was for MGE in its
15 initial purchase of 945 million in 2013 in
16 replacing 380 miles of pipeline,
17 infrastructure, I call it. But my question
18 that never got really answered into, "Well,
19 what's the annual revenue intake from MGE
20 customers, Spire?" That question was not
21 answered. So, you know, I look at what's
22 justifying the means. And the revenue intake
23 was not given to me, so that's why I wanted to
24 make the quarterly part part of the information
25 that I had acquired today.

1 I'm concerned about the growth of the
2 senior community as I have become a part. I
3 retired from the military when I was 37 and
4 worked another 20 productive years. And I want
5 to make my dollar stretch as far as I can. I
6 understand corporations have got their
7 shareholders to take care of. I know that when
8 a company buys another company, and this is
9 what scares me, any time there is something
10 new, be prepared to pay for it. I think you
11 all have heard that saying before new and
12 improved, new this, new that, be prepared for a
13 rate increase or an attempt at a rate increase.
14 But we can always go shopping some place else.
15 I can always say that I'm open to any other
16 company that wants to come in here and provide
17 natural gas. So it just does not have to be
18 Spire. And I know that the Commission can look
19 at that and I would like for them to be able to
20 look at other providers for who are the other
21 providers that can provide gas here. We need
22 competition, we just don't need a corporation
23 coming in here to buy another corporation and
24 all of a sudden the price goes up 10 percent.
25 When we only get three-tenths of 1 percent from

1 social security for a raise for the year. So I
2 can be dazzled and flashed by \$300 suits and I
3 can be dazzled and flashed by numbers. And I
4 don't have all the numbers, they weren't all
5 provided to me, and that's why I wanted to
6 testify here.

7 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir. Is there
8 any questions from counsel? Mr. Pendergast?

9 QUESTIONS BY MR. PENDERGAST:

10 Q Yes. Sir, I wanted to thank you for your
11 testimony and more importantly I wanted to thank you
12 for your service to our country. If you would like
13 a fuller explanation of what the expected impact of
14 the rate increase would be for somebody with your
15 kind of usage, please talk to us and we'll do our
16 best to give you a more specific estimate for you
17 and your estimate. I'd also be happy to provide you
18 with some information that we have on what some of
19 those gas utilities are charging their customers and
20 how MGE compares with them, because I know that's an
21 issue you raised that you seem to be specifically
22 interested in. So please talk to us after this is
23 over.

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: If you'd like to give me
25 that, you said you had a quarterly report that

1 you wanted to --

2 THE WITNESS: Yes, ma'am.

3 JUDGE DIPPELL: -- have entered on the
4 record? I will mark it as Exhibit 1 for this
5 hearing. Thank you.

6 (Exhibit 1 marked.)

7 THE WITNESS: That's the quarterly report.
8 This is the average over the last three years
9 of the stock that shows the difference.

10 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. I'll call that one
11 Exhibit 2, the average stock price.

12 (Exhibit 2 marked.)

13 THE WITNESS: And I don't -- I have the
14 population estimates here that can show that
15 we're a growing breed, we're not dying, we're
16 living healthier and lasting longer.

17 JUDGE DIPPELL: And I have two pages that
18 are the census data and I will mark those as
19 Exhibit 3.

20 (Exhibit 3 marked.)

21 JUDGE DIPPELL: And thank you, sir, for
22 your testimony and thank you for your service.

23 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: I have Ron Vert?

25 (Witness sworn.)

1 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. If you could
2 spell your name for the court reporter?

3 THE WITNESS: R-O-N-A-L-D. V -- as in
4 Victory -- E-R-T.

5 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead with your
6 comments, sir?

7 RONALD VERT testifies as follows:

8 A Interject a little bit of history. I
9 became an MGE customer in 1989. I thought I was
10 dealing with a reputable company. I was pleased
11 with the service and I paid for what I used. Which
12 means during the summertime my bill would drop to
13 six, \$7 a month at times. The only thing operating
14 was the hot water tank. Until recently. My account
15 canceled. I had to come up with a new deposit,
16 which was eventually returned. And all of a sudden
17 I am no longer paying for what I use, I am paying
18 for what I use plus operating costs, and fees, and I
19 am now paying four and five times what I used to.
20 The Preamble to the Constitution says, "We the
21 people." And I think I represent a portion of we the
22 people when I say we are fed up, we are tired of
23 large companies thinking they have a right to stick
24 their hands in our pocket whenever they choose to
25 and label it as operating costs or fees. We should

1 go back to paying for what we use. Where I come
2 from, when you charge somebody for something they
3 don't get, that's called legalized theft. The
4 people I know are tired of these large companies
5 thinking they can use us any time they chose. We
6 live on fixed incomes. What's going to be the
7 impact of this raise on the people who are living on
8 a fixed income with no recourse? How many loaves of
9 bread is it going to cost those families? How many
10 gallons of milks is it going to cost the young
11 people when they don't have the money to put those
12 groceries on the table for those kids? I think this
13 is a wonderful nation and I love our system, but it
14 has a few problems that need to be worked on, and
15 this is one of them. That's all I wanted to say.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir. Any
17 questions? Thank you very much for your
18 testimony.

19 Tammy Walker?

20 (Witness sworn.)

21 JUDGE DIPPELL: And if you could spell
22 your name for the court reporter.

23 THE WITNESS: T-A-M-M-Y, W-A-L-K-E-R.

24 Tammy Walker.

25 TAMMY WALKER testifies as follows:

1 A I work for Economic Security Corporation
2 of the Southwest Area. We are your local community
3 action agency serving Jasper, Barton, Newton, and
4 McDonald county. Our agency has a good relationship
5 with Spire. We partner with them, we provide
6 weatherization services to low-income families. We
7 do also receive Dollar-Help funds which also allows
8 us to serve additional low-income families with
9 their bills. Our agency receives funds from LIHEAP,
10 which is Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program,
11 which is a federal block grant program. With these
12 funds we operate the Energy Assistance Program and
13 Energy Crisis Intervention Program, which are the
14 largest utility programs available within any social
15 service agency in our four county area. Energy
16 assistance helps low-income customers who qualify
17 with a one time payment towards their primary heat
18 source during the winter.

19 JUDGE DIPPELL: Ms. Walker, if I could get
20 you to either just turn a little toward me or a
21 little away from the microphone --

22 THE WITNESS: Sorry.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: -- that one has a lot of
24 feedback. You're fine, just maybe not quite so
25 close to it.

1 A Okay. Energy Crisis Intervention Program,
2 we receive winter and summer funds. This program
3 provides assistance to households with a verifiable
4 energy crisis, which means having a termination
5 notice, disconnect notice, low propane, being a cash
6 on delivery customer, or a prepaid electric customer
7 who's almost out of service. We work really well
8 with Spire on these two programs as well. Our
9 agency has assisted 1,738 Spire households with
10 these two programs, which totals \$431,810 worth of
11 assistance this year.

12 A recent five-year study of our crisis
13 programs revealed that only 4 percent of the
14 households that applied over that five-year period
15 that the study looked at applied for assistance
16 every single year. What does that tell us?
17 Four percent represents -- that 4 percent represents
18 the most vulnerable households, which include
19 elderly, disabled, and households with small
20 children. Here are a few examples of some of our
21 vulnerable customers:

22 Mary and Bob are in their early 70s. They
23 both receive social security totaling \$1,380.90 per
24 month. They do receive some Food Stamps, they rent
25 their home, and their home has not been weatherized.

1 Jan and Bill are both disabled and both receive SSI
2 totaling \$1,100 per month. They do receive some
3 Food Stamps, they rent their home, and their home
4 has also not been weatherized. Amy is a single mom
5 with two kids who are five years old and nine years
6 old. Amy is employed and she grosses \$1,302 per
7 month, receives some Food Stamps and she also rents
8 her home. John is a 58-year-old disabled
9 individual. He receives \$767 per month, he receives
10 Food Stamps, he owns his home, and it has been
11 weatherized.

12 The cost of basic needs is a huge challenge
13 for our customers who struggle each month to make
14 ends meet. Any rate increase for the economically
15 disadvantaged and the most vulnerable population,
16 which are the elderly, disabled households and those
17 with small children, is too much.

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, Ms. Walker.
19 Could you tell me the name of your corporation
20 again?

21 THE WITNESS: Economic Security
22 Corporation.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. I just wanted to
24 make sure I got it down correctly. Are there
25 any questions? Mr. Pendergast?

1 QUESTIONS BY MR. PENDERGAST:

2 Q Yes. Thank you, Ms. Walker. The company
3 has a proposal in this case to establish a
4 low-income affordability program for MGE's customers
5 with a budget of approximately \$500,000. Would you
6 generally support those kind of programs that
7 provide additional assistance above and beyond

8 LIHEAP --

9 A Fill in companies?

10 Q Yes, fill in companies.

11 A Yes. And we have partnered with other
12 utilities on those programs. We work with families
13 already with a lot of other programs that we have
14 and that is something that we -- we would definitely
15 be interested in.

16 Q And would the same thing be true of our
17 existing program to provide weatherization for
18 low-income families?

19 A Yes. And we're doing that right now. And
20 that's a good partnership.

21 JUDGE DIPPELL: Great. Thank you,

22 Ms. Walker for your testimony.

23 Virginia Hopp?

24 (Witness sworn.)

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: Could you please spell

1 your name for the court reporter?

2 THE WITNESS: Okay. My name is Virginia
3 Hopp, V-I-R-G-I-N-I-A, H-O-P-P.

4 VIRGINIA HOPP testifies as follows:

5 A I'm here as a representative of the 10,000
6 AARP members in Jasper County, and I am a volunteer
7 with AARP for family caregivers. And I would like
8 to speak about who family caregivers are. Family
9 caregivers are family members who take it upon
10 themselves to care for their loved ones who are
11 aging or disabled. Generally, it's a spouse
12 situation where one spouse is caring for another
13 spouse as they age and decline. And these people
14 don't qualify for Economic Security's programs.
15 They're not poor, poor people. They are closer to
16 some of the other people that have spoken, where
17 people are living on fixed incomes and they're not
18 rich and they're not poor, but the non-gas rate
19 increases are extremely unfair to this population.
20 Because this -- on my bill, I'm a resident --
21 residential customer, and on my bill there's a \$23
22 per month meter charge that comes every month. And
23 as one of the -- or a couple of the previous
24 testimonies have said, it -- it is far more than the
25 value of the natural gas that is used in our home

1 for any month. It's generally -- in our home, for
2 example, one month this summer our total bill was
3 \$30-some and the \$23 meter charge plus the other
4 assorted charges is far more than the gas that was
5 used. So it's an unfair charge to people on fixed
6 incomes. People who -- you know, why should
7 residential customers pay for this non-gas when it
8 doesn't serve them. And the family caregivers are
9 people who are caught in this situation of having
10 this expense given to them when they don't receive
11 extra service for that. So I want to thank you,
12 Judge, for being here. And I want to record that
13 I'm really sorry that the Commissioners could not be
14 here. But I do thank you for coming to Jasper
15 County and listening to us.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, ma'am, for your
17 testimony. And again, on behalf of the
18 Commissioners they apologize for not being here
19 tonight and they will be taking down your
20 comments as well as getting a report from me
21 about what's said here tonight.

22 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Are there any questions
24 for Ms. Hopp?

25 QUESTIONS BY MR. PENDERGAST:

1 **Q Thank you for your testimony. Just a**
2 **follow-up on your question about the fixed monthly**
3 **charge. Would you generally be in favor of an**
4 **approach that would allow us to reduce that fixed**
5 **monthly charge typically for people that use less**
6 **gas than say the average?**

7 A It seems reasonable to me the people who
8 are using the most gas should pay for the gas they
9 use. And your shareholders should not be
10 compensated by hard-working people in retirement
11 for, you know, not being able -- not being able to
12 use their income for other needs.

13 **Q Okay. Thank you very much. Appreciate**
14 **you.**

15 A Thank you.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: I'm sorry, ma'am, I can't
17 allow -- but if you want to testify --

18 THE WITNESS: But I will listen to you out
19 in the hall.

20 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you.

21 THE WITNESS: Thank you. Am I done?

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, ma'am. Deborah
23 Altman?

24 THE WITNESS: That's me.

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: That's you? Well, now's

1 your chance.

2 THE WITNESS: Well, I mostly wanted to
3 talk about my personal experience --

4 JUDGE DIPPELL: Well, can I get you to
5 come down front? Are you able?

6 THE WITNESS: I am. I didn't think you
7 wanted to hear about my personal experience.

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: Well, I want to hear
9 whatever comments you want the Commissioners
10 and to go on the record.

11 (Witness sworn.)

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: Could you spell your name
13 for the court reporter, please?

14 THE WITNESS: Debbie Altman. D-E-B-B-I-E,
15 A-L-T-M-A-N.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: And go ahead with your
17 comments.

18 DEBBIE ALTMAN testifies as follows:

19 A I agree with the previous speaker exactly.
20 But it wasn't addressed, again, why there's such a
21 high cost of having someone read your meter. I
22 recently moved into a place where I had to sign up
23 for gas, I hadn't had gas in I don't know when.
24 When I called in to set it up, nothing was said to
25 me was about any charges. It was July and August.

1 Nothing was said to me about a fee. I got nothing
2 in writing, I only received their packet in the mail
3 for new customers. I ordered it the end of June, I
4 got it yesterday. But I didn't see anything about
5 rates. And the girl on the phone who took my order,
6 never said, "Are you running your heat?" I thought
7 it was -- the bills were for my hot water heater all
8 this time. And I paid each and every one of them,
9 but they kept getting higher. And it's not just the
10 \$23, it's taxes on top of that, so it was 27. I
11 don't understand how anybody can charge and get away
12 with charging that much to have someone come out and
13 just read your meter when you have a shutoff. I had
14 to -- I ordered a shutoff as soon as I found out
15 what was going on. So unfairness in rates, there
16 you go. I'm with everyone here who spoke about the
17 elderly, and I'm disabled myself. I had a career,
18 but that ended in 1999. And right now because of
19 the way Laclede treated me, I have been writing
20 letters to the attorney general and every consumer
21 protection company, agency that I can find. Because
22 they are not fair. That's all I have to say.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. I don't know
24 if you had a opportunity beforehand to talk to
25 either our Public Service Commission customer

1 service staff or MGE's customer service staff
2 that are here, but I'm sure that both and as
3 well as the Public Counsel would be happy to
4 talk to you to see if there's anything that
5 they can help you straighten out with the
6 company?

7 THE WITNESS: I have written e-mails to
8 MGE. And it's because of the Public Counsel
9 that I'm here. I got a letter.

10 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Well, again, feel
11 free to take advantage of the opportunity to
12 talk to someone face-to-face tonight, if you
13 think that will help, so --

14 THE WITNESS: I really don't.

15 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Are there any
16 questions for her? All right. Thank you,
17 ma'am, thank you for testifying.

18 And Ed Zimmer?

19 (Witness sworn.)

20 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. If you could
21 spell your name, please?

22 THE WITNESS: Ed Zimmer, Z-I-M-M-E-R.
23 E-D, is the first name.

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead?

25 ED ZIMMER testifies as follows:

1 A I've heard a lot of discussion about the
2 expansion of the companies and how it's gonna be
3 more effective for them to do their business. And
4 the thing that keeps coming to my head is if it's
5 going to be so much more efficient for them to
6 perform their business, then why do they have to
7 keep asking for more money? As my wife was kind of
8 informed tonight on the meter charge, we pay \$23 a
9 month for a gas meter. We've lived in our house now
10 for 20 years. So we've spent somewhere around
11 \$4,000 as this gas meter charge. Listed as a
12 customer charge, but it's listed as one meter at
13 \$23. Their proposal for the ISRS would increase our
14 cost by a factor of 300 percent. If it's going to
15 add \$5 for the average residential customer, we
16 currently pay \$1.51. So we're looking at then
17 paying instead of \$25 a month between the meter and
18 the ISRS, to paying \$30. That's a 20 percent
19 increase per month that is not affected by gas
20 usage. We're not on a fixed income, but I haven't
21 seen a raise in two years. And I'm sure that if
22 they are bringing in a 10 percent rate of return on
23 their investment, that that is not only more than
24 adequate, it's probably excessive especially in the
25 fact that most rate of returns on savings or any of

1 that nature at the current time is well under 3
2 percent. Can I afford an increase, I can. But as
3 has been the testimony tonight, many people here
4 cannot. And in fact, the recommendation from the
5 Office of Public Counsel is for a decrease. I would
6 say that that recommendation should be given serious
7 consideration.

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir. Thank you
9 for your testimony. Are there any questions?
10 Mr. Pendergast?

11 QUESTIONS BY MR. PENDERGAST:

12 Q Thank you, Mr. Zimmer. I just wanted to
13 ask you, you talked about the customer charge and
14 how it's approaching, with the ISRS included, over
15 \$25. Would you generally be in favor of a proposal
16 that would permit us to reduce that by approximately
17 20 percent down to \$20 a month?

18 A I think it would depend on the proposal.

19 Q Okay. Fair enough. If you wanted to talk
20 about that after the meeting is over, we'd be happy
21 to go ahead in a little more detail and explain it.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I like that idea. After
23 they tell you they lived there --

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. I'm sorry, sir, but
25 I need to keep just one person talking at a

1 time, so. Thank you. Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 Was there anyone that didn't sign up that
4 wanted to testify? Okay. I don't see anyone
5 else and that's all the signatures I had.

6 I do encourage you, if you still have
7 questions to talk to the Staff, the Public
8 Service Commission Staff, talk to the Public
9 Counsel, talk to the gas company people who are
10 here. This is a good opportunity for you to at
11 least talk to someone face-to-face. And again,
12 I appreciate you all coming out. This is an
13 important part of our rate case process to hear
14 what customers have to say and the Public
15 Service Commission takes those comments very
16 seriously and I appreciate your time. Thank
17 you all for coming out and we can go off the
18 record.

19

20 (WHEREUPON, the hearing concluded at 7:32 p.m.)

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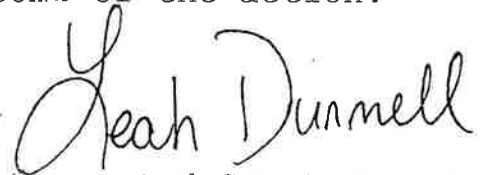
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF MISSOURI)
) ss.
CITY OF SPRINGFIELD)

I, Leah M. Durnell, Certified Court Reporter, Notary Public, do hereby certify that the witness whose testimony appears in the foregoing deposition was duly sworn by me; that the testimony of said witness 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 deposition 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.


Certified Court Reporter

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