

In the Matter of Spire Missouri, Inc.

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Hearing before:

John Clark

October 18, 2022

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vol 3

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BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

STATE OF MISSOURI

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing

Tuesday, October 18, 2022  
7:05 p.m. - 8:32 p.m.

Gregg/Klice Community Center  
1600 East 17th Terrace  
Kansas City, MO 64108  
and WebEx

VOLUME 3  
Pages 1 - 68

In the Matter of Spire Missouri, )  
Inc. d/b/a Spire's Request for )  
Authority to Implement a General ) File No. GR-2022-0179  
Rate Increase for Natural Gas )  
Service Provided in the Company's )  
Missouri Service Areas )

JOHN CLARK, Presiding  
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

SCOTT T. RUPP, Commissioner  
JASON R. HOLSMAN, Commissioner  
GLEN KOLKMEYER, Commissioner

Stenographically Reported By:  
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1 The following proceedings began at 7:05 p.m.:

2 JUDGE CLARK: Let's go on the record. Good  
3 evening. It's October 18, 2022, and it is approximately  
4 7:05 p.m. and we are at the Gregg/Klice Community Center  
5 in Kansas City, Missouri. The question and answer  
6 portion of the public hearing just ended. If you had  
7 questions about this rate case, I hope you were able to  
8 get answers to those.

9 If you have a cell phone at this time, I'd ask  
10 that you put it on vibrate or silent. The Missouri  
11 Public Service Commission has set aside this time for a  
12 local public hearing in File No. GR-2022-0179, a general  
13 rate case which is captioned as In the Matter of Spire  
14 Missouri, Inc. d/b/a Spire's Request for Authority to  
15 Implement a General Rate Increase for Natural Gas  
16 Service Provided in the Company's Missouri Service  
17 Areas.

18 My name is John Clark, and I'm the Regulatory  
19 Law Judge overseeing this hearing tonight. Now, the  
20 Missouri Public Service Commission regulates the rates  
21 charged by investor-owned utility companies in Missouri  
22 to ensure that those rates are just and reasonable. The  
23 Commission also regulates the quality of service and the  
24 safety of operations of investor-owned utilities.

25 The Commission is made up of five

1 Commissioners: Chairman Ryan Silvey and Commissioner  
2 Scott Rupp, Maida Coleman, Jason Holsman, and Glen  
3 Kolkmeier. The Commissioners are appointed by the  
4 Governor to fixed terms and confirmed by the Senate.  
5 The Commissioners employ a staff of engineers,  
6 accountants, attorneys, financial analysts, and other  
7 specialists in the field of utility regulation.

8 Now, with me here tonight in person are  
9 Commissioner Jason Holsman and Commissioner Glen  
10 Kolkmeier. Participating via the web at this point via  
11 WebEx is Commissioner Rupp.

12 Would either of the Commissioners like to make  
13 an opening statement?

14 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Thank you, Judge. Good  
15 evening. My name is Commissioner Jason Holsman. I just  
16 wanted to thank you guys for coming out tonight. There  
17 are many things you could have been doing on a Tuesday  
18 evening other than being here but you chose to be here  
19 to share your opinions with us. We do value them. They  
20 do matter. We do listen. And thank you very much for  
21 taking this time.

22 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Commissioner Holsman.  
23 Now, a court reporter is transcribing this hearing so  
24 that the other Commissioners may review and read the  
25 comments that are made tonight. I'm going to begin,

1 because this is a formal hearing, I'm going to begin by  
2 asking counsel to enter their appearance for the record  
3 starting with Spire.

4 MR. APLINGTON: Thank you, Your Honor. Matt  
5 Aplington for Spire Missouri, Inc., 700 Market Street,  
6 St. Louis, Missouri 63101.

7 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Aplington. For  
8 the Commission staff.

9 MR. STOKES: Thank you, Your Honor. On behalf  
10 of Commission staff, Curt Stokes, C-u-r-t S-t-o-k-e-s,  
11 and Scott Stacey, S-c-o-t-t S-t-a-c-e-y. We're at 200  
12 Madison Street in Jefferson City, Missouri.

13 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Stokes, Mr. Stacey, thank  
14 you. For the Office of the Public Counsel.

15 MR. CLIZER: John Clizer on behalf of the  
16 Office of the Public Counsel. My contact information is  
17 in the record. Thank you.

18 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Clizer. Are  
19 there any counsel I haven't called or any intervenors  
20 present? All right. I see and hear none.

21 Now, for those who would like to provide  
22 comments at today's hearing, I'm going to call the names  
23 listed on the sign-up sheet in the order they appear.  
24 When I call your name, please come down to the  
25 microphone at the front. I will then at that point ask

1 you to state and spell your name, because the court  
2 reporter, as I indicated, is taking everything down and  
3 that's for the record. Then I will place you under oath  
4 and you may offer the Commission your comments.

5 Now, we have a lot of people signed up tonight  
6 and a lot of people that are here, and I want to  
7 accommodate as many people as want to make comments  
8 tonight as possible. So I'm going to ask that you keep  
9 your comments as brief as possible. If it starts to get  
10 repetitive, I may cut you off and move on to the next  
11 person.

12 Also, after you've made your remarks, please  
13 remain at the podium for a minute. I may have questions  
14 for you. The Commissioners may have questions for you.  
15 Now, some of the attorneys may also have questions for  
16 you. If the attorneys have questions, if you'd please  
17 get my attention, I'll let you ask your question. If  
18 the Commissioners have questions, please feel free to  
19 interrupt me at any time. I'm not going to stop and ask  
20 after each person whether or not there are Commission  
21 questions.

22 Now, the Commissioners will be unable to  
23 answer any of your questions tonight and that's -- We  
24 were out of the room during the question and answer  
25 portion. That's because we have to remain impartial



1 until after the presentation of evidence at the  
2 evidentiary hearing. If you have questions, please  
3 speak to representatives of the company, the Commission  
4 staff, or the Office of the Public Counsel.

5 Also, I'm going to ask that you be polite as  
6 people get up here. Treat people as they make their  
7 comments, whether you agree or disagree with them, as  
8 you would like to be treated. Now, with that in mind,  
9 I'm going to go ahead and call the first witness. I'm  
10 going to apologize. There's a lot of names on this.  
11 There's a good chance that I'm going to butcher quite a  
12 few of them. So don't take offense. Just let me know  
13 that I've butchered your name and I will try and correct  
14 it. Mary Esselman. Ms. Esselman, would you please  
15 state and spell your name for the record.

16 MS. ESSELMAN: Yes. My name is Mary Esselman,  
17 M-a-r-y E-s-s-e-l-m-a-n.

18 JUDGE CLARK: And I notice there's also a  
19 Jessica Kibby signed up from Operation Breakthrough.  
20 Are you both --

21 MS. ESSELMAN: Yes.

22 JUDGE CLARK: Just you tonight. I just wanted  
23 to know if you both wanted to speak together or if you  
24 want to speak separately or if it's just going to be  
25 you. Okay. Would you raise your right hand to be

1 sworn.

2 Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the  
3 testimony you are about to give at this local public  
4 hearing is the truth?

5 MS. ESSELMAN: Yes.

6 JUDGE CLARK: And what would you like to tell  
7 the Commission this evening?

8 MARY ESSELMAN,  
9 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

10 MS. ESSELMAN: So my name is Mary Esselman.  
11 I'm the CEO of Operation Breakthrough. We're the  
12 largest community-based early learning center in the  
13 region. We serve 450 families with children from birth  
14 all the way to age 18. Our average income for our  
15 families is about a thousand dollars per month. Many of  
16 our families are the most vulnerable families in the  
17 community. On average they may be on a housing voucher  
18 which takes a third of their income. For many of the  
19 other families, gas becomes a third of their remaining  
20 income.

21 As I look at our average income over the past  
22 two years, 25 percent of our families have required gas  
23 assistance from internal. We've spent about 32,000.  
24 Another 25 percent of the families have required outside  
25 assistance that we have referred from local agencies

1 such as Bishop Sullivan, Metro Lutheran, Reconciliation  
2 Services and others. When I look at the amount of  
3 income as it stated in the proposal that it would only  
4 be a 10 percent increase for families, many of our  
5 families, their average gas bill in the winter, because  
6 the homes that they rent are not necessarily energy  
7 efficient, is around \$350 per month. So if you look at  
8 a 12.65 increase, that would generate almost a \$44  
9 increase per month which is a significant burden for  
10 many of our vulnerable families in the community.

11 So in my opinion, based on the information  
12 that we have, this is not the appropriate time for a  
13 rate increase and it does not appear to be just and  
14 reasonable in terms of the costs that are being pushed  
15 on to members of the community.

16 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you. I have no questions  
17 for you. Thank you for your comments.

18 MS. ESSELMAN: Thank you.

19 JUDGE CLARK: You said Jessica Kibby is not  
20 going to be speaking?

21 MS. ESSELMAN: No.

22 JUDGE CLARK: Okay. Damian Muller.

23 MR. MULLER: Good evening.

24 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Muller, would you please  
25 state and spell your name for the record?

1 MR. MULLER: D-a-m-i-a-n Muller, M-u-l-l-e-r.

2 JUDGE CLARK: Is it Muller?

3 MR. MULLER: Correct.

4 JUDGE CLARK: I apologize.

5 MR. MULLER: That's okay.

6 JUDGE CLARK: Would you raise your right hand  
7 to be sworn.

8 Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the  
9 testimony you are about to give at this local public  
10 hearing is the truth?

11 MR. MULLER: I do.

12 JUDGE CLARK: And what would you like to tell  
13 the Commission this evening?

14 DAMIAN MULLER,  
15 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

16 MR. MULLER: In the interest of time, I'll  
17 attempt to be as brief as possible. I just kind of  
18 prepared my notes here the best I could. I scanned over  
19 the Case No. GR-2021-0108 which shows processed in March  
20 of 2022, this year, and the Spire response also in March  
21 2022, adopting PSC staff recommendations regarding USOA  
22 accounting procedures, et cetera. I also perused the  
23 public comment approximately 10 or so pages worth of  
24 recent public comments to get a general gauge of what  
25 everybody else in the room echoes and seems that my

1 general assessment is not so far off from what everybody  
2 else seemed to indicate.

3 And I also perused general stock analysis over  
4 the last several years. Earnings per share and total  
5 shareholder return have grown in the past several years  
6 during the pandemic. It appears Spire agreed with  
7 almost all the PSC recommended changes recently I just  
8 mentioned and did a diligent job of adopting the  
9 changes.

10 Unfortunately Schedules 5, 6, and 7 were  
11 deemed confidential and not available for the public to  
12 view. So there may have been some additional --

13 JUDGE CLARK: Hold on just a second.

14 MR. MULLER: There may have been some  
15 additional information that may have given extra insight  
16 as to why Spire is requesting this rate increase of  
17 around 12 percent. I believe this much of an increase  
18 is not necessary and places an undue burden on a large  
19 segment of the customer base including those of us who  
20 try to live within our means but especially those  
21 considered in the 2012 suggested low income rate class  
22 File GW-2013-0046.

23 JUDGE CLARK: Can you give me that case number  
24 again, please?

25 MR. MULLER: Sir?

1                   JUDGE CLARK:  Would you give me the case  
2   number again, please?

3                   MR. MULLER:  Sure.  GW-2013-0046.  That was  
4   when the low income rate class was considered, and I  
5   believe that that low income class has been in existence  
6   for quite some time, if I remember correctly.  It's bad  
7   enough with all that has happened in the last two  
8   pandemic years but now Spire wants to add insult to  
9   injury with this increase.  It is possible some increase  
10  may be required as, of course, partly according to your  
11  chart that you have but most likely not this sharp of an  
12  increase.

13                   As a main point of interest in reference to as  
14  what a company can do to stabilize their positions, I  
15  use the example of Ford Motor Company.  In 2006, they  
16  did a smart thing and actually suspended dividends.  Not  
17  stopped but suspended dividends on their common stock  
18  for at least a year or more in order to keep the company  
19  viable.  They took no federal bailout money.  They  
20  weathered the storm and the economic conditions at that  
21  time.

22                   And continuing that idea of company integrity  
23  I maintain that Spire needs to follow Ford's example and  
24  suspend dividends for a year at least or more, which  
25  should provide plenty of money to accomplish any

1 necessary capital transfer costs, reclaim funds not  
2 covered by the ISRS charge, and carry out any of the  
3 required provisions or changes requested by the PSC.  
4 Now, if that were the case, then by your chart up there  
5 it appears that the 30 or so percent, if that's  
6 returning dividends and such, if dividends were  
7 suspended maybe that would cover the actual 25 percent  
8 of your other costs that you're trying to get an  
9 increase for.

10 If a bastion of American automotive like Ford  
11 can do that kind of an activity, then there should be no  
12 reason why Spire cannot follow that example. Unless  
13 there's some regulatory thing that keeps them from doing  
14 that kind of a thing, then there should be no reason why  
15 Spire cannot do the same example and suspend their  
16 dividends.

17 The question is if the CEO, senior management,  
18 and board of directors have the fortitude to do the  
19 responsible and right move. Thank you for your time.

20 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Muller, thank you for your  
21 comments.

22 MR. MULLER: Thank you.

23 JUDGE CLARK: Nate Morton. Mr. Morton, would  
24 you state and spell your name for the record?

25 MR. MORTON: Good evening. My name is

1 Nathaniel Morton, N-a-t-h-a-n-i-e-l M-o-r-t-o-n.

2 JUDGE CLARK: And would you raise your right  
3 hand to be sworn.

4 Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the  
5 testimony you are about to give at this local public  
6 hearing is the truth?

7 MR. MORTON: I do.

8 JUDGE CLARK: And what would you like to tell  
9 the Commission?

10 NATHANIEL MORTON,  
11 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

12 MR. MORTON: I'd first like to thank you for  
13 your time. My name is Nathaniel. I am a resident of  
14 Independence, and I believe that this rate increase is  
15 not good for the people and any effort to continue this  
16 process will be in complete and utter defiance for the  
17 citizens of the state of Missouri. Many folks, myself  
18 included, are already struggling with gas, grocery and  
19 other costs. Companies like Spire must cease squeezing  
20 the consumer in order to keep breaking and record  
21 breaking profits. This rate increase is, of course,  
22 unpopular as was the last, but Spire once again feels it  
23 necessary to disregard the consequences hikes will have  
24 on the working class with this proposal of this most  
25 recent increase.



1           Such measures are truly disgusting and goes to  
2 show us that this monopoly does not value us and will  
3 put profit over people time and time again. With that,  
4 I urge that this rate to not be passed. Thank you.

5           JUDGE CLARK: Thank you for your comments, Mr.  
6 Morton. Bob Inman.

7           MR. INMAN: Good evening. My name is Robert  
8 Inman, I-n-m-a-n. What else did you say we had to tell  
9 you? Oh, sworn.

10          JUDGE CLARK: Thank you very much, Mr. Inman.  
11 I'm sorry I didn't say your name correctly. Do you  
12 solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are  
13 about to give at this local public hearing is the truth?

14          MR. INMAN: I do.

15          JUDGE CLARK: And what would you like to tell  
16 the Commission?

17                                 ROBERT INMAN,  
18 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

19          MR. INMAN: Well, everybody has done such a  
20 professional presentation. I did make some notes but  
21 mine is a little more home folksy, I suppose. I'm a  
22 72-year-old living on a fixed income. I am the  
23 treasurer of Hutchins Park Neighborhood Association over  
24 in Independence, in western Independence. I was, you  
25 know, talking with neighbors and we were all griping

1 about oh, here goes gas prices up again and they're  
2 taking such a big chunk out of our thing. Many of our  
3 people over in western Independence in the neighborhood  
4 I live in, the homes were built in the thirties and  
5 forties and there are a lot of retired people like  
6 myself. There are some families moving in again because  
7 of school district changes but still a lot of retired  
8 people. And with property taxes and drug costs and  
9 groceries and utilities going up, it really becomes hard  
10 for them to make some decisions sometimes am I going to  
11 get my drugs for, you know, am I going to get my drugs  
12 for the month that I need, my blood pressure meds or  
13 whatever I need or diabetes meds or am I going to, you  
14 know, buy the food I need to keep me healthy or am I  
15 going to pay my utility bills. So it really is a burden  
16 on the elderly community whenever great big increases  
17 like the last young man said such a big increase at one  
18 time. And it really becomes harder year after year for  
19 not only myself but many of my neighbors to budget for  
20 this.

21 I wasn't going to come here and talk. I was  
22 just talking to my neighbors, and one of my neighbors  
23 said hey, why don't you go and tell them for us what  
24 we're all talking about around the neighborhood. So  
25 passing the costs -- I talked in the question and answer

1 about cost of doing business and asked the Commission  
2 how they figured the cost of doing business. And they  
3 talked about -- Spire talked about their way of doing  
4 business was we don't pay for the gas -- they're not  
5 charging us for the gas. That's a passthrough of  
6 whatever the cost is. What they're charging us for is  
7 infrastructure and pipes and buildings and everything  
8 like that.

9 I was a former partner in a business many,  
10 many, many years ago and I know when we first opened our  
11 business they said it was going to take two years before  
12 you made a profit and it did. That first profit day was  
13 great. What I want to say is we couldn't pass all of  
14 our costs, you know, when we had to renovate the space  
15 that we moved into, we had to pay utility bills, we had  
16 to pay water bills, we had to buy stock and everything.  
17 We couldn't pass that all on to our customers. When  
18 costs went up, we had to absorb that, otherwise they'd  
19 go to our competitors. We don't have a choice to go to  
20 competitors with gas services. We only have one gas  
21 company to get our heating gas from.

22 It's not like my customers could have gone to  
23 somebody else. So I really think that regulated -- and  
24 we talked about winter usage and the ISRS fees, which is  
25 I guess the pipeline costs and everything, and how many

1 of those should be considered cost of doing business  
2 rather than being passed on to the customers. If  
3 they're going to make money off of the gas things and  
4 everything being in the ground and everything like that,  
5 then their investors shouldn't be making great profits  
6 on the backs of the poor people.

7 So I urge the Commission to require Spire to  
8 carry more of the costs of doing business themselves  
9 instead of allowing them to pass these costs on to the  
10 customers. I do appreciate your time to be heard  
11 tonight. Thank you.

12 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Inman, and thank  
13 you for your comments. So far I haven't had any  
14 questions but I am going to remind you after you've  
15 given your comments if you can stay there for just a  
16 second, sometimes we do have questions. I don't at this  
17 point. Cathy Rinehart.

18 MS. RINEHART: Cathy Rinehart, C-a-t-h-y  
19 Rinehart, R-i-n-e-h-a-r-t.

20 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Rinehart, do you solemnly  
21 swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give  
22 at this local public hearing is the truth?

23 MS. RINEHART: Correct, yes.

24 JUDGE CLARK: What would you like to tell the  
25 Commission?

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CATHY RINEHART,

having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. RINEHART: I'd like to tell you what has happened in Clay County. I used to be the Clay County Assessor. In 2014, '15, somewhere in through there, Missouri Gas Energy was sold to Laclede. And when Laclede declared their personal property, 40 percent was taken off on the personal property line. When we asked them where it went, we never got what I considered or what my office considered a reasonable answer. We just didn't get it.

So to make a long story short, we started asking questions, we went to court, we had -- we went down to Columbia at one point in time and sat in a room and tried to negotiate a settlement. We couldn't come to anything.

And in our digging and in our depositions, we found out that Laclede, now Spire, had been declaring almost all of their meters in the Platte R-3 School District, which is one of the smallest school districts in Clay County, but also has the smallest levy for the school. And that was very upsetting.

So then we asked if we could see their GIS, which is Geographic Information Services Systems, and we were told that it would violate national security, we

1     couldn't have it, and we couldn't figure out why we  
2     couldn't have it. And then we found out that, and I'm  
3     just going to make up an example here. I'm a developer.  
4     I have 50 houses that I want to put in the ground, put  
5     out in the ground somewhere. I asked Laclede/Spire to  
6     come out and I'd pay them to put the gas line in, I'd  
7     pay them to put the meters in, and then I'd turn around  
8     and give it back to them but they don't declare that as  
9     an asset. Don't ask me why it's an asset according to  
10    Accounting 101, but they don't declare that. So that  
11    was a problem.

12                 And then I retired, and this last year they  
13    went to Jefferson City to try to get the law changed to  
14    go back retroactive eight years, because that's how long  
15    we've been arguing over this. Clay County has won in  
16    the courts, Clay County won at the State Tax Commission,  
17    and now it's back to the State Tax Commission to decide  
18    what the value should be.

19                 What Clay County wanted and what all the other  
20    counties wanted was a standard that we could work with  
21    with Laclede and Spire so that they would pay their fair  
22    share on personal property. I just thought this was  
23    information you might need to know, might want to know,  
24    may not care to know. I just thought it was important.  
25    Thank you.

1 JUDGE CLARK: Can you stay up there for just a  
2 second, Ms. Rinehart. I do have a few questions.

3 MS. RINEHART: Yes, sir.

4 JUDGE CLARK: You said early on 40 percent  
5 taken off at the property line, and I know you're  
6 talking about personal property tax, but can you clarify  
7 what you mean there just so I can follow?

8 MS. RINEHART: For example, the year before,  
9 I'm making up numbers here. Please don't quote me on  
10 this. I am going to make up numbers here. In 2014, a  
11 hundred million dollars was declared. In 2015, \$60  
12 million was declared and it wasn't in depreciation. So  
13 where did the \$40 million go?

14 JUDGE CLARK: Okay. I follow you. Thank you.

15 MS. RINEHART: Any other questions?

16 JUDGE CLARK: Go ahead, Mr. Aplington.

17 MS. RINEHART: As far as I know, yes, sir.

18 Thank you.

19 THE STENOGRAPHER: Judge, if Mr. Aplington, if  
20 he asked a question, I did not hear it.

21 JUDGE CLARK: Oh, I'm sorry, Ms. Bentch. I'm  
22 going to have Mr. Aplington repeat his question.

23 MR. APLINGTON: I'm sorry about that. I asked  
24 if the matter was still pending before the State Tax  
25 Commission.

1 MS. RINEHART: As far as I know, yes.

2 JUDGE CLARK: That was the court reporter.  
3 She did not get everything that was said. Thank you  
4 very much, Ms. Bentch, for stopping me there. Not being  
5 able to see you, it kind of caught me off guard.

6 MR. STOKES: This is Curt Stokes for staff.  
7 Do you have that case number handy?

8 MS. RINEHART: I have no idea. It's Laclede  
9 vs. Clay County. I don't think they've ever changed it  
10 to Spire.

11 MR. STOKES: Thank you.

12 MS. RINEHART: It started in '15, '16. It's  
13 just ongoing. Thank you.

14 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you for the information.  
15 I appreciate your comments. Jonathan Lotz.

16 MR. LOTZ: Jonathan Lotz, J-o-n-a-t-h-a-n  
17 L-o-t-z.

18 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Lotz, do you solemnly swear  
19 or affirm that the testimony you are about to give at  
20 this local public hearing is the truth?

21 MR. LOTZ: I do.

22 JUDGE CLARK: What would you like to tell the  
23 Commission?

24 JONATHAN LOTZ,  
25 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:



1                   MR. LOTZ: Good evening. My name is Jonathan,  
2 and I've been a resident and customer of Independence  
3 for the last 16 years. I thank the Commission for  
4 allowing the public to voice their comments on the  
5 proposed rate of roughly 10 percent by Spire on to its  
6 customers. While I like Spire and have experienced  
7 first hand the professionalism of Spire's employees, no  
8 additional rate increase are needed on to the millions  
9 of dollars Spire already receives from its customers. I  
10 would like to urge the PSC to not approve any such  
11 increase. The proposed 143 million increase to be  
12 collected in rates is one neither Missouri East nor West  
13 customers can endure.

14                   This proposed rate increase is another  
15 instance inflation forces on to the community that is  
16 not needed. The vague notice Spire customers receive  
17 say the proposed rate is primarily driven by  
18 infrastructure investment, rate of return, and overhead  
19 costs. This translates that Spire and shareholders want  
20 their turn on the inflation train and simply want to  
21 line their pockets with more money.

22                   The people in Missouri are already hurting  
23 from paying more on food, fuel, and other goods and  
24 services. We don't need a higher gas bill this winter  
25 too. Many corporations are currently forcing on to the

1 American public monthly price increases and this needs  
2 to stop. We can help stop the continued rate of  
3 inflation if we deny rate increases such as this  
4 tonight. Spire and other companies incorrectly think  
5 the Missouri public can continue paying more on goods  
6 and services as if everyone has extra money lying  
7 around. If we don't stop allowing prices to rise, then  
8 the prices will continue to just go up and up beyond  
9 even the requested 10 percent increase.

10 In December of 2021, the Federal Energy  
11 Regulatory Commission approved the continued operation  
12 of the Spire STL Pipeline. The Spire news release said  
13 this would ensure continued access to affordable energy  
14 to St. Louis customers, yet here Spire is asking for  
15 more money from customers of Missouri.

16 Further, when Spire took over the Missouri Gas  
17 Energy in roughly 2017, we were promised improved  
18 service with no additional costs. This rate increase  
19 request shows Spire is stepping back on its promise made  
20 years ago on to Missouri. If more money is needed for  
21 property infrastructure and program development, the  
22 money should come from perhaps current profits made off  
23 of Spire customers or a bank note like other companies  
24 and individuals do.

25 I ask the Commission to keep all this in mind

1 and squish this call for inflated gas bills this winter.  
2 I know you do what you want to do, but please keep the  
3 people in Missouri as the priority. Please vote no and  
4 not allow any such rate increases. Thank you for your  
5 time.

6 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Lotz, thank you for your  
7 comments. Ryan Dickey.

8 MR. DICKEY: Hi, my name is Ryan Dickey  
9 spelled R-y-a-n D-i-c-k-e-y.

10 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Dickey, do you solemnly  
11 swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to give  
12 at this local public hearing is the truth?

13 MR. DICKEY: Yeah.

14 JUDGE CLARK: What would you like to tell the  
15 Commission?

16 RYAN DICKEY,  
17 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

18 MR. DICKEY: I don't have anything  
19 particularly like formally prepared for this. I will  
20 try to be brief. My name is Ryan. I organize the  
21 Sunrise Movement Kansas City.

22 JUDGE CLARK: Organized what?

23 MR. DICKEY: I'm an organizer with Sunrise  
24 Movement Kansas City. It's a local community  
25 organization.

1 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you.

2 MR. DICKEY: Basically I'm here to oppose this  
3 rate hike. It's more palatable, of course, to have a  
4 lower rate hike that was proposed, the 70 million or so  
5 total rate hike. It's more palatable. I don't think it  
6 should increase whatsoever. We already know that Spire  
7 has the money. Like looking online a brief search can  
8 help you find that Spire profited last year somewhere  
9 around 240 million, if I remember correctly.

10 So if you subtracted even this entire rate  
11 hike from that, Spire would still have at least  
12 eightyish million of profit left in their pockets, which  
13 is I think plenty enough to take home with them. So  
14 they are capable of paying for it entirely by  
15 themselves.

16 I also don't think the entirety of this rate  
17 hike is even necessary. I know that when you look  
18 online at executive contracts for executives at Spire  
19 you do see that there's millions of additional  
20 compensation that executives can win if they secure a  
21 rate increase like this right here. So they're likely  
22 people in this room speaking for Spire who actually  
23 stand to directly profit from this here rate hike that  
24 they're proposing. I don't think that's right. I don't  
25 think that's a great use of our money. If we're looking

1 for ways to shave this revenue down, I think executive  
2 compensation is always something you can take money out  
3 of.

4 I also saw when Kansas City was passing  
5 recently its Climate Protection and Resiliency Plan, not  
6 just while that plan was passing but through the entire  
7 process Spire employees did come to manipulate that  
8 process, tried to push for weaker strategies included in  
9 that plan not just limited to burning gas in homes to  
10 provide heat but also electrifying the grid as a whole,  
11 removing natural gas from the electric grid.

12 So when I hear Spire talk about in this room  
13 today saying burning gas in homes is only about 6  
14 percent of emissions in the US, which 6 percent of the  
15 US's total emissions, that's a lot of emissions still.  
16 They say that's just a small piece of it. They also  
17 came out and fought in our city for a plan that would --  
18 they fought against this plan in our city that would  
19 reduce emissions from our grid and also reduce emissions  
20 from our transportation that they cited as well. So  
21 when they say oh, it's just a small piece, they fought  
22 against the larger pieces as well and they fought very  
23 hard.

24 I also saw several of their executives and  
25 employees show up in counsel chambers to testify against

1 that plan where they actually stretched the truth,  
2 misrepresented what was actually included in the plan.  
3 It had to be corrected by actually my council member  
4 sitting right next to me. So when I look at that, I see  
5 the employees up there paying coming to manipulate the  
6 politics that we use to make the best plan and the best  
7 livable city we can have. And when I see this rate hike  
8 that is going to be paying for employee compensation  
9 like that, I see Spire simply asking the ratepayers to  
10 finance their manipulation of our politics to make our  
11 home worse. That's not right. They have the money.  
12 They don't need more money. When they do have the  
13 money, they use it for bad things. That's all I've got.

14 JUDGE CLARK: You said Climate Resiliency?

15 MR. DICKEY: Climate Protection and Resiliency  
16 Plan.

17 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you.

18 MR. DICKEY: It was passed in August.

19 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you for your comments,  
20 Mr. Dickey.

21 MR. DICKEY: Thank you.

22 JUDGE CLARK: Mahreen Ansari.

23 MS. ANSARI: Hi. It's Mahreen Ansari spelled  
24 M-a-h-r-e-e-n A-n-s-a-r-i.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you. Sorry for the

1 mispronunciation. Do you solemnly swear or affirm that  
2 the testimony you're about to give at this local public  
3 hearing is the truth?

4 MS. ANSARI: I do.

5 JUDGE CLARK: What would you like to tell the  
6 Commission this evening?

7 MAHREEN ANSARI,  
8 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

9 MS. ANSARI: So my name is Mahreen Ansari. I  
10 am 22 years old. I'm a life-long resident of Kansas  
11 City. I've lived in south Kansas City, I've lived in  
12 midtown, and currently I live in northeast KC. So I've  
13 lived all over.

14 Although I am 22 years old, I have been paying  
15 gas bills since I was 16 assisting my family after  
16 getting my first job. I know first hand what those late  
17 fees look like and the panic that families feel when the  
18 threat of a shutoff is looming. The Commission is  
19 responsible for making sure Spire and utility companies  
20 stay true to their word and don't lie to the people to  
21 get their way.

22 As by the testimonies by Ryan Dickey  
23 previously to me, there has been a lot that's been going  
24 on with Spire and with our city government trying to  
25 push different things, trying to push their agendas,

1 trying to weaken different pieces of legislation that  
2 would improve Kansas City for all Kansas Citians.

3 I know how hard it is paying for Spire bills  
4 personally as for the past eight years I've been doing  
5 it. I also work at a non-profit called Journey to New  
6 Life where we assist people coming out of incarceration  
7 and we provide a lot of monetary support to people for  
8 their Spire bills. And I know what those checks look  
9 like. That's thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of  
10 thousands of dollars that we have put into Spire's  
11 pockets because there's so many people in Kansas City  
12 who can't afford the Spire bills as is. I don't  
13 entirely remember if Ryan mentioned this, but one of the  
14 fearmongering tactics that they used during the sessions  
15 about the Climate Protection and Resiliency Plan was  
16 that if the plan is passed that rates would go up; that  
17 oh, we can't raise it because then it would make it  
18 unaffordable and it's like they've already had this plan  
19 to like raise the rates before the conversation of like  
20 the Climate Protection and Resiliency Plan was put  
21 forward. And so it's like they were just trying to  
22 scare us out of something that they were going to do  
23 anyway.

24 And so it feels really dishonest to say that  
25 we need to raise the rates to cover these prices because



1 it feels like they're going to continue saying that  
2 about anything that comes up. We might have another  
3 crazy winter storm and they'll be like oh, well, we kind  
4 of have to raise again even though they wouldn't have to  
5 raise it to such an extent. 12.7 percent for Kansas  
6 City is really extreme, especially when we have such a  
7 high rate of poverty in Kansas City of so many Kansas  
8 Citians who are already struggling to pay their bills  
9 right now.

10 And so I really want to urge the Commission to  
11 like hold them accountable and not allow like such a  
12 crazy rate like increase especially after we already had  
13 one. Like people can't handle the current rate increase  
14 that we had last year. How are they supposed to handle  
15 this one? It's really unfair.

16 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Ansari, thank you for your  
17 comments. Raymond Forstater.

18 MR. FORSTATER: Hi. My name is Raymond  
19 Forstater, R-a-y-m-o-n-d F-o-r-s-t-a-t-e-r.

20 JUDGE CLARK: I apologize for messing your  
21 name up as well.

22 MR. FORSTATER: I'm used to it.

23 JUDGE CLARK: Do you solemnly swear or affirm  
24 that the testimony you are about to give at this local  
25 public hearing is the truth?

1 MR. FORSTATER: I do.

2 JUDGE CLARK: Please go ahead with your  
3 comments.

4 RAYMOND FORSTATER,  
5 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

6 MR. FORSTATER: My name is Raymond Forstater.  
7 I'm a leader with Sunrise Movement KC. I want to  
8 reiterate what a lot of people have said here. Not only  
9 have a lot of people spoken up about it here but a lot  
10 of communications I have with my neighbors I hear a lot  
11 from people that on a month-to-month basis have to  
12 regularly choose between putting food on the table,  
13 buying meds or keeping their heat on. You know, folks  
14 from Spire will say that they're, you know, available  
15 options for people to finance their bills, they have  
16 assistance available, but clearly that isn't sufficient  
17 based on the community members that I talked to that are  
18 regularly having to make these decisions again on a  
19 month-to-month basis.

20 The hearing just brought up and it was brought  
21 up by Mr. Weitzel before too that there was this most  
22 rate increase that went into effect in December  
23 following Winter Storm Uri that cut out the grid and  
24 jacked up the price of gas. I'd be curious and would  
25 like to know what Spire is doing to prepare for that so

1 in the event that that does happen again and the way  
2 that the climate crisis is going it looks that it's  
3 likely that it will happen again, what is the company  
4 doing to prepare for those costs not to be put back on  
5 to the customer once again. We're now seeing two  
6 proposed rate increases in the span of two years. It  
7 really concerns me that 30 percent on that chart there  
8 is going to financing costs and investor return. My  
9 understanding as an investor you're supposed to know  
10 that you're taking a risk that the money that you're  
11 putting in might not come back. The way that this is  
12 set up it looks like we're guaranteeing them a return on  
13 their investment which again doesn't really to me seem  
14 like the idea or definition of what an investment is  
15 meant to be. Again, I mean, I don't know if there's  
16 going to be anybody in here that's coming up in support  
17 of these rate increases, but I'd just be curious to know  
18 like what does it take for the Public Service  
19 Commission, what sort of public outcry against these and  
20 how many people does it take saying that this is not  
21 affordable to overturn this rate and deny it, because it  
22 was briefly brought up before but the fact is in their  
23 2021 proxy reports there are millions of dollars of  
24 executive bonuses that are specifically named to be  
25 towards their involvement in the Missouri rate case

1 process. So are millions of these dollars going to be  
2 put towards executive bonuses once again, is that how  
3 this is going to work, and if so, again, that doesn't  
4 sound like a company that's looking out for this  
5 community.

6 Mr. Weitzel mentioned the investment that  
7 Spire is putting into the community, but really what it  
8 sounds like from a lot of the people speaking is that  
9 this company is extracting wealth from this community  
10 and that again I guess I'll just end on saying that I  
11 oppose this rate increase.

12 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Forstater, thank you for  
13 your comments.

14 MR. FORSTATER: Thanks.

15 JUDGE CLARK: Debra Yates.

16 MS. YATES: My name is Debra Yates, D-e-b-r-a  
17 Y-a-t-e-s.

18 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Yates, do you solemnly swear  
19 or affirm that the testimony you are about to give at  
20 this local public hearing is the truth?

21 MS. YATES: Yes.

22 DEBRA YATES,  
23 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

24 MS. YATES: I would really just like to  
25 basically go on record and ask that the Commission

1 please vote no on the Spire rate increase. In  
2 September, I'm on an average pay plan, and last  
3 September my monthly payments already almost doubled and  
4 now they're asking for another increase.

5 JUDGE CLARK: Can you say that again, please.

6 MS. YATES: Yes. Last September my payments  
7 almost doubled. They went from \$65 a month to \$120 a  
8 month. So that's almost double. And now they're asking  
9 for another increase, and that is not affordable. I'm a  
10 senior citizen on social security, and I'm sure there  
11 are many other people in this state that are in similar  
12 circumstances as myself. So with the ever increasing  
13 high cost of inflation and the economic recession that  
14 we are experiencing, I can't afford this increase in  
15 cost and to heat my home and pay the other necessities  
16 of life. So I would -- You guys say that you ensure  
17 that the Missourians receive safe, reliable utility  
18 services and just reasonable and affordable rates. I  
19 say these rates are not affordable. So again, I ask you  
20 to vote no on the proposed rate increase. Thank you.

21 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Yates. Elaine  
22 Artzer.

23 MS. ARTZER: My name is Elaine Artzer, and  
24 that's E-l-a-i-n-e, last name Artzer, A-r-t-z-e-r.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Artzer, do you solemnly

1 swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give  
2 at this local public hearing is the truth?

3 MS. ARTZER: Yes.

4 ELAINE ARTZER,  
5 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

6 MS. ARTZER: Probably most of my comments  
7 would otherwise be redundant. You've heard from people  
8 --

9 JUDGE CLARK: Can you step a little closer to  
10 the microphone. I'm having a little difficulty hearing  
11 you.

12 MS. ARTZER: Oh, yeah. My comments likely  
13 would be on an overall basis fairly redundant. People  
14 here have expressed as a consumer how difficult just in  
15 general with every company under the sun that provides  
16 services to them are asking for an increase with this  
17 just being an additional one being added on to their  
18 plate.

19 Sometimes as a consumer I feel like the adult  
20 in the room. The only one -- the only one willing to  
21 sacrifice during a bad economy while all the companies  
22 come kneeling like little children who don't want  
23 anything disturbed in their world but I am supposed to  
24 take care of it for them. That's all I have to say.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Artzer, thank you for your

1 comments. I know everybody wants to be supportive of  
2 everybody who is speaking tonight. I appreciate that.  
3 Please bear in mind this is a local public hearing and  
4 it is a formal hearing that I'm trying to preserve the  
5 record as much as possible. If you can hold your  
6 support until after a person has spoken, that would be  
7 preferable. Andrew Savastino.

8 MR. SAVASTINO: Andrew Savastino, A-n-d-r-e-w  
9 S-a-v-a-s-t-i-n-o. If the Commission doesn't mind, as a  
10 representative of the City of Kansas City, Missouri, I'd  
11 like to invite Councilwoman Shields to join me at the  
12 podium here.

13 JUDGE CLARK: I have no problem with that.  
14 Would you also say and spell your name for the record.

15 MS. SHIELDS: Yes. My name is Katheryn  
16 Shields, K-a-t-h-e-r-y-n S-h-i-e-l-d-s. I am a  
17 councilwoman here in Kansas City. I represent the 4th  
18 District at Large, which means I am voted on by people  
19 throughout the City of Kansas City.

20 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you. Will you both raise  
21 your right hands to be sworn.

22 Mr. Savastino, Ms. Shields, do you solemnly  
23 swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give  
24 at this local public hearing this evening is the truth?

25 MS. SHIELDS: Yes.

1 MR. SAVASTINO: Yes.

2 JUDGE CLARK: Go ahead.

3 KATHERYN SHIELDS,  
4 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

5 MS. SHIELDS: I think I'll kick it off. First  
6 of all just to provide a little information, as someone  
7 mentioned the street repairs and the problems the city  
8 has had in the past with Spire, and I will say that  
9 recently they have improved and have for the most part  
10 been following city standards in repairing roads. But  
11 we had to reach the point of actually suspending their  
12 permits to get them to actually come to the table and  
13 listen to what needed to be done.

14 The second thing I would refer to is in our  
15 Climate Action Plan debate, I hope when Spire gives you  
16 all information that you are carefully considering it  
17 and weighing it and making sure that it is accurate  
18 because they provided very, very misleading testimony to  
19 my colleagues and myself about the outcome and results  
20 of our Climate Action Plan.

21 They actually told some of my colleagues,  
22 actually all of my colleagues, that if we pass the  
23 Climate Action Plan that everyone in Kansas City,  
24 Missouri would have to stop using gas and would have to  
25 go to electric. Well, I think you all are probably more



1 knowledgeable than I. Not only did our plan not do  
2 that, but there's a specific state law that does not  
3 allow a municipality to designate what energy source  
4 should be used by individual citizens. So they had  
5 people coming in to testify that we'd no longer be able  
6 to have barbecue in Kansas City, Missouri, because all  
7 the gas implements would be shut down. It was a very,  
8 very misleading effort on their part. And so when they  
9 come to you with supposed facts, I hope that you all  
10 look behind those facts and make sure that they're  
11 correct and that what they're telling you is accurate,  
12 because they certainly did not display that kind of  
13 honesty when they were testifying and lobbying people  
14 about our Climate Action Plan.

15           That is -- I wanted to let you know that our  
16 council, our mayor and council went on record through a  
17 resolution that we oppose this rate increase and  
18 Mr. Savastino, who is our energy chief environmental  
19 officer, is probably going to provide you more specific  
20 details and what our concerns are. As a council, I  
21 think I've been on the council off and on for a  
22 combination of 16 years and we've never really come out  
23 against a rate increase before but we did very strongly  
24 on this. And I hope you all will take our concerns and  
25 consider them seriously. Thank you.

1 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Shields. I have  
2 a question here for you from one of the attorneys.

3 MR. CLIZER: Really quick. The testimony you  
4 were alluding to regarding what Spire said, is there a  
5 copy of the transcript or recording of that somewhere?

6 MS. SHIELDS: There is certainly there would  
7 be testimony from council people who said things like I  
8 am opposed to this because I don't want everyone in  
9 Kansas City to have to stop using gas if they choose.

10 MR. CLIZER: Where can I --

11 MS. SHIELDS: You can go to the city clerk's  
12 office. If you got me a card, I would reach out to the  
13 clerk for you and ask her to send you the video of those  
14 meetings where council members expressed what had been  
15 told to them and their concerns over it.

16 MR. CLIZER: Thank you. I'll try to get my  
17 card to you after this.

18 MS. SHIELDS: Okay.

19 JUDGE CLARK: And Ms. Bentch, I think he may  
20 have stepped away from the mike for a second but he said  
21 no further questions from Mr. Clizer. Mr. Aplington, do  
22 you have a question?

23 MR. APLINGTON: No, no, please sit down. I  
24 can ask Mr. Savastino.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Why don't you wait until after

1 we get Mr. Savastino's comments.

2 MR. SAVASTINO: May I proceed?

3 JUDGE CLARK: Please.

4 ANDREW SAVASTINO,

5 having been previously sworn, testified as follows:

6 MR. SAVASTINO: So as Councilwoman Shields  
7 said, in September 29, 2022, the City Council in Kansas  
8 City, Missouri passed Resolution No. 220861 directing  
9 staff to bring the concerns of the city to the Missouri  
10 Public Service Commission regarding the natural gas rate  
11 filed by Spire in April of this year.

12 The main concerns are as follows: Inflation  
13 first pressures have rapidly increased in the past year.  
14 High inflation tends to worsen inequality and poverty  
15 because it hits income and savings harder for poorer or  
16 middle income households than for wealthy households.  
17 Consumer prices were up 9.1 percent by June of 2022, the  
18 largest increase in 40 years. These increases are  
19 making it harder for average Kansas Citians to afford  
20 their basic needs.

21 In addition to inflation, Kansas City has one  
22 of the biggest energy burdens in the country and is one  
23 of the top 15 cities with the worst energy burden for  
24 low income, black, and Latino households as reported by  
25 ACEEE. In the most energy burdened census tract in

1 Kansas City, the average resident spends 20 percent of  
2 their income on utilities.

3           Spire's primary rationale for filing this rate  
4 case seems to be that they want to increase their profit  
5 margin. The PSC approved a 9.3 return on equity in the  
6 last rate case and the company is requesting a 10.5 ROE.  
7 The average return on equity for a distributed natural  
8 gas company in the United States based on an S&P global  
9 financing is 9.33. Kansas City acknowledges as  
10 documented in major energy rate case decisions in the US  
11 January to June 2022, that, quote, state regulatory  
12 support and the authorization of adequate returns to  
13 ensure ongoing capital attraction in the utility sector  
14 will be instrumental as the industry shifts away from  
15 fossil fuels to renewables and storage and invest in  
16 strengthening the nation's power grid against climate  
17 and other risks, unquote.

18           However, when ruling in this case, we urge the  
19 Public Service Commission to carefully consider the  
20 risks to Kansas City residents and consumers at a time  
21 when they are already facing increased rates of  
22 inflation and energy burden. Natural gas prices are  
23 expected to soar this winter, and those costs will be  
24 passed on to ratepayers without their input.

25           The Public Service Commission and Spire need

1 to make sure they have exhausted every other possibility  
2 before asking Kansas City residents to shoulder this  
3 additional burden. Thank you.

4 JUDGE CLARK: Quickly, because I didn't catch  
5 it in my notetaking, what was your citation for Kansas  
6 City being one of the top energy users?

7 MR. SAVASTINO: So our energy burden based on  
8 the ACEEE. So ACEEE is the American Council for an  
9 Energy Efficient Economy.

10 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you. Mr. Aplington, you  
11 had a question?

12 MR. APLINGTON: Yes, just one. Is the City of  
13 Kansas City a represented party in this proceeding?

14 MR. SAVASTINO: I am not for certain. I think  
15 they may have filed, but I'm not sure that the attorney  
16 has been involved in that.

17 MR. APLINGTON: Thank you.

18 JUDGE CLARK: Hold on just a second. I have a  
19 question. Are you an attorney?

20 MR. SAVASTINO: I am not.

21 JUDGE CLARK: Go ahead, Mr. Clizer.

22 MR. CLIZER: I believe you referenced a  
23 decision by the City Council. Decision is not the right  
24 word. What would be the proper word?

25 MR. SAVASTINO: It's a resolution.

1           MR. CLIZER: Do you have a copy of that  
2 resolution with you?

3           MR. SAVASTINO: Yes, I might, yes. I promise  
4 I'm going to get there. How about I bring it to you in  
5 a minute. Sorry about that.

6           MR. CLIZER: That's fine. Never mind. Thank  
7 you. I have no further questions.

8           JUDGE CLARK: Thank you for your comments.  
9 Paul Webb.

10          MR. WEBB: P-a-u-l W-e-b-b.

11          JUDGE CLARK: Paul Webb, would you raise your  
12 right hand to be sworn. Do you solemnly swear or affirm  
13 that the testimony you're about to give at this local  
14 public hearing is the truth?

15          MR. WEBB: I do.

16          JUDGE CLARK: What would you like to tell the  
17 Commission this evening?

18                                 PAUL WEBB,  
19 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

20          MR. WEBB: So I'll make this brief. I'm a  
21 business owner here in Missouri. But there's been a lot  
22 of talk this evening about return on equity. That's  
23 what I'm having trouble with. I'm speaking directly to  
24 the Spire representatives when I say this. As a  
25 business owner, you have a monopoly. Your customers

1 can't go elsewhere. They can choose to potentially use  
2 less, but the difficulty I have with this is that you  
3 are also expecting to have a guaranteed profit margin.  
4 I as a business owner can't have a guaranteed profit  
5 margin. I can lose money just as easily as I can make  
6 it. I hope that I don't.

7 But I want to urge to the Commission tonight  
8 vote no on this. In fact, stop wasting our time. We  
9 don't want to be here. This is not what we want to be  
10 doing tonight. I know that if you vote no you'll  
11 probably just come back and ask us again. Please stop  
12 this. We don't want rate increases. In fact, if you  
13 became insolvent, as the public good I would love for  
14 the state of Missouri to take ownership of those pipes  
15 that you think you can make profit off of. So thank  
16 you.

17 JUDGE CLARK: I have no questions. Thank you,  
18 Mr. Webb, for your comments.

19 MR. WEBB: Thank you, Your Honor.

20 JUDGE CLARK: You'll forgive me. I'm having a  
21 little difficulty reading this. Brandon Kanoy.

22 MR. KANOY: Brandon Kanoy. I apologize. My  
23 handwriting is small.

24 JUDGE CLARK: Can you say that again, please?

25 MR. KANOY: Brandon Kanoy.

1 JUDGE CLARK: Kanoy?

2 MR. KANOY: Yes, sir. B-r-a-n-d-o-n  
3 K-a-n-o-y.

4 JUDGE CLARK: Would you raise your right hand  
5 to be sworn. Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the  
6 testimony you are about to give at this local public  
7 hearing is the truth?

8 MR. KANOY: I do.

9 JUDGE CLARK: Please go ahead.

10 BRANDON KANOY,  
11 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

12 MR. KANOY: So I am testifying against the  
13 rate increase for Spire Energy due to the SEC report for  
14 Q3 of 2022 --

15 JUDGE CLARK: Can you step a little closer to  
16 the mike. I had a hard time hearing that.

17 MR. KANOY: Yes. I am testifying against the  
18 rate increase for Spire Energy due to their SEC report  
19 for quarter 3 of 2022. As it shows for the nine months  
20 ended June 30 of 2022, Spire Gas reported a net economic  
21 earnings of 240.6 million and that is pulled from Spire  
22 reports third quarter results on their website  
23 investors.spireenergy.com. I think that's a little more  
24 than what they're asking us to cover. It seems like  
25 their bank account should cover this cost. That's the



1 end of my statement.

2 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you for your comments.

3 MR. KANOY: Thank you.

4 JUDGE CLARK: This is another one I'm having  
5 difficulty reading. Reese Bentzinger.

6 MS. BENTZINGER: Yeah, Bentzinger is correct.

7 JUDGE CLARK: I'm sorry?

8 MS. BENTZINGER: Bentzinger is correct.

9 JUDGE CLARK: Bentzinger is correct.

10 MS. BENTZINGER: My name is Reese Bentzinger,  
11 R-e-e-s-e B-e-n-t-z-i-n-g-e-r. I am a Missourian and a  
12 renter.

13 JUDGE CLARK: Would you raise your right hand  
14 to be sworn.

15 MS. BENTZINGER: Yes.

16 JUDGE CLARK: Do you solemnly swear or affirm  
17 that the testimony you are about to give at this local  
18 public hearing is the truth?

19 MS. BENTZINGER: I swear.

20 REESE BENTZINGER,  
21 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

22 MS. BENTZINGER: So I'm a Missourian, I'm a  
23 renter, and I'm someone who believes that this rate  
24 increase will be catastrophic for already struggling  
25 renters. Currently I'm searching for a new apartment.

1 JUDGE CLARK: Hold on just a second everyone.  
2 We're having a little bit of technical difficulty.  
3 Let's see if we can get the mike consistent.

4 MS. BENTZINGER: So currently I'm searching  
5 for a new apartment. When I plug in my budget on  
6 apartments.com, I see a map full of pinpoints turn into  
7 a few small dots. Other rising costs, including  
8 utilities further narrow my search. Nearly every  
9 apartment I've toured has had some kind of issue,  
10 including bed bugs, security, and installation of  
11 plastic sheets. I don't think renters should be asked  
12 to trade their safety for affordability. I've come here  
13 because I know I'm not the only one finding safe and  
14 affordable housing.

15 Right now gas prices are so high that other  
16 renters have sweltered in 102 degree weather and have  
17 frozen in negative temperatures. If this price increase  
18 passes, it will make more renters suffer as a result.

19 Kansas City has an affordability problem. Be  
20 a part of the solution. Reject this proposal. Thank  
21 you for your time.

22 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you. Kevin Grooms.

23 MR. GROOMS: Kevin Grooms, K-e-v-i-n  
24 G-r-o-o-m-s.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Grooms, do you solemnly

1 swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give  
2 at this local public hearing is the truth?

3 MR. GROOMS: Yes.

4 JUDGE CLARK: What would you like to tell the  
5 Commission?

6 KEVIN GROOMS,  
7 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

8 MR. GROOMS: I'm a Kansas City resident. My  
9 name is Kevin Grooms. I'm also the chair for the  
10 Missouri Chapter of the Sierra Club. So I do that in a  
11 volunteer position.

12 JUDGE CLARK: I'm going to stop you for just a  
13 second. I apologize. Is the Sierra Club an intervenor  
14 in this case?

15 MR. APLINGTON: No.

16 JUDGE CLARK: Go ahead.

17 MR. GROOMS: Thank you.

18 JUDGE CLARK: And thank you, Mr. Aplington.

19 MR. GROOMS: I just want to say that I, from a  
20 personal standpoint I make tradeoffs in my life. One  
21 tradeoff I've made was from working a tip job as a  
22 server and pay that varied a lot week to week to my  
23 recent entry into a salaried job and a trade I'm proud  
24 to work in. So my wage potential went down somewhat but  
25 I can budget better. Thanks to that regular pay I was

1 just recently able to catch up with my energy bills  
2 after the pandemic limited my income combined with the  
3 rising utility rates recently. And volunteering for the  
4 Sierra Club represents a tradeoff too, because my job  
5 gives me the work/life balance I need to give some of my  
6 time to environmental justice which I consider a civic  
7 good. So I feel I can only make so much money at this  
8 time all while prices for everything is going up.

9           So I'm concerned I'm going to fall behind  
10 again, and I don't even live on as thin a margin as many  
11 people in my community but I save money as I can, for  
12 example, by living without a car and I live here in  
13 midtown in the Union Hill Neighborhood in a pretty low  
14 rent apartment. But again as the person from Operation  
15 Breakthrough mentioned, I pay that low rent because it's  
16 a very inefficient home. So I pay much higher rates for  
17 utilities than I should be, which is another tradeoff I  
18 have to make.

19           So to me personally and to our organization  
20 with Sierra Club this represents a reckless rate hike  
21 for upgrades we don't need, and what folks need right  
22 now is stability in their cost of living. Thank you.

23           JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Grooms. Michael  
24 Wolfe. Would you please say and spell your name for the  
25 record?

1 MR. WOLFE: Yeah. That's Michael Wolfe,  
2 M-i-c-h-a-e-l W-o-l-f-e.

3 JUDGE CLARK: Wait just a second while they  
4 adjust the mike. Do you solemnly swear or affirm that  
5 the testimony you are about to give at this local public  
6 hearing is the truth?

7 MR. WOLFE: I do.

8 MICHAEL WOLFE,  
9 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

10 MR. WOLFE: My name is Michael Wolfe. I'm a  
11 leader with Sunrise Movement Kansas City and a resident  
12 of Kansas City, Missouri, and I live in one of the last  
13 affordable apartments in Gentrifying Midtown. What I  
14 somehow don't manage to pay in rent I do pay in  
15 utilities because my landlord has not like ever to my  
16 knowledge replaced my windows.

17 So as someone making \$16 an hour, this rate  
18 increase would be a pretty disastrous burden upon me.  
19 Spire claims to care about customers and affordability;  
20 but during the Q&A before this, the reps couldn't give  
21 an answer on how many customers it has disconnected from  
22 its service due to an inability to pay, nor could they  
23 say how many customers are on a payment plan.

24 To my knowledge, Spire is also claiming a need  
25 to increase rates to pay for employee costs. And in a

1 December 23, 2021 article in St. Louis Today entitled  
2 Spire CEO Sitherwood Nets Pay Raise Amid Year of Record  
3 Earnings Growth, it reads, and I quote, Spire President  
4 and CEO Suzanne Sitherwood, Sitherwood 61, was  
5 compensated almost \$5.6 million over the last fiscal  
6 year, a 26 percent raise over her 4.4 million in pay a  
7 year prior according to the new Securities and Exchange  
8 Commission's filings from the St. Louis based natural  
9 gas utility. Her pay last year was 48 times greater  
10 than that of Spire's median employee, end quote.

11 Spire also maintains that this rate increase  
12 does not cover costs for lobbying or campaign  
13 contributions, and this may be legally true on paper but  
14 time and again Spire has lied about fossil gas as a  
15 clean fuel as you've heard in testimony from elected  
16 city officials here. And this is even though gas,  
17 fossil gas, not natural gas, fossil gas, it's a fossil  
18 fuel is linked to asthma, lung cancer and the climate  
19 crisis.

20 Congress literally just passed a law  
21 regulating methane which is a -- which is what makes up  
22 the natural gas that Spire provides. You know, they  
23 passed a law regulating that as a greenhouse gas. And  
24 during the Q&A, again, reps seemed focused on carbon,  
25 not methane. So while Spire may not be legally allowed

1 to ask for rate increases for those political costs,  
2 it's pretty clear they're using money to spread lies.  
3 So we have a company that lies with some of its money,  
4 clearly doesn't seem to be prioritizing ratepayers  
5 enough to have statistics ready at a public hearing, and  
6 they seem to be giving lots of money to their  
7 executives.

8 So the picture doesn't really seem to add up  
9 to me as to why this rate increase is necessary. So you  
10 all should oppose this rate increase and the executives  
11 of Spire should probably dig into their deep pockets  
12 where they already have a ton of money to make up for  
13 anything they would want to pass on to consumers because  
14 why are we paying for this. Thank you.

15 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Wolfe, thank you for your  
16 comments. We've already heard from Ms. Shields.  
17 Christian Moss. Mr. Moss, I believe I remember you from  
18 the WebEx public hearing; is that correct?

19 MR. MOSS: Yes, sir, that is correct.

20 JUDGE CLARK: Would you please state and spell  
21 your name again for the record?

22 MR. MOSS: Christian Moss, C-h-r-i-s-t-i-a-n,  
23 last name Moss, M-o-s-s.

24 JUDGE CLARK: I'm going to swear you in again.  
25 Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony

1 you're about to give at this local public hearing is the  
2 truth?

3 MR. MOSS: I do.

4 JUDGE CLARK: Go ahead.

5 CHRISTIAN MOSS,

6 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

7 MR. MOSS: My name is Christian Moss. I lived  
8 for 30 years in California. I just actually made it out  
9 to Missouri last year where I purchased my first home.  
10 That was to escape all of the type of junk that's going  
11 on in California. Trust me, you guys do not want  
12 California coming here, but that's exactly what you've  
13 got going on. I was paying bills over there that are  
14 less than the bill here from Spire. When I first looked  
15 at it, I thought I was reading like R. L. Stein's  
16 Goosebumps when I first saw what my rate was going to  
17 be. When I told my parents back home, they didn't even  
18 literally believe me. They didn't believe what I was  
19 paying for my bill because it's so disgustingly high for  
20 just a small one-person home.

21 You know, as far as stats, I want to keep it  
22 logical. I'm going to keep it accurate. We can just  
23 look at the FY20 results. This is taken straight from  
24 investors.spireenergy.com. I think this is important to  
25 look at because this is what it's all about. It's about



1 the investors. It's about making money. So let's look  
2 here. For fiscal 2020, we, this is Spire speaking, we  
3 reported consolidated net income of 88.6 million but now  
4 we move to FY21. For fiscal '21, we reported  
5 consolidated net income of 271 million. Okay. And then  
6 moving on to FY22, we reported consolidated -- for the  
7 first six months of fiscal 2022, we reported  
8 consolidated net income of \$229 million. It makes me  
9 want to throw up in my mouth.

10 Moving on here, this is probably the most  
11 damning thing that everybody in this room should know  
12 about because the fact that this is for customers or  
13 about customers is a bold face lie. I say that because  
14 of this quote. We remain, quote, we remain confident in  
15 our long-term ability to grow NEE per share 5 to 7  
16 percent given our growth strategy expectations of  
17 reasonable regulatory outcomes and planned capital  
18 investment in infrastructure upgrades, innovation and  
19 new business. Our targeted capital investment for the  
20 five-year period through fiscal 2026 remains \$3.1  
21 billion, and this level of investment is anticipated to  
22 drive 7 to 8 percent rate-based growth for our  
23 utilities. There you have it. This is what it's about.  
24 It's not going to stop. This is one of many, many  
25 increases. I've been listening to everybody else, the

1 ones that have gone on probably before I even got here,  
2 and now that I'm here I'm already seeing an increase and  
3 with this outlook to raise it they already have it all  
4 planned through 2026 and beyond. You know, this is not  
5 going to stop. This is just one of many increases. And  
6 I am vehemently opposed to it and I believe everybody  
7 else should be as well. It's just disgusting that 100  
8 percent of people could show up to oppose something and  
9 they just want to push it through, just want to push it  
10 through.

11 I'm telling you if you want to see corruption  
12 in government, then look no further than California.  
13 It's coming right here. It's coming right here because  
14 of this. That's what I've got to say.

15 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Moss. Thank you  
16 for your comments.

17 MR. MOSS: Thank you.

18 JUDGE CLARK: Those are all the people that we  
19 had signed up to speak this evening. Is there anybody  
20 that at this point would like to offer comments that was  
21 unable to sign up but wanted to tell the Commission  
22 their thoughts? Yes, please come up to the microphone.  
23 Bear with me just a moment while I catch up my notes.

24 Yes, would you please state and spell your  
25 name for the record?

1 MS. ZAIDI: Hi. My name is Laela Zaidi,  
2 L-a-e-l-a, last name Zaidi, Z-a-i-d-i.

3 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Zaidi, would you raise your  
4 right hand and be sworn. Do you solemnly swear or  
5 affirm that the testimony you're about to give at this  
6 local public hearing is the truth?

7 MS. ZAIDI: Yes.

8 JUDGE CLARK: What would you like to tell the  
9 Commission?

10 LAELA ZAIDI,  
11 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

12 MS. ZAIDI: Like I said, my name is Laela.  
13 I'm a leader with Sunrise Movement Kansas City. We are  
14 just one part of a national movement of young people who  
15 are alongside our communities wanting a safe, livable  
16 and accessible future and that includes one in which  
17 every youth and family can live without the fear of a  
18 rate increase of utility bills that put them out of  
19 their home and that make life harder.

20 I can tell you in the room today you've heard  
21 that workers, tenants, the elderly, and young people and  
22 so many more, for these groups of people it's getting  
23 harder to live out here. It's getting harder to pay our  
24 bills, to save for a future. It's getting harder to put  
25 food on the table, and it is at this time that Spire is

1 now asking for us to pay more money. And I can say as  
2 an organizer in this city, there's very few things  
3 sometimes that can bring everyone together on an issue  
4 as complicated as this, but you've seen today the people  
5 in this community are united in saying that corporate  
6 greed cannot stand. The people in this room are united  
7 in telling you that this corporation has lied to us, has  
8 divided our community, has pitted us tenant versus  
9 workers, young people versus our elders. It's not  
10 right. And this happened during the Climate Protection  
11 and Resiliency Plan hearings that happened one in which  
12 the young people in this room alongside so many in the  
13 community really came out to testify at.

14 And as our councilwoman said, Spire has united  
15 business interests in this city against the working  
16 class people, the young people, and the elderly, and  
17 it's unfair and it's not right and you as regulators  
18 have the opportunity in front of you today to hold them  
19 accountable to the views in this room. That's your job.  
20 And as young people, we don't have any money. We don't  
21 have any influence in this process except to show up  
22 here and ask for you to do the right thing. That's the  
23 only influence we can do is to ask you to do the right  
24 thing and to stand up for us for the people in this room  
25 and for the people who are not here. So I'm

1 respectfully asking that you please reject this rate  
2 increase and bring some accountability to a company that  
3 has for too long gotten away with lies.

4 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Zaidi. Is there  
5 anyone else who wanted to offer comments at this time?  
6 Yes, sir, come on up. Would you please state and spell  
7 your name for the record?

8 MR. EAGAN: Yes. My name is Sean Eagan,  
9 S-e-a-n E-a-g-a-n.

10 JUDGE CLARK: Mr. Eagan, do you solemnly or  
11 affirm that the testimony you are about to give at this  
12 local public hearing is the truth?

13 MR. EAGAN: I do.

14 JUDGE CLARK: What would you like to tell the  
15 Commission this evening?

16 THE STENOGRAPHER: Sir, could you raise the  
17 microphone, please.

18 MR. EAGAN: Is this good? Can you hear me?

19 JUDGE CLARK: I can. Go ahead.

20 SEAN EAGAN,  
21 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

22 MR. EAGAN: I just kind of want to mirror some  
23 of the comments others have said regarding, I mean, as  
24 Congresswoman Shields said before about propagating sort  
25 of misinformation. And drawing on an April 21, 2021 --

1 no, I think it was this year Intercept article about the  
2 STL pipeline, also a Spire project, Spire got in front  
3 of this and put out news articles, essentially  
4 propaganda describing how with a severe winter on the  
5 outlook essentially threatening the customers, the  
6 forced customers of Spire Energy in St. Louis  
7 fear-mongering. And for a company that is essentially a  
8 monopoly it seems pretty low. But again since you're an  
9 investor-owned monopoly, it sort of tracks, right.

10 And I think it makes sense to think about what  
11 it means to have an investor-owned monopoly company who  
12 gets a seat at the table annually apparently to just ask  
13 for more money.

14 And I think the gentleman from California  
15 maybe said it, or maybe it was somebody else, a lot of  
16 people have said great things tonight, but the increase  
17 in executive pay rate is insane and the bottom line here  
18 is profit. This is supposed to be a public utility or  
19 at least a utility because the interests of the provider  
20 are certainly not public. I mean, when you have a group  
21 that's lobbying for legislation against city  
22 initiatives, obviously they are pitting -- they're  
23 pitted against the community itself by the nature of a  
24 profit motive and not to mention the environment. It  
25 doesn't matter. They would rather see gas live forever,

1 which scientifically it cannot. Don't do it. That's  
2 all.

3 JUDGE CLARK: Hang on just a second. Forgive  
4 my lack of knowledge here. You said Intercept article?

5 MR. EAGAN: It's the Intercept. It's a news  
6 publication.

7 JUDGE CLARK: Where is that news publication  
8 out of?

9 MR. EAGAN: The internet. It was April 27, I  
10 think, '21 or '22. You should be able to find it fairly  
11 easily. I could give you the printed out version of it  
12 if you'd like.

13 JUDGE CLARK: If you would like to make that a  
14 hearing exhibit, I would be happy to take it.

15 MR. EAGAN: I would.

16 JUDGE CLARK: I'll note for the court reporter  
17 I'm going to call this Local Public Hearing Commission  
18 Exhibit 1. Yes, sir, Mr. Clizer.

19 THE STENOGRAPHER: I'm not hearing this.

20 JUDGE CLARK: I'm sorry. A lot of that was  
21 off. Let's go ahead and make this -- I'm going to call  
22 this Intercept article Commission Local Public Hearing  
23 Exhibit No. 1, and we don't usually give exhibits to the  
24 court reporter. This will be attached to the transcript  
25 afterwards. Thank you for your comments, Mr. Eagan.





1 seen a \$35 extra credit to my account which again it  
2 doesn't help me. If I'm on a payment plan, then I still  
3 have to pay that extra money. I was just on one last  
4 month. I have to pay that money and then I also have to  
5 pay the balance due too this month as well, including my  
6 bill to make that payment plan valid. If you go through  
7 with this, I don't make -- okay. I'm not on Section 8.  
8 I make too much for food stamps. I got to put gas in my  
9 car and we can barely eat. Even if you approve a dollar  
10 more, how am I supposed to afford that? I'm doing the  
11 best that I can. I've been living on my own and working  
12 since I was 16. I'm 37. And I do the best that I can  
13 for my children. We have to buy clothes, shoes, food,  
14 and everything else. Please, I am begging you, find it  
15 in your heart do not do this, do not approve this  
16 increase. Thank you. That's all I have to say.

17 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you for your comments. At  
18 this time I'd like to thank everybody for coming  
19 tonight. The Commission appreciates you offering  
20 comments. I'm going to tell you right now if you have  
21 additional comments or if people you know were unable to  
22 show up tonight and would like to make written comments,  
23 you can make written comments by contacting the Office  
24 of the Public Counsel, that's this gentleman at the  
25 table here, or by using the email address

1 pscinfo@psc.mo.gov or you can go to the Public Service  
2 Commission's web page and you'll see a link to leave  
3 comments. If you do that, please reference the case  
4 number so we know which case it is you are talking  
5 about. And the case number for this case is  
6 GR-2022-0179.

7 Would either of the Commissioners like to make  
8 any closing comments?

9 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Thank you. While I  
10 can't comment on the case in front of us, I can say  
11 thank you for coming out tonight. I can tell you that  
12 political activity takes many forms. Tonight you've  
13 engaged in a very important one which is sharing your  
14 opinions with those who have the ability to vote on this  
15 regulation. I want to thank everybody for being concise  
16 and being direct. I especially want to commend the  
17 young people who came out tonight. I thought that you  
18 were very focused on your message and it was appreciated  
19 and you guys all have very bright futures in front of  
20 you in making a difference in our state and our country.  
21 So thank you very much for being here this evening.

22 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Yes, I too would like  
23 to thank everyone for coming out and giving their  
24 testimony and their comments this evening. So thank  
25 you.

1 JUDGE CLARK: For the record that was  
2 Commissioners Holsman and Kolkmeyer respectively.

3 At this time I'm going to ask the parties if  
4 there's anything further the Commission needs to take up  
5 this evening starting with Spire.

6 MR. APLINGTON: Just for Your Honor, there is  
7 a GO docket that's open that bears on some of the  
8 comments that were made tonight. So we will supplement  
9 with you that case number after the hearing, if you  
10 don't mind.

11 JUDGE CLARK: Do you want to give me that case  
12 number now?

13 MR. APLINGTON: I don't have it, but I'll give  
14 it to you right after the hearing.

15 JUDGE CLARK: Okay. Thank you.

16 MR. APLINGTON: For everybody else, I would  
17 just like to echo the comments from the Commissioners.  
18 It's not all the time that we get a chance to come out  
19 and interact with our customers, be in the communities  
20 that we serve, and we really appreciate the opportunity  
21 to hear from you, to understand your concerns. That  
22 helps us be better and serve you better. So I would  
23 just say thank you very much.

24 JUDGE CLARK: Anything from the Commission  
25 staff?

1 MR. STOKES: Nothing further, Your Honor.

2 JUDGE CLARK: Office of the Public Counsel.

3 MR. CLIZER: Would the gentleman from the  
4 Council, would you like to offer the resolution as an  
5 exhibit? Would the Commission entertain it or is that  
6 too late?

7 JUDGE CLARK: It's not too late. Do you have  
8 it on you? This is Resolution 220861. Okay. I'm going  
9 to call this Local Public Hearing Commission Exhibit 2  
10 and description is Kansas City Resolution 220861 and  
11 that will be attached to the transcript.

12 MR. CLIZER: I have nothing further. Thank  
13 you, Your Honor.

14 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Clizer. Okay.  
15 Again, I can't say this enough. Thank you everyone for  
16 coming out this evening. It's very important that the  
17 Commission gets to hear from the public. Outside of the  
18 evidentiary hearing where the parties will be offering  
19 evidence, this is the only chance we get to hear from  
20 non-parties. So thank you. And with that in mind, this  
21 hearing is now adjourned. Please have a good evening  
22 and get home safely and we are off the record.

23 (Thereupon, the local public hearing concluded  
24 at 8:32 p.m.)

25

1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2 STATE OF MISSOURI )

3 COUNTY OF COLE )

4 I, Beverly Jean Bentch, RPR, CCR No. 640, do  
5 hereby certify that I was authorized to and did  
6 stenographically report the foregoing Public Service  
7 Commission local public hearing and that the transcript,  
8 pages 1 through 67, is a true record of my stenographic  
9 notes.

10 I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative,  
11 employee, attorney, or counsel of any of the parties,  
12 nor am I a relative or counsel connected with the  
13 action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

14 Dated this 31st day of October, 2022.

15   
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17 Beverly Jean Bentch, RPR, CCR No. 640

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