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STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing

February 25, 2014

St. Joseph, Missouri

Volume 7

In the Matter of the General Rate)
Increase Tariffs for Missouri Gas) File No.
Energy, A Division of Laclede Gas) GR-2014-0007
Company,)

KENNARD L. JONES, Presiding
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE
WILLIAM P. KENNEY
STEPHEN M. STOLL
COMMISSIONERS

Reported by:
Janet H. Wimer, CCR

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APPEARANCES:

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Missouri Gas Energy

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

2 (Starting time of the Hearing: 12:42
3 p.m.)

4 JUDGE JONES: My name is Kennard Jones,
5 I'm the Regulatory Law Judge who will be presiding
6 over this rate case. To my right is Commissioner
7 Kenney and to my left is Commissioner Stoll.

8 This is Case Number GR-2014-0007. You
9 have just finished a question and answer session.
10 I assume that you have gotten your questions
11 answered. If you haven't, you'll have to wait
12 until after this portion to do that. Now, what
13 we're going to do is take statements from anyone
14 who wishes to make one on the record. It will be
15 transcribed and included in the case.

16 Just thought I'd take entries of
17 appearances for the parties. Missouri Gas Energy?

18 MR. JACOBS: Todd Jacobs on behalf of
19 Missouri Gas Energy.

20 JUDGE JONES: The Office of the Public
21 Counsel?

22 MR. POSTON: Thank you, Marc Poston,
23 Office of the Public Counsel.

24 JUDGE JONES: And from the Staff of the
25 Commission?

1 MR. BORGMEYER: Thank you, Judge.
2 Appearing for the Staff of the Missouri Public
3 Service Commission, my name is John Borgmeyer.

4 JUDGE JONES: Are there any other parties
5 present to enter an appearance? I don't see
6 anyone. What I will do is call your name, have you
7 come up here at the podium. I'll swear you in as a
8 witness to make your statement and then if there
9 are questions that the Commissioners or ourselves
10 have, we'll ask at that time. And then after we've
11 gone through the list, if there's someone who has
12 not signed up who wishes to make a statement,
13 you'll have an opportunity to do that at that time.

14 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Thanks, Judge.
15 Just briefly, I want to thank everybody for taking
16 time out of the middle of your day to appear at
17 this local public hearing. This is the opportunity
18 where you have the chance to express your feelings
19 about the proposed rate increase.

20 As you see, there's a court reporter
21 here. You'll be sworn in and that testimony will
22 be transcribed and will become a part of the case
23 records so we will have an opportunity to take into
24 account your comments and thoughts as we
25 deliberate, ultimately make a decision on the

1 proposed rate increase.

2 There are currently four sitting
3 Commissioners and two of us are here, the other two
4 are not able to be here, but please rest assured
5 that they will have the opportunity to review the
6 testimony and review the transcript and they, too,
7 will take into account your comments and thoughts
8 as we deliberate and make a decision in the case.
9 So again, thank you for being here and we look
10 forward to hearing your comments.

11 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Stoll?

12 COMMISSIONER STOLL: I also want to thank
13 you for being here today. We are in this area for
14 three days. We had two local public hearings
15 yesterday. We have another one this evening in
16 Independence and then we have one tomorrow in the
17 City of Kansas City, plus we're having our weekly
18 meeting at UMKC Law School. So we are hearing from
19 a lot of folks and we look forward to hearing from
20 you.

21 JUDGE JONES: Jerome Williams is the
22 first to have signed up.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: You'll have to excuse me,
24 my eyes. I can't really see too well.

25 JEROME WILLIAMS, duly affirmed by Judge

1 Jones, testified as follows:

2 MR. WILLIAMS: You will probably hear
3 from a lot of people that say the same thing that
4 I'm going to say. It's to the point that we don't
5 get a raise for anything, as far as working. We
6 haven't got a raise for several, several years.
7 But they are expecting us to give a raise to the
8 gas company of like 7 - or 4. some odd percent.
9 It's getting to the point where you have to choose
10 between medicine, food, utilities.

11 Please take into consideration the
12 people that can't afford another rate hike, because
13 the gas company, which it's been awhile since
14 they've been here, the next one will be the water
15 company, electric company or whatever utility.
16 It's getting to the point where you can't afford it
17 anymore. Please take it into consideration.

18 I cannot complain about service. I have
19 good service from all the utilities, so far, but
20 it's getting to the point, I'm not getting any more
21 money. They have to help their investors get more
22 money or make sure that they will get profit of
23 some kind. But the people that don't get a raise,
24 that profit is not helping them at all.

25 That's pretty much all I have to say. I

1 had a lot of things on my mind, but I got my
2 questions answered.

3 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, Mr. Williams.
4 Ray Schildknecht.

5 RAY SCHILDKNECHT, duly affirmed by Judge
6 Jones, testified as follows:

7 JUDGE JONES: Can you spell your last
8 name for the court reporter?

9 MR. SCHILDKNECHT: S-c-h-i-l-d-k-n-e-c-h-
10 t. My comment basically is along the cost of
11 service delivered to the homeowners and I've been
12 spreading my costs for the last nine or ten years.
13 And the cost of goods is something that we don't
14 hear, whether there's any kind of a markup in the
15 cost of the gas that we actually consume.

16 But we do see the customer charges that
17 when I started spreading this, we had costs of - to
18 the customer of roughly \$10 and a nickle, a month
19 and that was in mid-'04. And that went along until
20 we hit '07 and we had a jump from 11.65 to 24.62 in
21 mid-'07. Now, we ran along at the mid-20's until
22 we're right now. We've jumped up to 26.88 and now
23 we're going up.

24 If we were to take the rate that most of
25 us saw in the newspaper and we were to average that

1 rate out, we would be paying just a few pennies
2 over \$30 a month. And I was kind of wondering, the
3 ISRS charges didn't even start until 2010 and they
4 started out at less than a quarter a month. And
5 right now, we're looking at .96 or just a few
6 pennies under a dollar.

7 What I just don't understand is how we
8 can encourage homeowners to buy energy saving
9 appliances and we do that, because the appliances
10 that we now buy are most of them energy saving.
11 Most of them, the life expectancy has gone probably
12 less than half of what it was when I was first
13 using an appliance. And you can go to your
14 appliance stores and they'll tell you, well, life
15 expectancy isn't what it used to be. And I have to
16 agree. They're telling us the truth.

17 But when we look at the fixed cost that
18 the consumer is paying, and we have very little
19 control over it, we know that when our appliances
20 are saving energy, that means the bottom line, the
21 total revenue for a utility company, no matter what
22 utility it is, is going to decrease. So we, as the
23 consumer, have to understand their revenue is going
24 to be increased or boosted by other charges and I
25 think that when we look at the utilities, I'd like

1 to see a very sharp pencil put to the money that is
2 being spent, because I retired from a private
3 company. And our challenge was, was to provide the
4 product that saved money in manufacturing.

5 And I don't know if that's the case with
6 what we're seeing now, but we need to look at
7 something that is going to cause our fixed rates to
8 at least level out or increase nearly nothing.
9 Because we can't continue to watch these rates go
10 up and up and up.

11 And that's basically what I have to say
12 is, and I honestly wouldn't want the jobs that you
13 guys in Jeff City have, it's very challenging, I'm
14 sure, because I retired from purchasing and I know
15 what it's like to look at the best product for the
16 least amount of expenditure. So I'd just like to
17 see that challenge put before the utility.

18 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for coming
19 out today, appreciate it.

20 JUDGE JONES: Margaret Easter.

21 MARGARET EASTER, duly affirmed by Judge
22 Jones, testified as follows:

23 MS. EASTER: I would like to address the
24 variable fixed monthly charge that MG is
25 requesting. I feel like this is a penalty on

1 people who live in an all electric homes. We have
2 very little gas usage except during the winter
3 months. In fact, the only two things that I have
4 that are gas in my house are my furnace backup and
5 my fireplace, neither one of which I use to any
6 extent after the month of May and before the month
7 of October and November, when the weather will
8 allow me to do that.

9 So I feel like winter loading the basic
10 charge is actually a penalty on me for not using
11 any gas in the summertime. Also, when I do call to
12 have my gas turned back on the fall, they charge me
13 \$65, which right now is about two and a half months
14 of that basic charge. If the summer rates go down
15 to 22 and the 65 stays the same amount, then
16 they're actually charging me three months basic
17 rate to turn my gas back on. And all of this for
18 about ten minutes when the man comes out, goes to
19 the basement - he turns the gas on at the meter,
20 goes to the basement turns the valve to make sure
21 that the pilot light which is electric does come on
22 correctly and he goes to my fireplace to make sure
23 that that pilot light is turned off, which I then
24 have to turn on myself and adjust.

25 So I feel like that \$65, even though it

1 does take the call center to make those people
2 available, that's not - that call center is not
3 there solely for the purpose of turning - allowing
4 me to call them to turn my gas off or on. The call
5 center ought to be part of the regular beat.

6 The \$65 I feel is exorbitant and I would
7 ask you to consider that if you do allow them to
8 have this variable fixed rate, that you ask them to
9 reduce their rate that they have, the \$65 that they
10 have for turning the gas back on. Thank you very
11 much.

12 JUDGE JONES: Next is Gregory Filardo.

13 GREGORY FILARDO, duly affirmed by Judge
14 Jones, testified as follows:

15 MR. FILARDO: It seems that in this world
16 today, it's all about gouging, selfishness and
17 greed. And what we're dealing with is a very
18 serious problem. Everybody wants more but those in
19 the power can get more, get it, like at the gas
20 pumps, the utilities, but all the rest of us who
21 can't raise their rates because people simply don't
22 have any more money left to purchase from small
23 businesses.

24 Why do you think downtown and other
25 areas look so bad? There's no more money left to

1 fix these buildings or anything. You can't get
2 blood out of a turnip, so I'm going to turn the
3 calendar back to a native son of Missouri, Mark
4 Twain, a/k/a Samuel Clemmons. Folks, it's like
5 this. Farmer's got to dig up the ground, they got
6 to put the seeds in it, and they go to plant it.
7 They got to irrigate it, they got to hoe it, they
8 got to till it and they got to harvest it, no
9 matter what you get for winter or summer, but ask
10 me this. How can you dig a hole in the ground and
11 you find something like oil or gas, it comes up,
12 you've got to contain it and then it comes out of
13 the ground, just keeps coming out of the ground and
14 you just to deliver it and you get to charge
15 whatever you want for it.

16 Now let me see, I'm a businessman. My
17 vehicle is 19 years old. I don't think you've got
18 any equipment or vehicles that old in your fleet.
19 It's got 308,000 miles, finally died this winter.
20 I take it to St. Louis to get my product, which I
21 open a warehouse and get it free. All you've got
22 to do is transport it back and forth, so I have to
23 get a new vehicle because that one finally died,
24 but I'm going to charge my customers more money now
25 because I had to upgrade the vehicle.

1 It's called depreciation, folks. I
2 mean, we're going to have to be belt tightening and
3 we've got a lot of things that need to get fixed.
4 This country has got a record deficit. We're going
5 to have to look at ways to do things differently.

6 I taught in a school system that was the
7 poorest school in the entire state. We didn't even
8 have text books. Kids sat on the floor. The
9 teachers go in there and got out as fast as they
10 could. They were all minority students. Nobody
11 wants to teach middle school. Yet, I realized the
12 American Education System sucks. We can make major
13 innovative changes.

14 With an evaluator behind me, I said,
15 you're about to experience one of the greatest
16 educators in America in action. Kids, hold on. I
17 had kids who couldn't read at the seventh and
18 eighth grade level, couldn't write, couldn't do
19 math. And I said, looked to the evaluator, said,
20 "Since you took away all my materials, we're going
21 to teach it my way." I instituted one of the
22 greatest reforms in American Education in the
23 history of this nation.

24 At the end of the year, we entered a
25 contest and all the other schools in the

1 southeastern part of the state, we won half the
2 first place awards without textbooks. I had kids
3 learning up to a college level in nine weeks
4 because I taught them how to acquire knowledge and
5 solve problems, not spend money.

6 We need to re-think America. I taught
7 my kids, and notice I said my kids, how to think,
8 how to think outside the box. They said, "Mr.
9 Filardo, you're so far out of the box, you're in
10 the next supermarket," and that's absolutely right.
11 We've got to look at innovative ways to change and
12 come up with new things instead of spending money,
13 because folks, the bubble's going to burst. The
14 collapse this time is going to be catastrophic.

15 The potholes in this city, get a piece
16 of cardboard and write a name about a pothole after
17 one of your city commissioners or the mayor or
18 anybody else and stick it there and call it the
19 national deficit crater. By God, you'll get some
20 action on that one and you'll definitely get
21 noticed and I just empowered everybody in the room
22 to fix the problem instead of complain about it.

23 But let me at it folks, because I've worked so long
24 with nothing, I can do anything with nothing.

25 So let's fix it, let's not spend money.

1 And I hate to say for the attorneys, you've never
2 heard anybody say this, \$50 an hour, that's it,
3 count the salaries. The national deficit will
4 disappear within six months. And if they don't
5 like it, then take it very simply put, put it on
6 computers. You're caught at 4:00, you're typed in,
7 justice is served fresh, hot and immediately and
8 you're set. If you have a complaint or a dispute,
9 a three man tribunal 24/7 and then a jury trial if
10 necessary.

11 We have way too much waste. It's right
12 at the top. Get at it, let's fix it. And I'm sick
13 and tired along with the rest of us who are tired
14 of paying all this crap and if you don't like it,
15 I'll show you the way how to do it, let me at
16 anything all the way, top to bottom. I got 65
17 years of living, a lot of common sense, a lot of
18 intelligence and a whole bunch of experience.

19 Thank you.

20 JUDGE JONES: Next on the list is
21 Virginia Weigum.

22 VIRGINIA WEIGUM, duly affirmed by Judge
23 Jones, testified as follows:

24 MS. WEIGUM: The pronunciation is Weigum,
25 W-e-i-g-u-m.

1 I am very concerned. I've listened to
2 the testimony, especially of our first witness and
3 this country is really really hitting hard on
4 veterans. For the first time in my life and I'm
5 going to be 74, they are cutting veterans' benefits
6 after they fought and could have died and some of
7 them are left with life threatening and lifelong
8 disabilities, that we have cut their benefits.

9 And it's true, once you're retired, you
10 don't get any more raises, just what we get with
11 Social Security. But yet, it just doesn't stop and
12 it's going to have to stop someplace.

13 I feel bad for people that have
14 permanent disabilities, that they have to choose
15 between food and medication, paying property taxes
16 or whatever expenses come along. I feel very, very
17 concerned about it. And back before everything
18 fell on the federal government and we have blown
19 the federal government up to the place it shouldn't
20 be. To help, people fell on churches, it didn't
21 fall on the federal government or local government,
22 and we existed for hundreds of years under that
23 system.

24 We have to go back to it. We can't
25 continue doing what we're doing because it's going

1 to all bust. And those are my concerns and I thank
2 you for your time.

3 JUDGE JONES: Jeri Townsend.

4 JERI TOWNSEND, duly affirmed by Judge
5 Jones, testified as follows:

6 MS. TOWNSEND: I think the biggest thing
7 - first, I want to thank everybody that's here,
8 came out today and the ones that agreed to come to
9 this, to take the time.

10 I think the biggest thing is
11 accountability. I appreciated the gentleman that
12 started this forum to give us the agenda that, how
13 all the process is done, the steps that are taken,
14 people that are basically to control these meetings
15 and make these decisions.

16 So with that said, I guess the biggest,
17 I think most important thing is accountability from
18 those folks, that are heading those teams up. So,
19 because it is about, you know, when you get the
20 powers above making the final decisions, that's a
21 pretty important and critical group of people for
22 all of us consumers out here that are going to
23 receive those decisions and pay, basically.

24 So if I could leave, you know, a
25 resounding note that I know that all of us
consumers trust those decisions being made and, you
know, we kind of sometimes feel helpless as we wait
to see what the result's going to be. And my heart
goes out to those, just as she mentioned the
veterans, disabled folks, the fixed income people,
it's so critical to them. And, you know, you'll
read cases upon cases in the newspaper that do make
the headlines, so I guess if we could again
cheerlead those folks that are in those powerful
positions to definitely be trustworthy and take
into consideration everything.

1 And it is, as the gentleman spoke about
2 accountability for expenses and finding a way to be
3 most economical, most efficient. And I understand
4 the price of goods, you know, it's just - that's
5 the way it seems to be going. The price of
6 everything is so much more expensive. Mechanical
7 maintenance, I'm a mechanical engineer out in the
8 field so I understand all of those, you know,
9 everything that, just by 22 years ago when I
10 started the business costs us three times more
11 today. And so I understand what that side of the
12 fence is, which you guys do to how to pay for that
13 equipment because it doesn't - it certainly costs
14 more money to maintain it and to get it purchased
15 when you guys were upgrading.

16 But still keeping in mind that we have
17 to find some kind of happy medium and that's
18 probably the toughest nut to crack in the world
19 today, is that happy medium spot that we can all
20 handle. So if I could leave that imprint today as
21 a consumer, that we just pray to God that the
22 powers above will certainly consider all those
23 things and we can watch. I thank you guys for
24 being here today, appreciate it.

23 COMMISSIONER KENNEY: Thank you.

24 JUDGE JONES: We have exhausted the list
25 of people who have signed up to make statements.

1 Is there anyone else here who hasn't said anything
2 who wants to? I don't see a show of hands. We
3 will go off the record. Thank you for coming.

4 (WHEREIN, the Hearing is concluded at
5 1:09 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF MISSOURI) ss
COUNTY OF CLAY)

I, JANET H. WIMER, Certified Court Reporter, the officer before whom the foregoing hearing was taken, do hereby certify that the testimony in said hearing was taken by me to the best of my ability and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this hearing was taken, and further, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

Notary Public in and for
the State of Missouri

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