

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

In the Matter of Missouri-American            )  
Water Company’s Request for Authority to    )  
Implement a General Rate Increase for        )     Case No. WR-2011-0337  
Water and Sewer Service Provided in        )  
Missouri Service Areas.                        )

**THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC COUNSEL’S RESPONSE**

COMES NOW the Office of the Public Counsel (Public Counsel) and for its Response states as follows:

1. On August 15, 2011, Public Counsel recommended that the Missouri Public Service Commission (Commission) schedule local public hearings in the following areas:

- **Brunswick**
- **Mexico**
- **Jefferson City**
- **Warrensburg**
- **Riverside/Parkville**
- **St. Joseph**
- **Joplin**
- **St. Louis County** (2 locations – one North and one South)
- **St. Charles**
- **Warrenton**
- **Jefferson County**
- **Reeds Spring**

- **Republic**
- **Sedalia**
- **Shell Knob**
- **Warsaw**

Additionally, Public Counsel requested for each local public hearing that the Commission schedule a question and answer session at 5:30 pm with the local public hearing beginning at 6:00 pm and continuing until all customers have been heard.

2. On August 19, 2011, Missouri-American Water Company (MAWC) filed a response to Public Counsel's request proposing the following local public hearing locations and groupings:

- **Branson** at noon combined with **Joplin** at 6 p.m.,
- **Sedalia** at noon combined with **Warrensburg** at 6 p.m.,
- **Riverside** at noon combined with **St. Joseph** at 6 p.m.,
- **St. Charles** at noon combined with **St. Louis** at 6 p.m.,
- **Brunswick** at 6 p.m.,
- **Mexico** at noon combined with **Jefferson City** at 6 p.m.

As justification for this drastically reduced number of local public hearings, MAWC states "Because of the variety of methods customers have to gather information about the request and to communicate with the Commission and Public Counsel (Internet, telephone, U.S. Mail, electronic mail, etc.), it would appear to be less than necessary to provide one hundred percent (100%) local hearing coverage of MAWC's territory. This being said, MAWC believes that its proposal will provide substantial coverage of MAWC's service territory as local public hearings would be conducted within 30 miles of approximately 456,965 of MAWC's approximately 457,678 customers (or 99.8%)".

3. Public Counsel opposes MAWC's proposal because it is not in the best interest of the customers of MAWC. MAWC states an unfounded belief that its proposal will provide substantial coverage of MAWC's service territory. In reality, proposal will not provide substantial coverage of the customers in MAWC's service territory.

4. Almost half of the local public hearings MAWC is proposing are to be held at noon. Scheduling local public hearings during the noon timeframe conflicts with a customer's work schedule even if the local public hearing is near to where the customer works. However, MAWC is proposing that customers be forced not only to attend during work hours, but travel a significant distance missing additional work time as well. This will not be possible for many customers. Therefore, MAWC's proposal specifically eliminates the possibility of providing comments directly to the Commission for a large number of the customers.

5. Also, MAWC's proposal all but ignores those customers in the recently purchased Aqua territories of Reeds Spring, Republic, Shell Knob, and Warsaw. Instead, MAWC proposes to hold a local public hearing at noon in Branson. It is not in these customers' best interest that they should all have to travel several miles to Branson during work hours to save just a few members of MAWC, the Commission and Public Counsel from travelling to those areas. Therefore, MAWC's proposal will also effectively eliminate the opportunity for customers in these areas to attend a local public hearing.

6. Local public hearings are for the benefit of the customer. Customers in all of MAWC's service areas should have a real opportunity to take advantage of this benefit, not just areas that MAWC finds it convenient to visit and at times which are convenient for MAWC. Affording customers the opportunity to speak to the Commission at a local public hearing is a critical part of the ratemaking process. All customers are affected by MAWC's rate increase request.

Therefore, all customers deserve the opportunity to provide their comments to the Commission at a local public hearing. It is imperative that all customers be given this opportunity. Therefore, Public Counsel objects to MAWC's local public hearing proposal.

**WHEREFORE**, Public Counsel respectfully submits its response.

Respectfully submitted,

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC COUNSEL

**/s/ Christina L. Baker**

By: \_\_\_\_\_

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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that copies of the foregoing have been mailed, emailed or hand-delivered to the following this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of August 2011:

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