

1 STATE OF MISSOURI  
 2 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
 3 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

4 Public Comment Hearing  
 5 May 13, 2008  
 6 Jefferson City, Missouri  
 7 Volume 1

8 In the Matter of Aqua Missouri,) )  
 9 Inc.'s Request for an Increase ) )  
 10 in Rates for Water Service ) Case No. WR-2008-0266  
 11 Pursuant to the Commission's ) )  
 12 Small Company Rate Increase ) )  
 13 Procedure. ) )

14 In the Matter of Aqua Missouri,) )  
 15 Inc.'s Request for an Increase ) )  
 16 in Rates for Sewer Service ) Case No. SR-2008-0267  
 17 Pursuant to the Commission's ) )  
 18 Small Company Rate Increase ) )  
 19 Procedure. ) )

20 In the Matter of Aqua Missouri,) )  
 21 Inc.'s Request for an Increase ) )  
 22 in Rates for Sewer Service ) Case No. SR-2008-0268  
 23 Pursuant to the Commission's ) )  
 24 Small Company Rate Increase ) )  
 25 Procedure. ) )

26 In the Matter of Aqua Missouri,) )  
 27 Inc.'s Request for an Increase ) )  
 28 in Rates for Water Service ) Case No. WR-2008-0269  
 29 Pursuant to the Commission's ) )  
 30 Small Company Rate Increase ) )  
 31 Procedure. ) )

32 NANCY DIPPELL, Presiding  
 33 DEPUTY CHIEF REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

34 KEVIN GUNN,  
 35 COMMISSIONER

36 REPORTED BY:

37 Brenda J. Bowers, CCR, CSR, RPR  
 38 Midwest Litigation Services  
 39 711 North Eleventh Street  
 40 St. Louis, Missouri 63101  
 41 (314) 644-2191

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

APPEARANCES:

For Aqua Missouri, Inc.:

Ms. Jane A. Smith  
Blitz, Bardgett & Deutsch  
308 East High, Suite 301  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Ms. Tena Hale-Rush  
Regional Manager  
Mr. Aaron Lachowicz  
Facility Supervisor  
PO Box 7017  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

For the Office of the Public Counsel:

Ms. Christina Baker  
Assistant Public Counsel  
State of Missouri Department of  
Economic Development  
Office of the Public Counsel  
PO Box 2230  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

For the Staff of the Public Service Commission:

Mr. Keith R. Krueger  
Deputy General Counsel  
Missouri Public Service Commission  
PO Box 360  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Ms. Jennifer Hernandez  
Missouri Public Service Commission  
PO Box 360  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Mr. Gregg Ochoa  
Public Information Coordinator  
Missouri Public Service Commission  
PO Box 360  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

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

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: This is the Missouri Public  
3 Service Commission. We set this time for a local  
4 comments hearing in case WR-2008-0266, SR-2008-0267,  
5 SR-2008-0268, and WR-2008-2069.

6 These cases are cases in which Aqua  
7 Missouri intends to seek a general rate increase. The  
8 Missouri Public Service Commission regulates the rates  
9 charged by investor-owned utility companies in Missouri  
10 to ensure that those rates are just and reasonable.

11 The Commission also regulates the quality  
12 of service and safety of operations of investor-owned  
13 utilities.

14 The Commission is made up of five  
15 Commissioners. One of them is here with me in  
16 Jefferson City today.

17 The Commissioners are appointed by the  
18 Governor to fixed terms and is confirmed by the Senate.  
19 The Commission also employs a staff of engineers,  
20 accountants, attorneys, financial analysts, and other  
21 experts in the field of utility regulation.

22 My name is Nancy Dippell. I'm a Regulatory  
23 Law Judge for the Public Service Commission, and my job  
24 is to preside over the hearing.

25 We're videoconferencing this hearing from

1 the high school in Reeds Spring and the Commissioners'  
2 office in Jefferson City.

3 In addition, we're broadcasting these  
4 hearings over the Internet and they are being -- being  
5 recorded.

6 Let me introduce you first to Commissioner  
7 Kevin Gunn, who's here with us tonight, and tell you,  
8 also, that Chairman Davis may be joining us a little  
9 later.

10 The court reporter in Reeds Spring is  
11 transcribing this hearing so other Commissioners may  
12 review and read the comments.

13 Also present with me in Jefferson City is  
14 the attorney on staff, attorney for the company, as  
15 well as water and sewer department staff, and our  
16 technical staff. And you all have met our public  
17 information staff, Greg Ochoa, there in Reeds Spring.

18 And is Christina Baker with the Office of  
19 the Public Counsel also there?

20 MS. BAKER: Yes, Your Honor. I'm here.

21 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. In addition, I  
22 believe Aqua Missouri has some representatives present,  
23 and I believe you have probably been introduced to  
24 those people.

25 And all of the staff and Aqua Missouri

1 representatives, I'm sure, will be happy to stay around  
2 if you think of additional questions that you didn't  
3 have a chance to get answered earlier.

4 I would like to thank Reeds Spring high  
5 school for providing us with the facility; and just  
6 mention that the comments and statements made here  
7 tonight are in no way associated with the school, but  
8 they have been generous enough to allow us to use their  
9 facility.

10 This is an official hearing of the Missouri  
11 Public Service Commission, and as such the statements  
12 and testimony of witnesses will be recorded by a court  
13 reporter and will be taken under oath or affirmation.

14 The purpose of the hearing is to receive  
15 comments from you regarding the proposed rate increase.  
16 The company will not present witnesses and will not  
17 answer questions while we're on the record.

18 The Commissioners are, also, not here to  
19 answer questions but only to listen to your remarks.

20 This is your opportunity to comment. And  
21 your remarks will become part of the official record of  
22 the case. If you wish to testify, please see Mr.  
23 Ochoa, and put your name on the sign-up sheet, if you  
24 have not already done so.

25 He will call the name of each witness who

1 signed up to speak, and I will ask that when you have  
2 been called, if you would come and sit in the chair, if  
3 you are able, there so that we can see you here in  
4 Jefferson City.

5 And as he stated, if you can please spell  
6 your name for the court reporter when you come forward  
7 so that she can get it in the record correctly.

8 And then after you have given your comments  
9 there may be some questions from Commissioner Gunn or  
10 myself, or some of the attorneys, so I'll ask that you  
11 please not leave the witness chair until -- until you  
12 are excused.

13 I believe that's all the preliminary  
14 matters. And unless there are some questions, we can  
15 go ahead and begin with the first witness.

16 MR. OCHOA: Mr. Waterson.

17 JUDGE DIPPELL: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.  
18 Let me let the attorneys make their entries of  
19 appearance. I forgot to do that.

20 I'm going to start with staff.

21 MS. HERNANDEZ: Jennifer Hernandez for  
22 Staff of Missouri Public Service Commission, PO Box  
23 360, Jefferson City, Missouri, 65102.

24 MS. DIPPELL: Office of Public Counsel?

25 MS. BAKER: Christina Baker, PO Box 2230,

1 Jefferson City, Missouri, 65102, appearing on behalf of  
2 the Office of the Public Counsel and the rate payers.

3 MS. DIPPELL: And Aqua Missouri?

4 MS. SMITH: Jane Smith of Blitz, Bardgett &  
5 Deutsch, 308 East High, Suite 301, Jefferson City,  
6 Missouri, appearing on behalf of the applicant, Aqua  
7 Missouri, Inc.

8 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you. I'm sorry.

9 Mr. Ochoa, if you would please go ahead and  
10 call the first witness.

11 MR. OCHOA: Mr. Larry Waterson.

12 THE COURT REPORTER: Will you raise your  
13 right hand, please?

14 JUDGE DIPPELL: Will you raise your right  
15 hand?

16 MS. BAKER: I think the judge is going to  
17 do it.

18 THE COURT REPORTER: Okay.

19 JUDGE DIPPELL: That's all right. That's  
20 all right. We do things a little bit different than  
21 regular court proceedings.

22 THE COURT REPORTER: I apologize.

23 (Witness sworn.)

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Thank you,

25

1 HARRY WATERSON,  
2 being sworn, testified as follows:

3 EXAMINATION

4 QUESTIONS BY JUDGE DIPPELL:

5 Q. Go ahead and spell your name, and then give  
6 us your comments.

7 A. My name is Harry Waterson. My last name is  
8 W-a-t-e-r-s-o-n. The first name is Harry, H-a-r-r-y.  
9 I live at 383 River Drive in Branson, Missouri. And  
10 I'm part of the LTA Service Group.

11 Q. Thank you.

12 A. My comments are that we received a rate  
13 increase on the 12th of October, '06, of 68.73 percent.  
14 We're now one year later being asked to pay another 114  
15 percent, which I note has been reduced to about 55  
16 percent by the staff recommendation.

17 I would just like to go on record that I  
18 think these are huge increases in a very short amount  
19 of time.

20 I would think that a Public Service like  
21 this should be a service, and should not be costing us  
22 these kind of rate increases over such a short period  
23 of time.

24 That having been said, there are some other  
25 interesting things that have happened in the last year.



1 Last fall a -- a new water tank was put in that  
2 increased the capacity probably 300 percent.

3 And what that did was also increase the  
4 amount of head feet that the water used -- the pressure  
5 to get the water to my house.

6 My house started to develop air locks in  
7 the system, and so I called Aqua Missouri, and got a  
8 customer service lady there, and I asked her about the  
9 water pressure. And she told me that the system  
10 operated as a water pressure pump system, and that the  
11 water pressure was coming to me at about 58 psi.

12 That seemed patently wrong to me. So I did  
13 call the Public Service Commission. And an inspector  
14 from the Public Service Commission came out by the name  
15 of Bill Nickle.

16 Bill Nickle is retired, but I guess he --  
17 he gets some part-time employment from the Public  
18 Service Commission to check out people like me with  
19 complaints.

20 He came around. He was very nice. And he  
21 explained to me that, no, it was not a -- a pressure  
22 system. That they did have a pump, but all the pump  
23 did was pump it out of the well. It didn't pump the  
24 water around the system.

25 It was, in fact, a gravity system. And he

1 checked my -- my pounds per square inch. And,  
2 unfortunately, since he was about to permanently  
3 retire, his gauge didn't work properly. It was 16  
4 pounds off.

5                   And so he said he thought I was getting  
6 about 44 pounds per square inch, but give or take. I  
7 was still getting air gaps in my system. And he said  
8 probably over time that will wear -- work out as the --  
9 as the system absorbs the greater head footage. The  
10 gravity system will work it out. And I must say over  
11 time it has eased up a little bit.

12                   The air locks that I have in the system  
13 are much smoother than it used to be. I'm still  
14 getting sputtering, but the sputtering is quicker.

15                   At about this time I got a phone call from  
16 a gentleman who was taking a survey on behalf of Aqua  
17 Missouri on my experience with my last phone call to  
18 Aqua Missouri.

19                   The gentleman was calling me from India.  
20 And in a very thick Indian accent he went through a 15  
21 minute questionnaire with me. And when I told him  
22 that -- about the inaccuracy that I had, in my phone  
23 call, about what kind of water system I had, I remember  
24 him saying in this wonderful Indian accent, very bad,  
25 very bad, very bad, Mr. Waterson.

1                   And I must say that while I didn't give  
2 Aqua Missouri a very good rating in that -- in that  
3 phone call, I did have a -- when I hung up I felt very  
4 good.

5                   The other problem that I've had with Aqua  
6 Missouri is in their -- in their billing. Their  
7 billing is almost lackadazical. In 2006 the billing  
8 would be 29 days, 30 days, 31 days.

9                   But then in 2007 I have one period where I  
10 didn't get a bill at all. Then I got a bill for 69  
11 days. Then I got a bill for 19 days. And now, just  
12 recently, I got a bill for 26 days. And ten days later  
13 I got a bill for 28 days.

14                   It all doesn't make sense. They are -- the  
15 billing is -- is accurate. It just comes in fits and  
16 starts. And you -- you keep waiting for the other shoe  
17 to fall.

18                   In any case, those are my -- those are my  
19 thoughts about my experience with Aqua Missouri and I  
20 wanted the Commission to hear what I had to say.

21                   Thank you very, very much.

22                   MS. DIPPELL: Thank you, Mr. Waterson. Mr.  
23 Gunn, did you have any questions?

24                   EXAMINATION

25                   QUESTIONS BY COMMISSIONER GUNN:

1 Q. I just have one question. Mr. Waterson,  
2 thank you very much for coming.

3 I apologize for not being able to do the  
4 math in my head, but what -- what were your average, if  
5 you do a top of the -- back of the napkin kind of  
6 thing, average rates prior to the October '06 increase  
7 per month?

8 A. The increase went up -- it went up 68.73  
9 percent, was what the Commission approved the last time  
10 out. And that became effective in October of '06. And  
11 then --

12 Q. I'm asking about -- I apologize. I'm asking  
13 about the actual dollar amount, about what you paid  
14 every month prior to October '06, in dollars, real  
15 dollars, and then immediately after what you paid  
16 today, average on a month?

17 A. Okay. Well, I can give it to you annually.  
18 In '06 I paid \$265. In '07 I paid \$366. And in -- in  
19 '06 I used 93,000 gallons. And in '07 I used 83,000  
20 gallons. So I used ten gallons less, and I paid \$101  
21 more between '06 and '07.

22 COMMISSIONER GUNN: That's all I have.  
23 Thank you, sir.

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: Are there any questions  
25 from Public Counsel?

1 MS. BAKER: I do have a couple of  
2 questions.

3 EXAMINATION

4 QUESTIONS BY MS. BAKER:

5 Q. You -- you talked about your -- your fairly  
6 resent call to the call center. Have you had any other  
7 calls to the call center for Aqua?

8 A. Who -- who are you referring to about the  
9 call center?

10 Q. You said that you called someone and -- and  
11 complained about the air in your lines. Did you call  
12 the call center for that?

13 A. Well, I -- I first called Aqua Missouri.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. And then I called the Public Service  
16 Commission.

17 Q. For Aqua? For Aqua itself, did you call  
18 their customer service number?

19 A. I just called the customer service line.

20 Q. Have you called that number any previous  
21 times or since then?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. Have you had any -- any quality issues  
24 with the water that you received?

25 A. Well, the water is very hard. It's very high

1 in calcium. But I understand, again, from Bill Nickle,  
2 who came out to my house on behalf of the Public  
3 Service Commission, he told me that that is not an  
4 issue that the Public Service Commission deals with.

5 It's an issue, but he said it's -- it's not  
6 an issue in terms of the potability of the water.  
7 It's -- so he told me that as far as he's concerned, or  
8 as far as the Public Service Commission was concerned,  
9 the hardness of the water is not an issue.

10 Q. Okay. Have you had any other quality issues  
11 besides hardness for the water?

12 A. No.

13 MS. BAKER: Okay. I think that's all the  
14 questions I have. Thank you for coming.

15 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you. Anyone from Aqua  
16 Missouri? Any questions? Counsel?

17 MS. SMITH: No. I have no questions.

18 Thank you, Mr. Waterson.

19 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you, sir.

20 MR. WATERSON: You're welcome.

21 JUDGE DIPPELL: Is there another witness?

22 MR. HEDRICK I have a condition -- oh, I  
23 need to be sworn.

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: That's fine.

25 (Witness sworn.)

1                                   DALE HEDRICK,  
2                                   being sworn, testified as follows:

3                                   EXAMINATION

4                                   QUESTIONS BY JUDGE DIPPELL:

5                   Q.     Thank you.  Go ahead.  State and spell your  
6                   name.

7                   A.     It's Dale Hedrick.  And I have permanent  
8                   laryngitis.

9                   Q.     All right.  I can hear you pretty good.

10                  A.     Can you understand me?

11                  Q.     I can.  If you would -- can you spell your  
12                  last name for the court reporter?

13                  A.     I think so.  It's H-e-d, like David r-i-c-k.

14                  Q.     Thank you.  Go ahead with your comments.

15                  A.     Okay.  I have lived in Lake Taneycomo  
16                  Acres -- we built a new home there.  We moved into it  
17                  in 2002, I believe.  And we've had a lot of problems  
18                  with calcium, and with odors and taste.

19                               And at the time we moved was before the  
20                               time that Aqua Missouri purchased this system from the  
21                               previous owner.  So when they came in we were hopeful  
22                               then some of those issues would be addressed.

23                               And over that period of time we didn't see  
24                               any change, with the exception of -- the requested  
25                               increase, the first increase that they had.

1           And at that time I talked with a number of  
2 the neighbors in the area, and we said if they actually  
3 come in and make improvements in their quality of the  
4 water, and can do something about the calcium, because  
5 a lot of people are having tremendous problems with the  
6 calcium.

7           I have a letter here from a gentleman that  
8 is -- that's an example of the type of problems that  
9 caused.

10           But when we talked to Aqua Missouri about  
11 calcium, they said that's not something that's  
12 regulated. That's something that doesn't have anything  
13 to do with the quality of the water, but the people  
14 that are in there, in the system, in the area on that  
15 system.

16           It makes a lot of difference, when right  
17 across Fall Creek Road, the city of Branson, is a water  
18 line adequate to bring a much higher quality of water  
19 directly into that system.

20           And so I began visiting with a number of  
21 the neighbors, and what have you. And we found out  
22 about this additional increase that they were asking  
23 for. And we had no improvement in the hardness of the  
24 water and the problems that come with it.

25           So I talked with -- talked with the people



1 that were there, the rest of the people then. The  
2 snow-birds were in in the winter that I didn't get to  
3 at that time.

4                   And we agreed to approach the city and ask  
5 them if they had an interest in -- if we gave them the  
6 petitions, and what have you, to purchase -- to be --  
7 to provide water to that area. They are already  
8 providing the sewer services there, and because that  
9 early on that area was not in the city of Branson.

10                   When Branson was putting in their sewer  
11 system, a lot of people come in or out of the country  
12 that come into Branson, can hook up to the sewer  
13 system, or they can stay on whatever system they had  
14 and not come to the city at this time, I believe, the  
15 water system in the homes, that are not on the Branson  
16 sewer system.

17                   So in any event, I went and visited with  
18 the city of Branson Water Department, and -- and they  
19 said that they have an interest in buying up or trying  
20 to buy up a lot of these little independent systems so  
21 that everybody had consistent quality of water within  
22 the city of Branson.

23                   And so based on our conversations we did  
24 approach Aqua Missouri and asked them if they would be  
25 interested in selling that system.

1                   Now, in addition to that, something was  
2 good because the city of Branson decided to hire Burns  
3 and McDonnell, an excellent engineering firm out of  
4 Kansas City that I'm very familiar with, to do an  
5 overall study of the water, and waste water systems,  
6 and the growth, and what have you, of the city based on  
7 their projections. And our system was included. The  
8 old system is included in that study.

9                   So what I'm saying to you is that the city  
10 has not had a response from Aqua Missouri with regard  
11 to their offer, or with some type of figure, or even to  
12 indicate if they have any interest in the city buying  
13 that system.

14                   But so we're in the process right now of  
15 acquiring signatures from all the residents so we can  
16 make it very plain that it isn't just, you know, the  
17 rate increases, and the fact there is -- the only time  
18 we see anybody from Aqua Missouri is when they come to  
19 read the meters.

20                   I have never even, since the first time,  
21 had anybody come to my house or call me and say, Mr.  
22 Hendrick, how are things going? What's going on? Do  
23 you have any problems?

24                   All I get are bills. And the bills, as was  
25 testified to, come at various times from, you know, a

1 different number of things.

2                   So I guess what I'm saying is as we get the  
3 petitions together, and what have you, and we know that  
4 to the city is saying we are in the city, we're  
5 residents of the city, we want on the city system, that  
6 the city is going to have to respond to that, because  
7 that's what the overwhelming majority of the people  
8 want.

9           Q.     Mr. Hedrick, you actually do live in the city  
10 limits of Branson?

11          A.     Yes.  As a matter of fact, I -- the city of  
12 Branson put in the sewer system in there, so everybody  
13 in there that opted to come into the city, which was  
14 all but maybe five or six -- I don't know exactly how  
15 many there were that didn't, but there was a small  
16 number, opted to stay.  So they officially were not  
17 residents of Branson.  They were residents of Taney  
18 County.

19                   Now, a number of people since then, because  
20 of the hardness of the water, and other reasons, to  
21 make their home more saleable, have come into the city  
22 and have paid in.  So I think almost everybody is on  
23 that system now, the sewer system.

24                   But we're all kind of held hostage to them,  
25 the LTA system, and that's why we went to the city and

1 said we want to come into the city lock, stock, and  
2 barrel, including the water.

3           We, as I mentioned, we discovered on Fall  
4 Creek Road there is a line that comes across, already  
5 across that we can tie into, and they can come up if  
6 they can get Aqua to sell the system, to tie into  
7 current system and provide us the high quality water  
8 without the calcium problems, and where we're dealing  
9 with our own city when it comes to rate increases and  
10 service matters.

11       Q.     And you had a letter there. Was that  
12 something that you wanted attached to the transcript  
13 or --

14       A.     This was a letter that was sent to Christine  
15 Baker. It was sent by Jay and Kay Scribner. He was  
16 the long time pastor of -- pastor of the First Baptist  
17 Church, Branson, a very well-known, respected  
18 individual.

19           And unless the expenses and costs that he's  
20 incurred in about the year and-a-half or so that he's  
21 been living there, because of the hard water -- calcium  
22 isn't a problem in the quality of the water, doesn't  
23 mean that people should have to incur unreasonable  
24 expenses to use it, when there is another water source  
25 provided by the city that we live in.

1 MS. DIPPELL: Ms. Baker, can I ask, is that  
2 letter that's something that's already attached to the  
3 customer comments that we've received in this matter?

4 MS. BAKER: Yes, Your Honor. I do believe  
5 so. I'll look at it again and make sure, but I do  
6 believe -- believe that letter from the pastor has come  
7 through. Yes.

8 MS. DIPPELL: Okay.

9 MR. HEDRICK: I can make another copy.

10 MS. DIPPELL: I won't mark it at this point  
11 then.

12 Commissioner Gunn, do you have questions?

13 COMMISSIONER GUNN: I don't have any  
14 questions. Thank you very much for your testimony.

15 MS. DIPPELL: Ms. Baker, do you have any  
16 questions?

17 MS. BAKER: I just have a couple of  
18 questions.

19 EXAMINATION

20 QUESTIONS BY MS. BAKER:

21 Q. You mentioned you had some taste and odor  
22 problems. Can you describe what those were?

23 A. Yeah. It was -- it was a nasty smell like  
24 gassy odor, like sewer gas or something.

25 Q. Like a natural gas?

1           A.     It wasn't -- it wasn't like chlorine or  
2 anything like that. And -- and the other problem is we  
3 have to have our dishwasher disassembled, and they have  
4 to go in because of the calcium build-up.

5                     We can tell it starts building up on our  
6 glasses. Every time we have to go in and tear that  
7 apart. I don't know what's happening to my hot water  
8 heater, but, you know, it's only -- we've only been  
9 using it since 2002 or so.

10                    I guess we'll find out what effect it's  
11 having. But it's a real problem getting our dishes  
12 clean without them being cloudy. My wife doesn't like  
13 cloudy glasses.

14           Q.     Do you find that the taste and odor is in any  
15 specific room, like the bathroom, or is it pretty much  
16 in every room?

17           A.     When it was -- as it builds up we notice it  
18 first on the glasses. Then we can go in and smell  
19 and -- and you can still smell it.

20                    But one of the major problems to us is what  
21 it might be doing to the entire water system in our  
22 house. We've asked some engineers but it's very  
23 expensive to have them come in and do that.

24                    Now I'm thinking that maybe Aqua Missouri  
25 may be -- if they said it's not a problem, maybe they

1 want to send somebody out to test a sample, the  
2 plumbing, what have you, to see if that's really the  
3 case.

4 Q. Have you ever called the Aqua call center --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And what is your experience with that?

7 A. Number one, their system is so complicated  
8 and a lot of it is voice activated. Trying to get to  
9 the point I can actually get somebody to talk to is  
10 extremely difficult. I wind up pounding my desk and  
11 acting immature trying to get somebody.

12 I think they should have a quick way for  
13 people who have problems to get through. So I happen  
14 to have very few substance conversations.

15 I had -- I took water samples and I had  
16 them tested. And they found that they were  
17 extremely -- the hardness was extremely hard, and that  
18 it could create a problem for home systems.

19 MS. BAKER: I think that's all the  
20 questions we have. Thank you for coming.

21 Stay with us for a minute.

22 MS. DIPPELL: Aqua Missouri?

23 MS. SMITH: No.

24 MS. DIPPELL: Staff?

25 MS. HERNANDEZ: Yes.

1 EXAMINATION

2 QUESTIONS BY MS. HERNANDEZ:

3 Q. Mr. Hedrick, can you state the name of the  
4 individual on the letter there by you?

5 A. It is Jay. That's Jay, J-a-y. And his last  
6 name is Scribner, S-c-r-i-b, like in boy, n-e-r. His  
7 address is 488 River Drive. And that's Branson,  
8 Missouri. That's in the Lake Taneycomo Acres on the  
9 water system we're discussing.

10 JUDGE DIPPELL: Anything else, Ms.

11 Hernandez?

12 MS. HERNANDEZ: Nothing further. Thank  
13 you.

14 MS. DIPPELL: Thank you, Mr. Hedrick.

15 Is there another witness? Will you please  
16 raise your right hand?

17 MS. ROBBINS: Which one?

18 MS. DIPPELL: Either one.

19 (Witness sworn.)

20 LORI ROBBINS,

21 being sworn, testified as follows:

22 EXAMINATION

23 QUESTIONS BY JUDGE DIPPELL:

24 A. I'm Lori Robbins. L-o-r-i, R-o-b-b-i-n-s, at  
25 257 Juniper Way.



1                   These guys have really covered a lot of the  
2 things that I felt I needed to share. We moved into  
3 Branson in 1999.

4                   I have managed to move my wages \$3.50 more  
5 per hour. That's not very much compared to what's  
6 happening in the cost of living to all of us.

7                   The first increase affected me. My bill  
8 was like \$8 to \$12 when we bought this house in the  
9 first increase. It's now around \$17 to \$24.

10                  And with this increase, being the minimum  
11 of \$37, I'm looking close to \$50 possibly as my  
12 average.

13                  I have not had an hourly wage increase  
14 since '04. My husband managed to get a cost of living  
15 wage out of the city of Branson that gets ate up by  
16 medical insurance premiums going up. Just the average  
17 bills have increased on our behalf about \$800 a month.

18                  We're not having consistent water in our  
19 home. I have to say, though, it's more my fault that  
20 they don't know this.

21                  We are -- because not getting the wage  
22 increase means I'm pretty much salary, so I'm not home  
23 much, but when we do go to turn water on, and such,  
24 there's airline pressures that have busted our new  
25 plumbing.

1                   We've had some new refinishing work done in  
2 our kitchen, and it was very hard for us to get our  
3 plumbing to hold in the dishwasher, and under the sink  
4 and in the bathrooms.

5                   The calcium problem is huge. Every day I  
6 can take CLR to everything. I don't like the thought  
7 that I'm drinking so much of that, and it floats  
8 everywhere, and it's gross.

9                   There is odor problems. Our dishwashers,  
10 I've gone through two already. They are not holding  
11 up. I'm glad to know I need to disassemble them. It's  
12 a pain. It is expensive.

13                   I started as a tour operator in Branson.  
14 And I have become very familiar with different aspects  
15 of the people that live in Taney County.

16                   Now I'm a mortgage loan processor. And I  
17 see people's pay histories, and such, on my desk every  
18 day. And Taney County still is a very underpaid  
19 county. They get laid off seasonally.

20                   I can't imagine to those who are trying to  
21 learn to live off of their fixed income, that they, you  
22 know, had to retire on, what that increase would do to  
23 them.

24                   The 63 percent increase was definitely an  
25 adjustment in my budget. I can't imagine what that's

1 like for those that are elderly and single. Like I  
2 think of my mother. I mean, there is no one else to  
3 help her with all of this.

4                   So I really don't understand when LTA was  
5 purchased by Aqua Missouri, they knew everything they  
6 were getting into, why there wasn't some things taken  
7 care of and just absorbed as part of the purchase.

8                   To have these two increases come so quickly  
9 is just -- just unheard of. I've asked all the  
10 coworkers in my office, and not one of them can say  
11 that they pay a \$37 water bill.

12                   And at that time I actually was asking for  
13 \$50, because that's the 119 percent increase that we  
14 were talking about. The average was a \$12 to \$14 water  
15 bill. We do pay the city sewer to the city of Branson,  
16 so we are also on the city sewer.

17                   And I would like to express to the city of  
18 Branson to buy it. That's it. That's really all I  
19 have to say.

20                   MS. DIPPELL: Thank you very much for your  
21 comments.

22                   Commissioner Gunn, do you have any  
23 questions?

24                   COMMISSIONER GUNN: No questions. Thank  
25 you very much for your testimony.

1 MS. DIPPELL: Ms. Baker, any questions?

2 EXAMINATION

3 QUESTIONS BY MS. BAKER:

4 Q. Again, you mentioned an odor problem. What  
5 type of odor problem do you have?

6 A. It's just a stench. It's not the hot water  
7 heater. We know about that. It's -- it's in every  
8 room. The -- I can say my downstairs bathroom is  
9 probably the worse. But the dishwasher always has a  
10 leftover odor in it, even with the cleaner you can run  
11 through it.

12 Q. Would you call it a musty odor, or like a  
13 sewer gas kind of an odor?

14 A. I would say it would have to be more like the  
15 sewer gas. It's not the rotten egg smell, though.  
16 It's not that.

17 Q. Okay. Have -- have you been getting  
18 intermittent bills from Aqua, as well?

19 A. Oh, yes. I have to state, though, they had  
20 given out a letter on that month that was missed to let  
21 everybody know that they would be billed the following  
22 month because they changed their billing system  
23 software, I believe it was, so I actually was aware of  
24 that.

25 Q. Have you called the Aqua call center?

1           A.     Nope.

2                   MS. BAKER:  I think that's all the  
3 questions I have.  Thank you for coming.

4                   MS. DIPPELL:  Questions from Aqua?

5                   MS. SMITH:  No.  Thank you.

6                   MS. DIPPELL:  Staff?

7                                   EXAMINATION

8 QUESTIONS BY MS. HERNANDEZ:

9           Q.     Ms. Robbins, can you clarify the statement  
10 you made about the \$800 per month and what type of  
11 increase that was?

12          A.     Oh, I was saying overall expenses in the  
13 household, just with everything hitting us.  The cost  
14 of groceries, and gas, utilities.  All the way around.

15                   We're absorbing about \$800 a month now.  
16 That's just -- I can't even afford to update my vehicle  
17 right now and I need to.

18                   MS. HERNANDEZ:  Thank you.

19                   MS. DIPPELL:  Thank you very much for  
20 coming tonight.

21                   MS. ROBBINS:  Is that it?

22                   MS. DIPPELL:  Yes.

23                   MR. OCHOA:  Is there anyone else that wants  
24 to testify?  There is no one else on the sign up sheet.

25                   We don't have anybody, Your Honor.  That's

1 it.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. Well, I  
3 appreciate very much all of you coming out this  
4 evening. We do take your comments seriously. And we  
5 really do appreciate the participation.

6 There are some other local public hearings  
7 scheduled in these cases around the area, one in  
8 Republic, and one in Shell Knob, in the next two  
9 evenings. I can't remember which is which.

10 And then we have three others. One in  
11 Jefferson City, one in Sedalia, and now one in Warsaw,  
12 Missouri. So if any of your friends or neighbors that  
13 didn't get an opportunity to testify want to try and  
14 make one of those locations, they are welcome to attend  
15 there.

16 So with that -- unless Commissioner Gunn  
17 has any closing remarks?

18 COMMISSIONER GUNN: I don't. Thanks  
19 everybody for coming in.

20 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. We appreciate  
21 your attendance.

22 MR. OCHOA: Your Honor, judge, before we go  
23 off the record, Mr. Hedrick gave me a letter that he  
24 would like to submit, and I will pass that to the court  
25 reporter, with your permission.

1                   He's referring to another resident; is that  
2 correct?

3                   MR. HEDRICK: That's another resident.

4                   MS. BAKER: Is it a comment that has come  
5 into me already; do you know?

6                   MR. HEDRICK: No. She gave it to me.

7                   MS. BAKER: All right. All right.

8                   MR. OCHOA: So I passed that to the court  
9 reporter.

10                  MS. DIPPELL: All right. We can just mark  
11 that as local public hearing Exhibit No. 1, and we'll  
12 make sure that gets in the public comment record, also.

13                   Is there anything else?

14                  MR. OCHOA: I don't believe so, Your Honor.

15                  (Public Hearing Exhibit No. 1 was marked for  
16 identification.)

17                  MS. DIPPELL: All right. Then we can go  
18 off the record. Thank you.

19                  (WHEREIN, the hearing concluded at 6:49 p.m.)

20

21

22

23

24

25

I N D E X

1		
2		
3	WITNESS NAME:	PAGE NO.
4	Harry Waterson	8
5	Dale Hedrick	15
6	Lori Robbins	24
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		



	EXHIBITS		
		Marked	Received
1			
2			
3	Exhibit No. 1	31	31
4	Letter and envelope		
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER  
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
STATE OF MISSOURI

I, BRENDA J. BOWERS, CCR, CSR, RPR, the  
officer before whom the foregoing hearing was taken, do  
hereby certify that the matters stated was taken by me  
to the best of my ability, and thereafter reduced to  
typewriting; 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.

---

Brenda J. Bowers  
Certified Court Reporter