

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

STATE OF MISSOURI

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing

Friday, June 16, 2023
12:40 p.m. - 12:56 p.m.

WebEx

VOLUME 4
Pages 1 - 12

In the Matter of Confluence Rivers)
Utility Operating Company, Inc.'s)
Request for Authority to Implement) File No.
A General Rate Increase for Water) WR-2023-0006
Service and Sewer Service)
Provided in Missouri Service Areas.)

CHARLES HATCHER, Presiding
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

SCOTT T. RUPP, Chairman
MAIDA J. COLEMAN
JASON R. HOLSMAN
GLEN KOLKMEYER
DR. KAYLA HAHN,

COMMISSIONERS

Stenographically Reported By:
Beverly Jean Bentch, RPR, CCR No. 640

Job No. 146212

1 APPEARANCES:

2 On behalf of Confluence Rivers Utility
3 Operating Company, Inc.:

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9 Public Service Commission:

10 Public Service Commission
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16 On behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel:

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20 BY: JOHN CLIZER, ESQ.
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1 The following proceedings began at 12:40 p.m.:

2 JUDGE HATCHER: Let's go on the record. This
3 is a local public hearing in the case of Confluence
4 Rivers Request for a General Rate case that is File No.
5 WR-2023-0006. Today is June 16, 2023. I would ask
6 everyone to please mute themselves unless they are
7 speaking. That will cut down on the audio feedback.

8 I'd also like to note for the record we have
9 four Commissioners currently in attendance and are
10 expecting the fifth. We have in attendance
11 Commissioners Maida Coleman, Jason Holsman, Glen
12 Kolkmeier and Kayla Hahn. I will announce when the
13 Chairman arrives as well.

14 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Commissioner Rupp has
15 arrived.

16 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Chairman. For the
17 record we'll note that Chairman Rupp has joined us.
18 There are five Commissioners. They are appointed by the
19 Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Commissioners
20 employ a staff of engineers, accountants, attorneys
21 financial analysts and other specialists in the field of
22 utility regulation.

23 My name is Charles Hatcher. I am the
24 Regulatory Law Judge and will preside over this hearing.
25 This is an official hearing of the Missouri Public

1 Service Commission, and the statements and testimony of
2 witnesses will be recorded by a court reporter and are
3 given under oath. The Commissioners have not made any
4 decisions in this case and cannot answer any questions
5 today, because they do have to remain impartial until
6 all of the evidence is presented.

7 Let's go ahead and start with entries of
8 appearance for counsel. Confluence.

9 MR. WOODSMALL: Thank you, Your Honor. Good
10 afternoon, Commissioners. David Woodsmall on behalf of
11 Confluence Rivers.

12 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Woodsmall. And
13 for Staff.

14 MR. VANDERGRIFF: Good afternoon, everyone.
15 I'm Eric Vandergriff representing the Staff of the
16 Missouri Public Service Commission.

17 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Vandergriff.
18 And Mr. Clizer.

19 MR. CLIZER: John Clizer on behalf of the
20 Missouri Office of Public Counsel. Thank you.

21 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you very much. Now I
22 just want to explain real briefly before we get started
23 the process is going to be I'm going to call the names
24 that I have on my list. And then after that, I will ask
25 if anyone in the audience would also like to testify.

1 So if you didn't sign up, not to worry, we're
2 going to offer that to you again. I only have one name
3 on the list. So we'll get right to it. John France.
4 If John France can speak up. If you're on a phone, to
5 unmute you press *6. John France. That's okay.
6 Sometimes that happens or they might be hung up on the
7 phone trying to get unmuted still.

8 Are there any other persons in attendance who
9 would like to offer their comments to the Commissioners?

10 Yes, I have a hand raised. Please go ahead.
11 Ms. Harrington.

12 MS. HARRINGTON: Yes, hi. Good afternoon.
13 Thank you. I registered online. I don't know what
14 happened.

15 JUDGE HATCHER: First let me swear you in
16 again. Ms. Harrington, do you solemnly swear or affirm
17 that the testimony you're about to give will be the
18 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

19 MS. HARRINGTON: Yes, I do so swear.

20 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. And for our court
21 reporter, the name is L-y-n-n-e-t-t-e?

22 MS. HARRINGTON: And I'll clarify that. My
23 full legal name is Elaine Lynnette Harrington.

24 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Ms. Harrington. If
25 you'd like to go ahead, please.

1 MS. HARRINGTON: All right. So I am offering
2 my opinion how it affects me and whether or not I
3 support. First of all, in my opinion, after listening
4 to the answers today previously in our informal meeting,
5 primarily those answers came from Mr. Josiah Cox. And I
6 hear a lot of vague statistics. I hear him telling us
7 how we're paying so much less than everybody else in the
8 country. I hear him also telling us yes, we do need
9 this.

10 I hear him telling us that we can expect
11 future increases, future surprises. I hear him telling
12 us that those of us who are not on a meter, that's going
13 to be at a cost. I hear him telling us -- What I'm
14 hearing him telling us is that we should not object to
15 this rate increase that he's requesting because the
16 improvements needed are what we have to pay in order to
17 get the water we need.

18 The problem I see with that is that he's not
19 telling us yes, the yacht is expensive, diamonds are
20 expensive, this is what you need to pay. He's telling
21 us the subsistence of life, water itself, is going to be
22 expensive and we want you to pay. What concerns me is
23 there's no way to equitably distribute the actual cost.
24 I'm a single retiree on a fixed income. I'm a former
25 employee of the Internal Revenue Service, United States

1 Treasury Department. I planned my life. I moved here
2 from Oregon after 48 years, thought I had it planned,
3 bought a place in Missouri to be next to my kids, Glen
4 Meadows Estates. Suddenly I find that the initial
5 proposal of the increases to my water and sewer, 144
6 percent for water, 201 percent for sewer will, in
7 essence, constitute an increase to the point where it's
8 half of my food budget for the month.

9 I'm looking at the future. I just moved here
10 to retire and join the community, return to my home
11 ground in Missouri. And now I'm faced with the
12 devastation of an unknown wrecking ball in the future in
13 terms of finances. I understand it's needed. I
14 understand it's costly. What I don't understand is why
15 we don't have options. Water is a basic necessity for
16 life to equitably distribute that cost, and I don't
17 understand why private investor-owned management with
18 profit as the primary motive -- oh, there's some
19 humanitarian comment of how they want to help us.

20 Bottom line it's an investor-owned company.
21 Investors have to have profit. That's their purpose.
22 That's their primary purpose is profit. Those of us we
23 understand today who are using very, very little water
24 will be asked to pay for those who are using a lot of
25 water, big families, equally. We understand that we'll

1 be paying not only for what has been and what is now but
2 the cost that will be in the future. The cost is spread
3 out, and his comment was that yes, you're going to be
4 helping contribute to the cost. Well, if we're
5 contributing to the cost unequally and the cost is at a
6 rate of I heard today 100, 203 percent of what we're now
7 paying, it doesn't keep up with the wages. Some wages
8 only increase. I experience personally in the federal
9 government an increase of not even 1 percent a year for
10 a stretch of time.

11 Some people say they will have a 3 percent
12 wage increase, others more. It doesn't keep up. Our
13 wages won't keep up with this unknown future just to
14 have water to survive. I believe then that this affects
15 many of us in one way or another financially, but some
16 of us it affects in an unfair manner, those of us who
17 are living on fixed income, may be disabled, may be
18 retired. It affects many, many people not equally but
19 it does affect them. And for that reason I do not
20 support a request to raise the costs that we're paying
21 for water and sewer, or just sewer in some cases, at
22 this exorbitantly high rate. I believe there have to be
23 some other options that are more tenable to us in being
24 able to live and survive and exist for life and liberty
25 in the great state of Missouri. Thank you.

1 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Ms. Harrington. I
2 appreciate your comments. Are there any Commissioner
3 questions for Ms. Harrington? Okay. Hearing none. Ms.
4 Harrington, thank you again.

5 We'll call again our one witness on our list,
6 John France. If there's a John France, go ahead and
7 speak up. It's *6 to unmute if you are on the phone.

8 Okay. Otherwise, I'll call if there's any
9 other witnesses, any other customers that would like to
10 speak up. Otherwise, we'll be closing this hearing in
11 the next couple minutes. Just a fair warning. Okay.
12 I'll call for John France one last time. And one last
13 time for anyone in the audience that would like to speak
14 up.

15 Okay. That will bring our hearing today,
16 public hearing, to a close. Are there any comments from
17 the Commissioners?

18 CHAIRMAN RUPP: No, Judge. Just thank you for
19 a well run hearing.

20 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: No, thank you, Judge.

21 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Commissioners. And
22 I would also like to thank all of our participants,
23 whether they spoke up or not today, taking time out of
24 their day to be here.

25 If you do have additional comments, you were

1 too shy to make comments, or you know someone who would
2 like to make comments, the Commission will be still
3 accepting written comments in this case. You can go
4 right to the PSC's home web page. That's psc.mo.gov.
5 And in the upper right-hand corner there will be a link
6 that says submit your comments. Just make sure and
7 reference this file number. It ends in 0006. The
8 number is WR-2023-0006.

9 If you'd like to contact the Office of the
10 Public Counsel, their email is mopco@opc.mo.gov. That's
11 mopco@opc.mo.gov.

12 And if you need to get a hold of Confluence
13 Rivers, their customer number is toll free 866-945-3920.
14 Thank you all for your attendance. We are adjourned.
15 Let's go off the record.

16 (Thereupon, the hearing concluded at 12:56
17 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF MISSOURI)
COUNTY OF COLE)

I, Beverly Jean Bentch, RPR, CCR No. 640, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing Public Service Commission local public hearing; and that the transcript, pages 1 through 11, is a true record of my stenographic notes.

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

Dated this 7th day of July, 2023.

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

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