

Missouri Public Service Commission



APR 1 1 2018

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Judge or Division:	Ap	pellate	Number:		Missauri Duki	
Appellant:	Mi	Missouri Public Service Commission File Number:			⊥ Missouri Publ \$ervice Commis	
Indian Hills Utility Operating Company, Inc. vs.			VR-2017-0259	8:45am M		
Respondent:						
Public Service Commission of Miss	ouri	8			(Date File Stamp)	
V	N	Votice	of Appeal		, (Zanasa - Ang)	
Notice is given that Indian Hill	s Utility Operatir	ng Com	pany, Inc.	appeals to the Miss	souri Court of	
Appeals Western Eastern Hand Barrell		istrict.	Signature of Attor	ney or Appellan		
The notice of appeal shall inclususbsection 4 of section 386.420, a commission proceeding, and any oth and (2) two copies and pay the dock by law. Please make checks or more serve a copy of the Notice of Appearepresented by an attorney.	oncise statement on her information spet fee required by ney orders payab	of the issection court replication to the	sues being appealed, a full by the rules of the court. ule to the Secretary of the e Missouri Court of Ap	Il and complete lis The appellant(s) no e Commission with apeals. At the same	nust file the original nin the time specified e time, Appellant must	
	CAS	SE IN	FORMATION			
Appellant Name / Bar Number:			Respondent's Attorney	/ Bar Number:		
Dean L. Cooper MBE 36592			Shelley Brueggeman	n MBE 52173		
Address:	NATORO DELET RESI SOO		Address:			
BRYDON, SWEARENGEN & ENG 312 East Capital Avenue P.O. Box 456	LAND P.C.		P.O. Box 360 Jefferson City, MO 65012			
Telephone: (573) 635-7166	Fax: (573) 635-042	27	Telephone: (573) 526-7393		Fax:	
Date of Commission Decision:	Date of Appli	ication	for Rehearing Filed:	Date Application	for Rehearing Ruled On:	
February 7, 2018	February 16,	2018		March 14, 2018		
A copy of the notice of appeal a ordered by the court of appeals, the court of appeals.	nd the docket fee	shall be				
		Certif	ficate of Service			
I certify that on April 11, 2018 following address(es), by the method Shelly Brueggemann, P.O. Box 3	l of service indica	ted.	copy of the notice of ap		ng parties, at the	
Hampton Williams, Public Couns	el, P.O. Box 223	30, 200	Madison Street, Jeffe	rson City, MO 65	102	
These individuals served by regu	lar mail and han	nd deliv	rerv			
				111	1/	
			App	pellant or Attorney for	Appellant	

FORM 1. CIVIL CASE INFORMATION FORM SUPPLEMENT

MISSOURI COURT OF APPEALS WESTERN DISTRICT

	No				
[Please type or neatly print the information reque Appeal (form 8-A) with the Circuit Clerk.]	ested. This form must be filed v	with the Notice of			
Indian Hills Utility Operating Company, Inc.	Dean L. Cooper	MBE 36592			
Plaintiff	Attorney's Name 312 East Capitol Avenue				
	Street Address Jefferson Cily, Missouri	65102			
	City	Zlp Code			
ys.					
Public Service Commission of Missouri	Shelley Brueggemann				
Defendant	Attorney's Name				
	200 Madison Street				
	Street Address				
	Jefferson City, Missouri	65102			
	City	Zip Code			
Date Notice filed in Xixxxix XXXXX April 11, with the Public Service Commission	2018				
The Record on Appeal will consist of a:					
X Legal File Only or include records filed pursuant to Rules 81.13 and	Transcript and Legal 1 d 81.16)	File. (This will			
FACTUAL BACKGROUND: (Events Giving I	Rise to Cause of Action)				
Please see attached.	·				
ISSUE(S); (Anticipated to be Presented by the Appeal; Appelle Please see attached.	pellant is Not Bound by this Des	signation)			
[Two (2) typewritten pages maximum] (Added June 25, 1987, effective Dec. 1, 1987.	Amended effective June 23, 198	8)			

FACTUAL BACKGROUND: (Events Giving Rise to Cause of Action)

This is an appeal of a Report and Order issued by the Public Service Commission in its Case No. WR-2017-0259 regarding a request by Appellant for approval of revised tariffs to increase permanent rates for water and sewer service to its customers.

ISSUE(\$);

(Anticipated to be Presented by the Appeal; Appellant is Not Bound by this Designation)

The issue on appeal is the Commission's determination of Appellant's cost of capital, specifically, the Commission's determination regarding Appellant's cost of debt capital. The details of Appellant's grievance are set fort in detail in the attached Application for Reconsideration or Rehearing.

Statement of Issues Being Appealed

The February 7, 2018, Report and Order ("Order") of the Missouri Public Service Commission ("Commission") is unlawful, unreasonable, unjust, arbitrary and an abuse of discretion in that the end result of the Order does not provide for revenues adequate to service the Appellant's debt obligations and does not provide for any return whatsoever on equity capital. As such, it does not meet the constitutional standards for determining whether an authorized return on capital is fair and reasonable was established by the United States Supreme Court as follows: (1) Returns must be consistent with other businesses having similar or comparable risks; (2) The return must be adequate to support credit quality and access to capital; and, (3) The end result, regardless of the analytical methods used, must result in just and reasonable rates. Bluefield Water Works & Improv. Co., 262 U.S. 679, 692-93 (1923); Federal Power Comm'n v. Hope Natural Gas Co., 320 U.S. 591, 603 (1944). The Order does not generate just and reasonable rates for failure to provide for bilateral fairness. State ex rel. Valley Sewage Co. v. Public Serv. Comm., 515 S.W.2d 845, 850 (Mo. App. K.C. 1974).

Also, the Commission incorrectly allocated the evidentiary burdens of the parties. While Appellant had the ultimate burden of proof (or persuasion), the burden of producing evidence shifts to the party asserting the contrary of the matter once the moving party presents a *prima facie* case. Indian Hills met its burden of coming forward with evidence by presenting the testimony of Appellant's President, and an independent expert in business finance, to the effect that no lower-cost debt capital was available to Appellant at the time of the acquisition of the company was made. At that point, the burden of going forward with the evidence to prove that lower cost debt capital was available to Appellant at the time of the acquisition shifted to the Office of the Public Counsel ("OPC"), the party making the contrary assertion. Appellant contends that burden was not met merely by OPC pointing out that some other dissimilar company in some other jurisdiction at some other time was able to obtain debt capital on more favorable terms.

Parties to the Proceedings Before Respondent

Indian Hills Operating Company, Inc., Appellant

Public Service Commission of Missouri, Respondent

The Office of the Public Counsel, Statutory Consumer Advocate

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

In the Matter of the Rate Increase Request of)	
Indian Hills Utility Operating Company, Inc.)	File No. WR-2017-0259

APPLICATION FOR RECONSIDERATION OR REHEARING

COMES NOW Indian Hills Utility Operating Company, Inc. ("Indian Hills" or the "Company"), and pursuant to §386.500, RSMo., submits its Application for Reconsideration or Rehearing of a *Report and Order* issued by the Commission in the above-captioned matter on February 7, 2018 (hereinafter "Order"). In support hereof, Indian Hills states as follows:

1. The Order of the Missouri Public Service Commission ("Commission") is unlawful, unreasonable, unjust, arbitrary and an abuse of discretion for one or more or all of the reasons hereinafter set forth. For these reasons, the decision of the Commission should be reconsidered or the case should be reheard and the Order in this case should be amended or superseded to address and correct the matters of error raised by the Company.

DEBT COST

2. Among other things, the Order addresses the issues associated with the appropriate cost of capital as a component of the Commission's determination of Indian Hills' revenue requirement. (*See*, pp. 45-66) In this regard, the Commission determined that compliance tariffs should be based on a 50:50 debt to equity ratio with the cost of debt at an imputed 6.75% and a return on common equity at 12%, representing a weighted average cost of capital ("WACC") of 9.375%.¹

¹ A summary of these findings appears at page 45 of the Order.

- 3. The justification in the order for using the 6.75% interest rate is grounded in part on the conclusion that the Company's evidence supporting Exhibit 15 was not able to be effectively subjected to cross-examination.² This finding is unwarranted in the circumstance because this evidence was provided by the Company to rebut OPC witness Meyers' Schedule GRM-SUR2, which was filed **as part of his surrebuttal testimony**. Not having had an opportunity to respond to Mr. Meyers' schedule in pre-filed testimony, Indian Hills compiled and presented evidence at the hearing in the only way available to it, to distinguish the circumstances of each and every one of the small water companies identified in that schedule from that of Indian Hills. It is, therefore, an abuse of discretion to disregard the Company's evidence on this point simply because Schedule GRM-SUR2 was introduced in the final round of prepared testimony. By disregarding Indian Hills' distinguishing evidence and imputing a cost of debt of only 6.75% based in large part on Schedule GRM-SUR2, the Commission acted arbitrarily and capriciously.
- 4. This error is consequential. The use of an imputed cost of debt of 6.75%, instead of the Company's actual cost of 14%, to determine its WACC results in rates that are insufficient to cover the Company's contractual debt service obligations, much less provide a return to its equity investors. This can be illustrated thusly:

	WACC	Net Operating Income	Income Available for Common Shareholders	Return on Common Equity
Ordered by the Commission	9.375%	\$176,260	(\$26,740)	-6.22%3

² Report and Order, p. 58.

³ This tabulation and calculations follow the format, inputs and methodology supporting Table 1 on page 3 of Company witness Dylan W. D'Ascendis' Rebuttal Testimony (Exh. 11).

On its face, the consequence of the Order is to place Indian Hills in the position of defaulting on its contractual debt obligations and to chart a course to insolvency. The Order thus is unlawful in that it represents confiscatory ratemaking in violation of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States and in violation of Article I, §10 of the Constitution of the State of Missouri.

- 5. Because the end result of the Order does not provide for revenues adequate to service the Company's debt obligations and does not provide for any return whatsoever on equity capital, it is further unlawful and unreasonable in that it does not meet the standard the Commission enunciated in 2010 wherein it found that a "just and reasonable" rate under the law is one that is fair to both the utility and its customers, is no more than sufficient to keep public utility plants in proper repair for effective service to the public, and insures investors a reasonable return upon the funds invested. The constitutional standards for determining whether an authorized return is fair and reasonable was established by the United States Supreme Court as follows: (1) Returns must be consistent with other businesses having similar or comparable risks; (2) The return must be adequate to support credit quality and access to capital; and, (3) The end result, regardless of the analytical methods used, must result in just and reasonable rates. Bluefield Water Works & Improv. Co., 262 U.S. 679, 692-93 (1923); Federal Power Comm'n v. Hope Natural Gas Co., 320 U.S. 591, 603 (1944). The Order does not meet these criteria.
- 6. Additionally, the Order mentions, but gives short shrift to, the compelling factual background which has resulted in the much improved operational circumstances under which the Company now operates. The Commission will recall that Indian Hills took over the troubled

⁴In the matter of Missouri Gas Energy, Report and Order in Case No. GR-2009-0355 dated February 10, 2010, page 7.

operations of I. H. Utilities, Inc. ("IHU") in 2016.⁵ Since that time, the Company has invested substantial capital to upgrade the water system and improve service to its customers. The Commission notes in its Order at page 59 the Company's successful remediation of IHU's environmental violations. The Commission's sharp criticism in the Order of the terms of the Company's debt financing is disconcerting, particularly given the relevant operational and regulatory history.

- 7. The principal terms of the loan agreement that is so robustly criticized by the Office of the Public Counsel ("OPC") and whose critiques have been sanctioned by the Commission cannot have come as a surprise. In its Application to the Commission in File No. WO-2016-0045, Indian Hills outlined its plans for obtaining capital associated with its takeover and rescue of IHU. In a term sheet filed with the Application on August 25, 2016 (Appendix H HC), the 14% interest rate⁶ and the prepayment terms⁷ were disclosed. Significant concerns about the cost (for example, the significant difference between a 14% debt rate and a 6.75% debt rate) or other consequences of the Company's financing should have been raised prior to the time the financing was closed. The Order thus is unlawful and unreasonable.
- 8. Additionally, the Commission's finding in this case that 14% debt is not just and reasonable "as to the customers" and to substitute instead a 6.75% rate appears to conflict with the Commission's findings in the 2016 acquisition case, a circumstance the Order does not directly address. As noted above, the essential terms of the Company's debt financing were made known to the Commission as part of Indian Hills' 2016 Application. Presumably, the

⁵ As noted in the Commission's February 3, 2016, order in File No. WO-2016-0045, IHU had been administratively dissolved and even though given notice of, and opportunity to intervene in, that proceeding, it did not participate.

⁶ "Fixed Interest Rate: 14%"

⁷ "Prepayment: 14% of total interest remaining in loan schedule"

⁸ Report and Order, pp. 55-56.

Commission carried out its duty to consider the financing terms associated with the acquisition of IHU in its File No. WO-2016-0045, as part of its review of the filing. It is, therefore, proper to infer that the Commission had determined that the transaction's financing terms were reasonable (or not grossly unreasonable); a necessary element in deciding whether the transaction was detrimental to the public interest.

- 9. The Commission's concern about the cost of debt assumed by Indian Hills is understandable as an abstract matter and, were there any evidence that lower cost debt actually was available to it in 2016, the Commission's adjustment might be justified, but the fact is that the Company provided competent expert and other testimony that lower cost debt capital simply was not available for it to finance the takeover and rescue of IHU. The Commission's disregard of this testimony in favor of OPC's conjecture that lower cost debt was available because another much larger company has financed with debt bearing an interest rate equal to 6.75% is unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious in nature.
- burdens of the parties⁹ and, thus, creates a significant error in the Commission's findings. While the Company had the ultimate burden of proof (or persuasion), the burden of producing evidence shifts to the party asserting the contrary of the matter once the moving party presents a *prima facie* case. ¹⁰ Thus, Indian Hills met its burden of coming forward with evidence by presenting the testimony of Josiah Cox, the Company's President, and Michael Thaman, an expert in business finance, to the effect that no lower-cost debt capital was available *to the Company* at the time of the acquisition. At that point, the burden of going forward with the evidence to prove that lower cost debt capital *was* available to Indian Hills at the time of the acquisition shifted to

⁹ See, Report and Order, p. 60.

¹⁰ The Commission applied this evidentiary rule in its August 5, 2004, <u>Order Closing Case</u> in its File No. GO-2003-0354 at page 3.

the OPC, the party making that assertion. That burden was not met merely by pointing out that some *other* dissimilar company in some *other* jurisdiction at some *other* time was able to obtain debt capital on more favorable terms.

- 11. Ultimately, the Order does not generate just and reasonable rates for failure to provide for bilateral fairness. *State ex rel. Valley Sewage Co. v. Public Serv. Comm.*, 515 S.W.2d 845, 850 (1974). The Commission asserts that the Company's customers have not been benefitted by the debt financing terms, but the Commission found that customers of Indian Hills *have* benefitted from having a troubled water supply system taken over and have seen substantial improvements made to the water system's plant and operations by virtue of capital investments made available by its new owners. In disregard of this finding, the rates approved by the Commission not only fail to generate the revenue needed to service the Company's debt, but fail to provide any return whatsoever to its equity investors.
- Lastly, although the Order concedes that parties are free to establish the terms and conditions under which credit is extended to a borrower, it contains certain ambiguous language with regard to the loan agreement's prepayment penalty language. Specifically, the Commission directs that "the tariffs shall include in rates and charges no amount for a prepayment penalty." There is no evidence in the record that the Company has sought to refund its indebtedness, or that the prepayment penalty clause has been triggered and that any monies with respect to it are currently due and owing. Necessarily derivative of this fact is that Indian Hills has not sought to recover in rates any amounts associated with this aspect of the loan agreement in this case.

 Where the prepayment penalty is concerned, there is no impact for rates and charges purposes.

 In this light, the Company views the quoted language in the Order as has having no practical consequence at the time compliance tariffs are filed. However, to the extent the language in the

¹¹ Report and Order, p. 62.

Order is intended to negate or modify a term of the loan agreement, the Commission may not do so. It has no statutory authority to enforce, construe or annul contracts because it is not a court of law and any attempt to do so is unlawful and unreasonable. *Wilshire Constr. Co. v. Union Electric Co.*, 463 S.W.2d 903, 905 (Mo. 1971); *May Dept. Stores v. Union Electric Co.*, 107 S.W.2d 41, 49 (Mo. 1937).

RATE CASE EXPENSE

- unreasonable in that it is not based on competent and substantial evidence. This figure, drawn from a November 22, 2017, Non-Unanimous Stipulation and Agreement ("Stipulation") that was filed in the case, but not approved by the Commission, is based on rate case expenses incurred as of an early point in the case and does not include rate case expenses associated with preparation for the evidentiary hearing, participation in the evidentiary hearing, and preparation of the Company's Brief. The amount identified by the Order has no record support and is, therefore, not competent evidence in the case. To the contrary, the Stipulation includes language agreed to by the signatories that it is an integrated whole and, unless adopted in total by the Commission, is "void" and neither signatory will be bound by any of its terms.¹²
- 14. Staff's brief addresses rate case expense on pages 16 and 17 and states "[i]f the Stipulation is approved, this number [\$5,722] is frozen, and there will be no true-up to increase rate case expense incurred in this case due to the hearing. If the Stipulation is not approved, Indian Hills will be able to submit a higher, final rate case expense number to be included in cost of service."
- 15. Consistent with this, the Company took the position in its post-hearing brief (and still maintains) that its rate case expense should be "brought forward to a cut-off date at least one

¹² See, ¶15.

week after the filing of the post-hearing brief (and normalized over three years)". ¹³ The Order should be corrected to include an appropriate level of rate case expense.

Conclusion

For the reasons stated herein, Indian Hills respectfully requests that the Commission reconsider its Order or, alternatively, grant the Company's Application for Rehearing, and upon rehearing, issue a superseding or correction order directing that compliance tariffs be filed based on a cost of capital derived using the contractual interest cost of 14%, rate case expense through at least January 11, 2018, and making such other findings as are consistent with the matters set forth above.

Respectfully submitted,

Dean L. Cooper

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ATTORNEYS FOR INDIAN HILLS UTILITY OPERATING COMPANY, INC.

¹³ Company Brief, p. 27.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that copies of the foregoing have been transmitted by electronic mail to the following on this 16th day of February, 2018:

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STATE OF MISSOURI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

At a session of the Public Service Commission held at its office in Jefferson City on the 14th day of March, 2018.

In the Matter of the Rate Increase Request of) Indian Hills Utility Operating Company, Inc.)

File No. WR-2017-0259 Tracking No. YW-2018-0102

ORDER DENYING REHEARING

Issue Date: March 14, 2018

Effective Date: March 14, 2018

Indian Hills Utility Operating Company, Inc. ("Indian Hills") filed an application for rehearing of the *Report and Order*. The Commission grants an application for rehearing if "in its judgment sufficient reason therefore be made to appear." Under that standard, the Commission will deny the application for rehearing.

THE COMMISSION ORDERS THAT:

- 1. The Application for Reconsideration or Rehearing is denied.
- 2. This order is effective when issued.

BY THE COMMISSION

Morris L Woodulf

Morris L. Woodruff Secretary

Hall, Chm., Kenney, Rupp, and Coleman, CC., concur; Silvey, C., absent.

Daniel Jordan, Senior Regulatory Law Judge

¹ Electronic Filing Information Service ("EFIS") No. 189 (February 16, 2018) *Application for Reconsideration or Rehearing*.

² Section 386.500.1, RSMo 2016.

Missouri Public Service Commission - Auditing Department Indian Hills Utility Operating Company, Inc.

Case No. WR-2017-0259

Reconciliation of Issues Decided by the Commission Change in Revenue Requirement and Rate Impact

Payroll		Change in Revenue Requirement From Order		Customer Class	Change in Rate Impact Based on Revenue Requirement
Per OPC		-\$5,971	Per OPC	Residential - Customer Charge	Requirement
Auditing and Tax Pre	paration Fees				
Per OPC		-\$11,751	Per OPC	Residential - Customer Charge	
Management Consult	ting Fees				
Per OPC		-\$6,000	Per OPC	Residential - Customer Charge	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
Bank Fees					
Per OPC		-\$4,932	Per OPC	Residential - Customer Charge	······································
Rate Case Expense					
Per OPC		\$4,729	Per OPC	Residential - Customer Charge	
Leak Repair Costs					
Per OPC		-\$48,006	Per OPC	Residential - Customer Charge	
Extension of Electrica	ıl Line				
Per Indian Hills/Staff		\$6,210	Per Indian Hills/Staff	Residential - Customer Charge	
Capital Structure					
Per Order	Equity 50% / Debt 50%				
Per Indian Hills/Staff	Equity 35% / Debt 65%	-\$36,610	Per Indian Hills/Staff	Residential - Customer Charge	
Cost of Debt					
Per Order	6.75%				
Per Indian Hills/Staff	14.00%	\$71,872	Per Indian Hills/Staff	Residential - Customer Charge	
Return on Equity					
Per Order	12.00%				
Per OPC	9.34%	-\$40,619	Per OPC	Residential - Customer Charge	

	OPC	Staff/Company	<u>Difference</u>	Account / Changed	New Rate Revenues	Difference
Payroll	\$45,751	\$51,722	(\$5,971)	920.000	\$575,957	(\$5,971)
Auditing and Tax Preparation Fees	\$2,242	\$13,993	(\$11,751)	923.500	\$570,177	(\$11,751)
Management Consulting Fees	\$0	\$6,000	(\$6,000)	923.600	\$575,928	(\$6,000)
Bank Fees	\$0	\$4,932	(\$4,932)	903.280	\$576,996	(\$4,932)
Rate Case Expense	\$16,391	\$11,662	\$4,729	928.300	\$586,657	\$4,729
Leak Repair Costs				Note (1)	\$533,922	(\$48,006)
Extension of Electrical Service				Note (2)	\$588,048	\$6,120
Capital Structure	50% / 50%	35% / 65%		Capital Structure Page	\$545,318	(\$36,610)
Cost of Debt	6.75%	14.00%		Capital Structure Page/AFUDC (Note 3)	\$653,800	\$71,872
Return on Equity	9.34%	12.00%		Capital Structure Page	\$541,309	(\$40,619)

Note (1) 1- Removed: Amortization Expense -\$56,969

2- Add: Account 343.00 \$56,969

Note (2) 1- Removed: Amortization Expense, Amortization of electric line, -\$4,600

2- Add: Plant in Service, act 325, Addition of electric line, \$23,000

3- Add: plant addition from AFUDC calculation \$9,310

4- Add: Act 325, depreciation reserve for electric line, \$2,315

Note (3) 1 - changed cost of debt to 14%

2 - changed AFUDC to total \$65,513