

In the Matter of:

MISSOURI-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY'S REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY, etc.

WR-2020-0344, VOL. VI

January 25, 2021



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BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

STATE OF MISSOURI

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Public Hearing

January 25, 2021

Jefferson City, Missouri

Volume 6

WebEx

In The Matter of Missouri-American)	
Water Company's Request for)	
Authority to Implement General)	File No.
Rate Increase for Water and Sewer)	WR-2020-0344
Service Provided in Missouri)	
Service Areas)	

NANCY DIPPELL, Presiding
REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

MAIDA COLEMAN
JASON R. HOLSMAN,
COMMISSIONERS

REPORTED BY:
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A P P E A R A N C E S

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Let's go ahead and go on the
3 record. Today is January 25, 2021. The Missouri Public
4 Service Commission has set this time for a virtual
5 public hearing in Case No. WR-2020-0344, which is
6 captioned In the Matter of Missouri-American Water
7 Company's Request for Authority to Implement General
8 Rate Increase for Water and Sewer Service Provided in
9 Missouri Service Areas.

10 The Commission has scheduled this public
11 hearing to give members of the public a chance to
12 comment about Missouri-American's request. The Public
13 Service Commission regulates the rates charged by
14 investor-owned public utilities in Missouri to ensure
15 that those rates are just and reasonable. The
16 Commission also regulates the quality of service and
17 safety of operations of public utilities.

18 The Commission is made up of five
19 commissioners. The commissioners are appointed by the
20 Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The commissioners
21 employ a staff of engineers, accountants, attorneys,
22 financial analysts and other specialists in the field of
23 utility regulation.

24 My name is Nancy Dippell. I'm a Regulatory
25 Law Judge for the Commission, and it's my job to preside

1 over this hearing and the procedural matters in this
2 case. With me today I have -- I know I have
3 Commissioner Coleman on the line. Are there any of the
4 other commissioners on the line? I don't think they've
5 been able to join us just yet.

6 This is an official hearing of the Missouri
7 Public Service Commission, and the statements of the
8 witnesses will be taken down by the court reporter and
9 will be given under oath or affirmation. So I will ask

10 --

11 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Commissioner Holsman is
12 here.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, Commissioner. -- I
14 will ask you to either swear or affirm to tell the
15 truth. All of the commissioners will then have the
16 opportunity to read your comments if they're not here
17 present listening. This will all go down in a
18 transcript and will be part of the record.

19 I'm going to begin by asking the counsel for
20 the parties to give their entries of appearance. Let me
21 begin with Missouri-American Water Company?

22 MR. LUFT: Thank you, Judge Dippell. This is
23 Tim Luft, counsel for Missouri-American Water, 727 Craig
24 Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63141.

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, Mr. Luft. If you

1 speak more in the future you may need to move just a
2 little closer to your microphone. Commission Staff?

3 MS. BRETZ: Karen Bretz for Staff of the
4 Missouri Public Service Commission. Address is 200
5 Madison Street, PO Box 360, Jefferson City, Missouri
6 65102.

7 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. And the Office of
8 the Public Counsel?

9 MR. HALL: Good afternoon, Judge. Caleb Hall
10 appearing on behalf of Missouri's Office of the Public
11 Counsel. Our office address is 200 Madison Street,
12 Suite 650, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: And do we have counsel for any
14 of the intervenors present that needed to make an entry?
15 I'm not hearing any. The process is going to be that
16 I'm going to call the names on the list of preregistered
17 individuals, the individuals that stated that they
18 wished to speak today. When I get to the end of that
19 list, then I will call to see if there's anyone else
20 that's present that wishes to testify.

21 When I call your name, I'll ask you to unmute
22 your device. And if you're on a phone to call in, you
23 may also need to then press *6 to unmute the system.
24 And then I will ask you to raise your right hand with me
25 if you're able and to swear or affirm to tell the truth.

1 Then I'll ask you to state your name and spell it for
2 the court reporter and then you can give your comments
3 to the Commission. I'd also like you to remain on the
4 line after you've finished your testimony in case I or
5 the commissioners or some of the attorneys have some
6 clarifying questions for you.

7 Given the number of people that are on the
8 line, I'm going to ask that you limit your remarks to no
9 more than five minutes so that everyone has a chance to
10 testify. Also, the audio of this hearing is being live
11 streamed on our website. That's psc.mo.gov. And the
12 recording of this testimony portion of that audio will
13 also be available after the hearing and you can access
14 that from the website.

15 The commissioners won't be available to answer
16 questions during this hearing. They and myself remain
17 as impartial during this whole evidence gathering
18 portion and through the evidentiary hearing that's
19 scheduled in late February. And then once all of the
20 information is available, the Commission will make a
21 decision. The Commission has not made a decision at
22 this point in this case, and they are very interested in
23 hearing your comments and will use them in conjunction
24 with the evidence that the parties present to help make
25 their decision.

1 If you have any questions after the hearing
2 that you haven't gotten addressed, you can use the same
3 email address that was in your notice to register for
4 the hearing. That's mawccomments@psc.mo.gov. And you
5 can also, if you have questions or need to be referred
6 to where you can get your questions answered or help
7 with your billing questions, and so forth, you can also
8 contact the customer service portion of the Commission
9 at 800.392.4211, and they can direct you to where you
10 might either leave a comment and get a question
11 answered.

12 And comments are also available again on our
13 website under this case number. There will be a link
14 there where you can go and leave a written comment if
15 you prefer to do that. I think that is most of my
16 housekeeping matters. So I will go ahead then and just
17 begin with the first name on my list. And again, you'll
18 probably need to unmute your phone if you're calling in
19 and unmute, press *6 to unmute the system.

20 So the first name I have is Maxine Timms. Is
21 Ms. Timms available? I will try to pause long enough
22 for people to navigate the electronic system. Is Ms.
23 Timms wanting to testify or available? I'm not hearing
24 anything so I will move on. Kathleen Friederich? I
25 apologize if I'm mispronouncing people's names. Diane

1 --

2 MS. FRIEDERICH: Hello.

3 JUDGE DIPPELL: Yes, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

4 Is that Ms. Friederich?

5 MS. FRIEDERICH: Yes.

6 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Great, great. Can you
7 please raise your right hand?

8 (Witness sworn.)

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: If you would go ahead and
10 state your name and spell it for us.

11 MS. FRIEDERICH: Sure. It's Kathleen,
12 K-a-t-h-l-e-e-n, Friederich, F-r-i-e-d-e-r-i-c-h.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Thank you. You can go
14 ahead and give us your comments.

15 MS. FRIEDERICH: Okay. I believe that
16 Missouri-American Water has reduced tremendously
17 customer service in that you can't get through on the
18 lines and talk to someone who's knowledgeable much of
19 the time. The new meters, which calculate usage, are
20 digital and they're not mechanical. So therefore the
21 charges have gone up since the installation. And also,
22 the water charges to MSD need to be regulated in some
23 way, shape or form, because that information is going
24 from a regulatory agent to a nonregulated agent. But
25 that is information --

1 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead. I'm sorry.

2 MS. FRIEDERICH: -- that is information that
3 is going from a nonregulated -- a regulated entity,
4 which is the Missouri-American Water, to a nonregulated
5 entity. That information is still being passed. So
6 therefore, there should be some oversight on that in
7 accordance, or to MSD, which is my sewer company. Thank
8 you.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Ms. Friederich, let me just
10 make sure I understand. Are you suggesting that it's
11 the information that's going to MSD that is either
12 incorrect or is not complete?

13 MS. FRIEDERICH: I'm glad you clarified that,
14 Judge Nancy. What I'm saying is we don't get
15 information along that line. Okay. You call the water
16 company and then they refer you to MSD and MSD can't
17 answer your question. Therefore, we do not know or
18 understand okay, the charge and if the amount of water
19 is correct or incorrect. And what I am saying is since
20 there is, or seems to be confusion and they are touching
21 on to a regulated to a nonregulated, they need to take a
22 look at it. That's all.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Thank you for
24 clarifying that for me. I'll just pause at the end of
25 each witness. And if the commissioners have anything

1 further, I'll just ask them to jump in. And I can see
2 each of the attorneys on my video. So when I ask if the
3 attorneys have any questions, you can just nod at me or
4 wave your hand or something if you do. Are there any
5 additional questions for Ms. Friederich at this time?
6 Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Ms.

7 Friederich.

8 MS. FRIEDERICH: You're welcome. Thank you.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Is Diane Schenker on the
10 phone? And again, you may have to press *6 if you're on
11 a phone.

12 MR. LUFT: She said she had an appointment,
13 she had to get off.

14 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Luft.
15 Is Sarah Aleman available? Sarah Aleman? Naomi Niles?

16 MS. NILES: Yes. Thank you. Thank you for
17 this opportunity. I'm a new resident.

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Hold on just one second
19 and let me swear you in. Then I'll ask you to state
20 your name and spell it. Okay?

21 (Witness sworn.)

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. Go ahead with your
23 -- State your name and spell it, and then go ahead with
24 your comments.

25 MS. NILES: Naomi Niles, N-a-o-m-i N-i-l-e-s.

1 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead. Thank you.

2 MS. NILES: I am a new resident. So I'm
3 interested in the process and concerned about a rate
4 increase of more than 20 percent. I'm trying to
5 understand the process, and the separation between the
6 water company and the sewer company is very new to me.
7 So I'm here for my information, as well as to say I'm
8 not sure why the 20 percent plus is being asked for but
9 I understand it's for previously done infrastructure
10 work. It seems like it's a great amount. Thank you.

11 JUDGE DIPPELL: I appreciate those comments.
12 Utility regulation in Missouri can be very confusing.
13 So I don't know if you're a new resident to Missouri or
14 are you a new resident to the St. Louis area, which
15 you're using?

16 MS. NILES: Both.

17 JUDGE DIPPELL: Both. Okay. So yes, the
18 Missouri-American Water is regulated by the Public
19 Service Commission, the state. However, the sewer
20 district there is not regulated by Missouri Public
21 Service Commission. So when we're discussing a rate
22 increase, that is affecting -- Specifically the
23 Commission only has jurisdiction over the water portion
24 of that for your particular district. Missouri-American
25 does own some sewer districts in the state of Missouri.

1 So that also makes things kind of confusing. So I hope
2 that your participation in this process helps you
3 understand that a little better. And if you need
4 additional information after this, again, like I say,
5 the Commission's website has a lot of information and
6 the consumer services department of the Commission can
7 point you to other sources or people to answer specific
8 questions.

9 Are there any other clarifying questions for
10 Ms. Niles? I'm not seeing any. We really appreciate
11 your participation, Ms. Niles. Thank you.

12 MS. NILES: Thank you.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Peggy Nelson? Chris Parks?
14 Jeff Coleman?

15 MR. COLEMAN: Yes, Judge.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: Yes. Would you please raise
17 your right hand if you're able.

18 (Witness sworn.)

19 JUDGE DIPPELL: If you could go ahead and
20 state your name and spell it.

21 MR. COLEMAN: Jeff Coleman, J-e-f-f
22 C-o-l-e-m-a-n.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Coleman.
24 Go ahead.

25 MR. COLEMAN: No relation to Commissioner

1 Coleman. Before I start, I just want to say it seems
2 like my WebEx connection has been in and out today. So
3 please feel free to interrupt me if any of my audio cuts
4 out during my testimony. I support this rate increase,
5 because I fear for the health and well-being of St.
6 Louis County water customers if Missouri-American
7 continues to rely upon their current levels of revenue.

8 We built our house in 2002, and almost from
9 day one my family has suffered an endless series of
10 damages to our bathroom and plumbing fixtures due to the
11 highly corrosive water provided by Missouri-American.
12 Shower heads, shower enclosures, toilets, washing
13 machine, supply lines, valves. The list goes on and on.
14 All of these components were installed brand new less
15 than 20 years ago.

16 The final straw was last year when we
17 discovered our main shut-off valve had been completely
18 destroyed by less than two decades of water usage.
19 That's when our family made the difficult decision to
20 switch all of our consumable water usage to bottled
21 water. We are no longer using any tap water for
22 drinking, cooking or cleaning. Now the only
23 Missouri-American water in our house is flushing our
24 toilets, because that water has no human contact. If
25 you think that's not achievable for a typical family,

1 feel free to verify that my household's water usage is
2 down about 90 percent since September.

3 Now, I understand rate increases are difficult
4 for most families to bear, and mine is no exception, but
5 consider the alternative. Take a look at what
6 Missouri-American's water has already done to your
7 plumbing system and consider what it must be doing to
8 your family's vital organs. Now imagine how much worse
9 it will be if Missouri-American is forced to cut corners
10 on water quality even more than they already have been.
11 Will they start piping in water from Flint, Michigan?
12 Let's get them the revenues they need so they can find a
13 way to deliver clean, safe water rather than the
14 corrosive poison they've been selling us for decades.
15 Thank you for your time.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you for those comments,
17 Mr. Coleman. Let me just real quick, I'm assuming that
18 you have been in touch with Missouri-American at some
19 point about your issues; is that correct?

20 MR. COLEMAN: I have been in touch with them
21 sporadically, but, you know, I've been assured that the
22 water quality is operating at or above legal
23 requirements. So it doesn't seem like that's going to
24 be a productive avenue for me to pursue.

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: I'm not sure if it will be

1 either, but I would encourage you to reach out to their
2 customer service people in case there is some quality
3 issue that they can help you with. And I hope you were
4 able to hear me because I see that your video is cutting
5 out a little bit there. But I'm just encouraging you.

6 MR. COLEMAN: I can hear you. You're cutting
7 as well.

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: I was just going to encourage
9 you to reach out to Missouri-American's consumer
10 services department to see if there is anything with the
11 quality particular to your house or your neighborhood or
12 something that they can assist you with. And if you
13 don't have a number to call them, I'm sure there's one
14 on your bill. If you don't have a number, I'd encourage
15 you to go ahead and call the Public Service Commission
16 consumer number and they can redirect you and that
17 number is 800.392.4211.

18 Mr. Luft, did you have anything you wanted to
19 add that?

20 MR. LUFT: Mr. Coleman, are you on Robbins
21 Grove?

22 MR. COLEMAN: I am.

23 MR. LUFT: We don't show -- We do show that we
24 were out at your home for the valve. We do not show
25 that we've ever been out there for water quality issues.

1 Would you be willing to allow our water quality folks to
2 come to your home and do some testing?

3 MR. COLEMAN: Sure, absolutely.

4 MR. LUFT: Okay. We would love to do that. I
5 think we've got an email for you, a hotmail email
6 address. Is that a good one to use?

7 MR. COLEMAN: Yes, it is.

8 MR. LUFT: We'll follow up with you. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. COLEMAN: Thank you, sir.

11 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you for that. Are there
12 any other questions for Mr. Coleman? Okay. Appreciate
13 your participation, Mr. Coleman. Good luck with your
14 issues and appreciate your comments.

15 MR. COLEMAN: Thank you.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: Mike Grant? G L Tate? How
17 about Sandra Mawhinney? How about Tori Williams?
18 Again, if you're on a phone, you might have to hit *6 to
19 unmute.

20 MS. WILLIAMS: I'm here.

21 JUDGE DIPPELL: Oh, okay.

22 MS. WILLIAMS: Can you hear me?

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Yes, I can hear you. You're
24 very quiet. Is there any way you can speak louder or
25 get closer to a microphone?

1 MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah. Is this better?

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: That is much better. Thank
3 you. Can you please raise your right hand.

4 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

5 (Witness sworn.)

6 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Go ahead and state your
7 name and spell it for the court reporter and then give
8 us your comments.

9 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. My name is Tori Williams,
10 T-o-r-i W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s.

11 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay.

12 MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah. So I just want to say my
13 opinions on this rate increase is it's just not
14 justifiable. It is a 22 to 24 percent increase, and
15 social security has only raised their rates 1.3 percent
16 from last year. So I don't understand how
17 American-Water can justify asking for this much of an
18 increase, especially if other utilities were to do the
19 same how can they pay for this.

20 Water is an essential utility that we need.
21 Unfortunately it is regulated and owned by corporations
22 and we don't have access to it so we can't go about it
23 another way. They shouldn't be able to raise their
24 rates 22 percent and force us to accept it when we have
25 no alternatives.

1 Last year American-Water reported a 6 percent
2 increase in 2019 at a quarter three. So I don't think
3 it's an issue of money as regard as where the profit has
4 come from and having to pay back shareholders. So I
5 don't agree with raising the rates. If anything, water
6 needs to become owned by the government and regulated by
7 them to take it out of corporation's hands. And if
8 these are issues from poor water quality to bad
9 plumbing, then it sounds like an issue of American Water
10 doing a bad job and they need to cover the cost
11 themselves of replacing their bad plumbing of bad
12 management. That's all I have to say.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. Are there any
14 questions for Ms. Williams? I'm not seeing any.
15 Appreciate your participation, Ms. Williams. That was
16 all of the people that I had on my preregistration list,
17 but I do have a few people that have said that they were
18 interested in testifying but didn't give me which
19 hearing they were interested in testifying in. So I'm
20 just going to run through this list really quickly and
21 see if any of these people are available. I'm also
22 going to mention, because I don't think I mentioned this
23 earlier, I notice some of you are using the chat feature
24 in the WebEx program and that is a good way to get phone
25 numbers and information, and so forth. But I will

1 mention that that is not being recorded as part of the
2 official comments for this case. So if you are
3 participating in those chat items, just know that those
4 will not be officially taken down and if you want to
5 give other comments you should do that either by
6 testifying or doing written comments later. Is David
7 Parr available? Or Julie or Terry Hayes? Barbara
8 Yusen? Bruce Kondracki? Phillip Mitchel? Clarissa
9 Cobb-Fritz? Or Jasmine Jones?

10 Okay. I'm not seeing any of those people
11 available. So at this time I'll ask if there are others
12 that are on the line that wish to testify and I will ask
13 you to be patient with me and we will try to get you as
14 we can. Is there anyone else who would like to testify?

15 MR. LICATA: Yes, I would.

16 MS. GRUENDLER: I would like to make a
17 statement.

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. I heard a gentleman
19 first. If I could get him to start and then we'll go to
20 the next person. Would you please raise your right
21 hand.

22 (Witness sworn.)

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Would you state your name and
24 spell it for us, please?

25 MR. LICATA: Yes. My name is Frank Licata,

1 F-r-a-n-k, Licata, L-i-c-a-t-a. I live in the Spanish
2 Village area. One thing I'd like to say I've lived here
3 about 45 years. I've had no problem with the pipes and
4 I've had no problem with the quality of water that's
5 coming to my house as that one gentleman, I'm sorry to
6 hear, had. I've been here 45 years. So I don't think
7 the problem can be that drastic.

8 Now, the other thing I wish to say is this. I
9 heard what Missouri-American Water Company say they want
10 10-1/2 percent rate of return. That is ridiculous in
11 today's economy. The banks aren't even paying anything
12 out in interest, and to get a loan on a home or
13 whatever, you can get it for below 3 percent. All I
14 would like to just make a comment is okay, everybody
15 needs money. All right. We'll give them some money.
16 Compromise, split the difference and give them half.
17 That's all I have to say.

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, Mr. Licata. Are
19 there any questions for Mr. Licata?

20 MR. HALL: I have a question for Mr. Licata,
21 Your Honor.

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead, Mr. Hall.

23 MR. HALL: Mr. Licata, are you aware that the
24 Office of the Public Counsel is recommending that there
25 be no rate change as a result of this rate case?

1 MR. LICATA: No, I'm not aware of that. I'm
2 not 100 percent sure they need a rate increase, but I
3 guess you might say I'm willing as a customer/consumer
4 to pay the increase but don't give them everything.
5 They want way, way too much. I say split the difference
6 and give them half.

7 MR. HALL: So you would not object to Public
8 Counsel's recommendation, even though it's not give them
9 half, it's keep rates as is?

10 MR. LICATA: Well, no, I wouldn't object to it
11 if they don't want the rate increase, because I'm not
12 really in favor of it either. I'm just willing to
13 compromise because I'm afraid they'll get it all. And
14 my gosh, I've already looked at my bill how high it's
15 going to go up. My bill is going to go up over \$400 a
16 year. And I just think -- I don't think that's right,
17 especially today. You know, the economy is getting bad.
18 Who knows what's going to happen. So many people out of
19 work. It's just the wrong timing. So they should have
20 come in at a better time or waited until this corona
21 virus was over and the economy started roaring again.
22 That's all I've got to say. It's the wrong timing. I
23 guess I'd be willing to compromise. I'm not willing to
24 give them everything. If they get nothing, I'll be
25 happy too.

1 MR. HALL: Thank you. No further questions.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. I don't think
3 there's any other --

4 MR. LUFT: Mr. Altman.

5 JUDGE DIPPELL: Mr. Altman?

6 MR. ALTMAN: Yes. My name is David Altman.
7 That's David and then Altman, A-l-t-m-a-n. I just have
8 a comment that I've been hearing a lot of things in the
9 media about some customers such as in St. Louis County,
10 possibly City, having to subsidize other customers that
11 are in other areas, as well as subsidizing people of
12 different size link pipes or different size water mains
13 going into their house. That's what I'm concerned with.
14 That's my comment.

15 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. I'm sorry. I didn't
16 get to swear you in before you gave your comment.

17 (Prior witness sworn.)

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Can you spell your name for
19 us, please.

20 MR. ALTMAN: Sure. It's David, D-a-v-i-d,
21 Altman, A-l-t-m-a-n.

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Thank you. I thought I
23 heard another caller at the same time earlier when I
24 asked. Was there another person that wished to testify?

25 MS. GRUENDLER: I had just wanted to say I was

1 against the raise.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Let me go ahead and get
3 you officially on the record then.

4 (Witness sworn.)

5 JUDGE DIPPELL: Can you state your name and
6 spell it for us.

7 MS. GRUENDLER: My name is Brenda,
8 B-r-e-n-d-a. Last name is Gruendler, G-r-u-e-n-d-l-e-r.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Go ahead with your
10 comment now, Ms. Gruendler.

11 MS. GRUENDLER: I just wanted to say I think
12 that it is just so appalling that they would want to
13 raise the rate the amount that they do that they're
14 asking for at this time.

15 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. Are there any
16 questions for Ms. Gruendler? Thank you, ma'am.

17 MS. GRUENDLER: Thank you.

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Is there anyone else who wish
19 to testify?

20 MR. LARSON: I would like to testify. Can you
21 hear me?

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: Yes, I can. Would you please
23 raise your right hand.

24 (Witness sworn.)

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Would you please state

1 your name and spell it?

2 MR. LARSON: John Larson, L-a-r-s-o-n.

3 JUDGE DIPPELL: Mr. Larson, go ahead and give
4 us your comments.

5 MR. LARSON: Yes. I was employed at the water
6 company, St. Louis County Water Company, before it was
7 American Water Company. For about 17 years I managed
8 the distribution system and at other times the
9 distribution engineering department. And my comments
10 are that in the times -- during the time I worked for
11 them in the early '90s, water for residential customer
12 cost about a tenth of a penny a gallon. Currently we're
13 paying just over a penny a gallon for that same amount
14 of water for a gallon of water. So the increase of ten
15 times over that period of time from 1990 to now is very
16 excessive but that's not to say it's unnecessary. The
17 regulations have increased. Reliability hopefully has
18 increased. But it's still a very high increase over
19 that period of time. And their rates right now should
20 be high enough to where the Office of the Public
21 Counsel's investigation resulting in a zero increase
22 recommendation sounds very reasonable to me. I would
23 like to say also that the water company, part of the
24 reason the rates have gone up is that they've begun a
25 replacement program that was much more intensive than

1 when I was in charge of system engineering. But I will
2 comment that the reason that the amount of replacement
3 was a lot less significant in rates was because our
4 analysis, our financial analysis of what pipes needed to
5 be replaced was based on the expense of the water main
6 breaks and the irritation to customers of unreliability
7 was factored into the cost of pipe replacement. So
8 there was a lot less pipe replacement than the company
9 seems to be involved in now.

10 So the rate increase would make sense over
11 time, but the rates are very high now and the work that
12 they're doing to replace pipes shouldn't justify this
13 kind of a 20 percent rate increase. As an example, by
14 the way, the water main break a few days ago on Dunn
15 Road that flooded part of Highway 270, that kind of
16 thing should have been predicted and the pipe there
17 should have been replaced. That pipe we knew back when
18 I was working in the department that it was a very
19 unreliable pipe and it was in a very dangerous spot,
20 elevated above the interstate highway. So it's kind of
21 interesting that the pipes that they're replacing have
22 not yet included those that are particularly significant
23 to jeopardizing highways, and so forth.

24 One other comment I wanted to make regarding
25 the importance of the water company's public, their PR

1 efforts, their public relations efforts, is that the
2 gentleman that commented earlier, Mr. Coleman, about the
3 quality of the water doing damage to his pipes, the fact
4 of the matter is that those kinds of comments, which are
5 not engineering based, I say that because the water
6 coming into our houses are just over a neutral pH, about
7 8 pH. They're not corrosive at all. Those kinds of
8 comments have to be pushed back by the water company
9 because the idea of people going to bottled water for
10 all their water needs is something that, you know, the
11 country can't sustain.

12 The water company has to make it clear to the
13 customers that they're getting as good a quality water
14 as what they would buy for way more money in bottled
15 water. The last thing I wanted to say is that
16 eventually -- well, two things. Eventually the PSC
17 needs to look at the problem of service line ownership.
18 A lot of people don't realize until their service lines
19 break that they actually own the service line all the
20 way to their house. And almost every other utility in
21 the United States owns the service line up to the meter
22 box and the customer only owns from the meter box on to
23 the house. That's a very expensive thing or a threat to
24 common homeowners that they have to replace or repair
25 lines that extend from the water main to the meter box.

1 Typically in other communities that is not the case.

2 The last thing I'd like to say is that the
3 idea of making a common rate for everybody in Missouri
4 is foolish. St. Louis County should pay for the cost of
5 providing water to St. Louis County customers, and
6 people that live in smaller rural areas where there
7 might only be 200 people in a water system, those people
8 are going to pay a higher rate because there's so many
9 fewer people in a community that still has a lot of
10 capital cost. Still, the fairness of a person in a
11 rural community getting to push off part of its expenses
12 of operation onto St. Louis County customers is silly.
13 It makes no sense. So that should be denied. Thank you
14 for your time. Those are all the comments I have.

15 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you for your comments,
16 Mr. Larson. Are there any questions to clarify anything
17 Mr. Larson said?

18 MR. LUFT: I'm not going to cover everything.
19 I do want to just comment about what Mr. Larson said
20 about the service lines in St. Louis County. That has
21 changed just as of this past year. We worked with St.
22 Louis County and the Missouri PSC and ownership is now
23 going to be all the way to the main just like the rest
24 of the country. Even with this rate increase we're
25 still under a penny a gallon.

1 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, Mr. Luft.

2 MR. LARSON: Not much under a penny a gallon,
3 but thank you for your point.

4 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you very much,
5 Mr. Larson, for your comments. Appreciate it.

6 MR. LARSON: You're welcome.

7 JUDGE DIPPELL: Is there anyone else that
8 wishes to testify?

9 MS. EDISON: I would like to testify.

10 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Great. Can I get you
11 to raise your right hand.

12 (Witness sworn.)

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead and state your name
14 and spell it.

15 MS. EDISON: Linda Edison, L-i-n-d-a
16 E-d-i-s-o-n.

17 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead with your comments.

18 MS. EDISON: I just wanted to say that I
19 disagree with the rate increase and it should be zero.

20 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. Is that all?

21 MS. EDISON: Yes.

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Thank you very much for
23 that comment. Any questions for Ms. Edison? I don't
24 see any. We appreciate your participation. Is there
25 anyone else that would like to testify?

1 MR. LABIT: Yes, I would.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. If you could please
3 raise your right hand.

4 (Witness sworn.)

5 JUDGE DIPPELL: Give us your name and spell
6 it, please.

7 MR. LABIT: It's James, J-a-m-e-s, Labit,
8 L-a-b-i-t.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead with your comments.

10 MR. LABIT: I'm retired. And as other people
11 have stated, our amount of increase finally is less than
12 2 percent for our retirement pensions. To see a rate
13 increase of 24 percent coming at us from this water
14 company is absolutely frightening. We have to pay a lot
15 of different bills, and this kind of rate increase can
16 cost people to not be able to sustain themselves. This
17 is a capital, supposedly a capital investment kind of
18 reimbursement, yet I don't see any cap on when this
19 capital cost is recovered where the rate would go back
20 down. I agree that maybe they need some recovery, but
21 it certainly shouldn't be any greater than the cost of
22 living from the CPI.

23 I think maybe zero is a little much in terms
24 of a rate increase, but 24 percent is totally
25 unacceptable to me as a customer. In addition, although

1 the water quality is pretty good, I have noticed over
2 the last few years that if you let the water sit in a
3 glass overnight there is an odd taste to it and it's
4 been getting worse over time. I don't know whether
5 that's due to their sourcing or their inability to
6 handle the processing from the sources or what, but the
7 quality is degrading at least in terms of taste. So
8 anyway, I just wanted to voice my concern about such an
9 excessive rate increase. Thank you.

10 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir. And I will
11 also state the same thing I said earlier. If you are
12 having a quality issue or believe you're having a
13 quality issue that you haven't had an opportunity to get
14 in touch with the company, I would encourage you to do
15 that. And if you don't know how to do that or don't get
16 a satisfactory answer, then I would encourage you to
17 contact our consumer services division at 800.392.4211
18 just to -- We want to make sure that any quality issues
19 especially are addressed and I'm sure the company does
20 too.

21 Mr. Luft, did you have anything you wanted to
22 add to that? I'm not seeing that he has anything to
23 add. Again, appreciate that. Are there any questions
24 for this witness? Appreciate your comments, Mr. Labit.

25 Is there anyone else on the line that would

1 like to testify? Again, if you're on a phone you might
2 have to hit, as well as unmuting your phone, you might
3 have to hit *6 to unmute. Anyone else that would like
4 to speak? I've got someone unmuted, but I don't think
5 they're wanting to testify. So I'm going to mute that
6 caller. Is there anyone else that would like to
7 testify?

8 Okay. Well, again, we really appreciate your
9 participation. We hope that you have learned something
10 or had the opportunity to make your statements that you
11 wanted to make. If there are other comments that you
12 wish to make, you can do that in writing or you can
13 contact the consumer services folks and they can help
14 you make your comment.

15 The Missouri Public Service Commission website
16 is again just psc.mo.gov. You can find information
17 about this case under the particular Missouri-American
18 Case No. WR-2020-0344. If there's no one else that's
19 wanting to testify, again I will just thank you all for
20 your participation. Thank you for bearing with us on
21 our virtual public hearings during this pandemic. We
22 appreciate the opportunity to hear your comments and
23 still keep everyone safe. If there's nothing further,
24 we can go off the record.

25 (Off the record.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Beverly Jean Bentch, RPR, CCR No. 640, Certified Court Reporter with the firm of Tiger Court Reporting, LLC, within the State of Missouri, do hereby certify that I was personally present at the proceedings had in the above-entitled cause at the time and place set forth in the caption sheet thereof; that I then and there took down in Stenotype the proceedings had; and that the foregoing is a full, true and correct transcript of such Stenotype notes so made at such time and place.

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