

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

In the Matter of the Rate Increase Requests of the)
Regulated Water and Sewer Utilities Owned and) File No. WR-2015-0192
Operated by Ozark International, Inc.)

**THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC COUNSEL’S REQUEST
FOR LOCAL PUBLIC HEARINGS**

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

1. On February 9, 2015, Ozark International, Inc. (Ozark) initiated small company rate increase proceedings with the Missouri Public Service Commission (Commission) requesting a total water and sewer revenue increase of \$111,900 for its six regulated utilities: Bilyeu Ridge Water Company, LLC; Midland Water Company, Inc.; Moore Bend Water Utility, LLC; Riverfork Water Company; Taney County Water, LLC; and Valley Woods Utility, LLC.
2. On September 8, 2015, the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission (Staff) filed a Notice of Disposition (Company/Staff Agreement) indicating agreement between Staff and Ozark for a total water and sewer revenue increase of \$51,373 annually. Public Counsel did not join in the agreement.
3. Revised tariff sheets reflecting the proposed rates agreed to in the Company/Staff Agreement were filed by Ozark on September 14, 2015. These proposed tariff sheets contain an effective date of October 30, 2015.
4. As the Company/Staff Agreement was executed by only Ozark and Staff, 4 CSR 240.3-050(15) requires Public Counsel to file a pleading stating its position regarding the Company/Staff Agreement and the related proposed tariff revisions, or requesting a local public

hearing or an evidentiary hearing, no later than five (5) working days after the end of the comment period for the written customer notice contemplated in 4 CSR 240-3.050(14).

5. Affording customers the opportunity to speak to the Commission at a hearing is a critical part of the ratemaking process. There have been a significant number of customer comments regarding the proposed rate increase request, many of which cite concerns regarding quality of service, number of outages, and poor customer service. Customers should have the opportunity to voice these concerns to the Commission at a local public hearing.

6. Ozark has customers in Christian County as well as in Taney County and Stone County. Given these two geographic service areas, Public Counsel requests two local public hearings pursuant to 4 CSR 240-3.050(15). Public Counsel suggests one local public hearing be held in Nixa, Missouri, for the customers in Christian County. Public Counsel also suggests one local public hearing be held in Forsyth, Missouri, for the Taney County and Stone County customers.

7. Public Counsel requests a Commission order requiring Ozark to provide written notice of the local public hearings to each customer. Public Counsel does not object to the Commission scheduling the local public hearings promptly, as long as customers are given at least 7 days notice.

8. Section 393.150, RSMo., provides that the Commission may suspend tariff sheets for a maximum period of 120 days plus six months. Scheduling and providing notice of the local public hearings in this case would require additional time beyond the October 30th effective date of the proposed tariff revisions. Therefore, Public Counsel requests that the Commission suspend the proposed revised tariff sheets for a sufficient period to allow adequate time for the local public hearings and subsequent case disposition as appropriate.

WHEREFORE, Public Counsel respectfully requests that the Commission schedule two local public hearings in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC COUNSEL

/s/ Christina L. Baker

By: _____

Christina L. Baker (#58303)
Deputy Public Counsel
P O Box 2230
Jefferson City, MO 65102
(573) 751-5565
(573) 751-5562 FAX
christina.baker@ded.mo.gov

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that copies of the foregoing have been mailed, emailed or hand-delivered to the parties of record this 14th day of October 2015.

Missouri Public Service Commission

Kevin Thompson
200 Madison Street, Suite 800
PO Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102
Kevin.Thompson@psc.mo.gov

Missouri Public Service Commission

Office General Counsel
200 Madison Street, Suite 800
PO Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102
staffcounsel@psc.mo.gov

Riverfork Water Company

Legal Department
PO Box 1080
786 Croley Blvd.
Nixa, MO 65714-1080

Taney County Water, LLC

Legal Department
786 Croley Blvd
PO Box 1080
Nixa, MO 65714

Valley Woods Utility, LLC

Legal Department
786 Croley Blvd.
Nixa, MO 65714

Moore Bend Water Utility, LLC

Legal Department
786 Croley Blvd
PO Box 1080
Nixa, MO 65714

Bilyeu Ridge Water Company, LLC

Legal Department
786 Croley Blvd.
PO Box 1080
Nixa, MO 65714

Midland Water Company, Inc.

Legal Department
786 Croley Blvd.
PO Box 1080
Nixa, MO 65714-1080

/s/ **Christina L. Baker**
