

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

In the Matter of The Empire District)	
Electric Company d/b/a Liberty, The)	
Empire District Gas Company, Liberty)	
Utilities (Missouri Water), LLC d/b/a Liberty)	
Utilities, and Liberty Utilities (Midstates)	<u>File No. AU-2021-0072</u>
Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty Utilities)	
for Accounting Authority Orders Allowing)	
the Electric, Gas, Water, and Wastewater)	
Utilities to Record and Preserve Costs)	
Related to COVID-19)	

ORDER DIRECTING RESPONSES

Issue Date: November 18, 2020

Effective Date: November 18, 2020

On September 17, 2020, The Empire District Electric Company, The Empire District Gas Company, Liberty Utilities (Missouri Water), LLC, and Liberty Utilities (Midstates Natural Gas) Corp. (collectively “Liberty”) applied in a single application for four accounting authority orders (AAOs) related to COVID-19 for the four companies. The Commission subsequently approved the intervention of Midwest Energy Consumers Group, Missouri School Boards’ Association, the National Housing Trust, and Renew Missouri.

In order for the Commission to determine why it should not separate these four requests into individual files, the Commission will seek input from the parties. The Commission is concerned that the COVID-19 impacts will vary substantially due to industry, corporate structure, billing practices, or other factors. Moreover, the four companies have not yet explained how a single AAO application for four separate companies involves related questions of law or fact. All parties will be directed to respond to the following inquiries to the extent of their knowledge.

- 1) Do the four AAO requests involve related questions of law or fact? Please specify areas of dis-similarity as well.
- 2) If these four requests are kept in a single file, how are the parties intending to separately address the AAO requests for the four companies in testimony, exhibits, and witnesses? Explain how the parties intend to address the different utilities' provision of different services, different costs, and different customers. The Commission would also note that each utility has separate Commission approved rates for service, and separate tariffs. Also, while all utilities share some rules, electric, gas, and water utilities are regulated under different chapters of the Commission's rules.
- 3) Will any administrative efficiencies be gained by keeping the four requests combined, and do they outweigh the potential for disparate outcomes?
- 4) Assuming that the Commission divides this file into four separate applications, is it expected that the issues and witnesses would be similar enough to conduct a combined hearing?
- 5) Current interveners shall identify the AAO applications in which they desire to be parties.

The Commission will direct a prompt response to this order to more quickly determine how to process these requests given the proposed deadline for direct testimony of December 4, 2020.

THE COMMISSION ORDERS THAT:

1. All parties are directed to respond to the Commission inquiries stated in the body of this order no later than November 23, 2020.

2. This order shall be effective when issued.



BY THE COMMISSION

Morris L. Woodruff

Morris L. Woodruff
Secretary

Charles Hatcher, Regulatory Law Judge,
by delegation of authority pursuant to
Section 386.240, RSMo 2016.

Dated at Jefferson City, Missouri,
on this 18th day of November, 2020.