In the Matter of:

WILLIAM L. GEHRS, JR.

V.

THE EMPIRE DISTRICT ELECTRIC COMPANY

VOL. 1 EC-2018-0033

December 19, 2017



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1	STATE OF MISSOURI						
2	PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION						
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5	TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS						
6	Procedural Conference						
7	December 19, 2017						
8	Jefferson City, Missouri						
9	Volume 1						
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12							
13	WILLIAM L. GEHRS, JR.,)						
14	Complainant,)) File No. EC-2018-0033						
15	v.)						
16	THE EMPIRE DISTRICT ELECTRIC) COMPANY,)						
17	Respondent.)						
18							
19	DANIEL JORDAN, Presiding SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE						
20							
21							
22	REPORTED BY: Beverly Jean Bentch, CCR No. 640						
23	TIGER COURT REPORTING, LLC						
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1 APPEARANCES 2 DIANA CARTER, Attorney at Law Brydon, Swearengen & England, PC 3 PO Box 456 Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0456 4 573.635.7166 The Empire District Electric Company FOR: 5 MARC ELLINGER, Attorney at Law STEPHANIE BELL, Attorney at Law 6 Blitz, Bardgett & Deutsch 7 308 East High Street, Suite 301 Jefferson City, Missouri 65101 573.634.2500 8 FOR: Complainant and Intervenor 9 CASI ASLIN, Assistant Staff Counsel 10 200 Madison Street, Suite 800 PO Box 360 11 Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0360 573.751.8517 12 FOR: Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 Page

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1	PROCEEDINGS					
2	(December 19, 2017)					
3	JUDGE JORDAN: Let's go on the record. The					
4	Commission is calling the action in File No.					
5	EC-2018-0033. That is the complaint of William L.					
б	Gehrs, Jr., Complainant v. The Empire District Electric					
7	Company, Respondent.					
8	My name is Daniel Jordan. I'm the Regulatory					
9	Law Judge assigned to this action. We'll begin with					
10	entries of appearance, and please introduce any					
11	representatives of your client that are present either					
12	here or on the phone. Let's start with the complainant?					
13	MR. ELLINGER: On behalf of W.L. Gehrs, I'm					
14	Marc Ellinger and also Stephanie Bell with the law firm					
15	of Blitz, Bardgett & Deutsch. Our information is on					
16	file with the court reporter. And Mr. Gehrs is on the					
17	line also on the dial-in number.					
18	JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. For The Empire					
19	District Electric Company?					
20	MS. CARTER: Diana Carter with Brydon,					
21	Swearengen & England, 312 East Capitol Avenue, Jefferson					
22	City, Missouri.					
23	JUDGE JORDAN: For the staff of the Missouri					
24	Public Service Commission?					
25	MS. ASLIN: Casi Aslin for staff of the Public Page					

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1	Service Commission. My information has been provided to					
2	the court reporter. With me today is J.R. Perez who					
3	prepared the staff memo in this case and Robin					
4	Kliethermes.					
5	JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. Anyone from the					
6	Office of Public Counsel here this morning? I'm not					
7	seeing or hearing anyone.					
8	We also have a movant for intervention. And					
9	an appearance on behalf of that?					
10	MR. ELLINGER: Marc Ellinger and Stephanie					
11	Bell of the law firm of Blitz, Bardgett & Deutsch also					
12	on behalf of the proposed intervenor.					
13	JUDGE JORDAN: Thank you. Here's what we're					
14	going to do today. We're going to be on the record as					
15	you see with our court reporter making a transcript.					
16	We'll discuss procedure. We have a couple of motions					
17	pending. We can discuss the substantive matters. We					
18	can also discuss the possibilities for settlement of					
19	these matters. And after the on-the-record portion is					
20	done, we will go off the record and I will adjourn that					
21	part of this conference leaving the room available for					
22	the parties to discuss settlement and other matters.					
23	I want to remind everyone that the Commission					
24	does offer mediation services. Almost all our judges					
25	have training in civil mediation from the University of Page					

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1 Missouri's Center for the Study of Dispute Resolution. So that can help when the parties find themselves at 2 impasse. We have a good success rate with that. 3 I will ask staff to lock up when everyone is 4 done with the room. And one of the outcomes of this 5 conference I hope will be a proposed procedural schedule 6 7 which I will ask staff to coordinate and file with the Commission. 8 9 Any questions about what we're doing so far? 10 Okay. Now, we have a couple of motions that are pending 11 right now, and counsel had some electronic 12 communications difficulties I understand. 13 Ms. Carter, would you like to set that forth? 14 MS. CARTER: There seems to have been a 15 security issue on my e-mail end that I did not receive all EFIS notifications. I did have a chance though 16 17 before we hopped on the record to review the pleadings I 18 had missed. So I am fine with proceeding as you had intended, Judge. 19 20 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. Did you want to take some time off the record to discuss this before we 21 22 discuss it on the record or are you good? 23 MS. CARTER: I'm fine. 24 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. Well, then let's go to 25 the pending motions. One is to enforce discovery. The Page

movant in that is Mr. Gehrs, and the respondent in that 1 is the utility The Empire District Electric Company. 2 3 Does The Empire District Electric Company still oppose this discovery? 4 5 MS. CARTER: In one portion. Certainly there being counsel dramatically changes the situation. 6 7 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. MS. CARTER: I believe it would have been 8 unlawful for Empire to provide customer specific 9 10 information directly to Mr. Gehrs without a Commission 11 order but there being counsel in the case now for that 12 confidential designation. However, the confidential 13 designation under the new rules allows clients to see 14 the material. So I would suggest if the discovery 15 motion is granted that there be a protective order so 16 that the customer specific information of other 17 customers is limited to counsel and outside consultants 18 as would have been the case under the old highly 19 confidential designation of the Commission's rule. 20 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. How does complainant feel about that? 21 22 MR. ELLINGER: Judge, we would disagree 23 obviously. You're shocked to hear that. 24 MS. CARTER: I actually am. 25 MR. ELLINGER: I think that we can have Page

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1	Mr. Gehrs enter an agreement pursuant to the rules to					
2	not disclose that information to any other person. I					
3	think it's necessary for our preparation of the case,					
4	because it's a complaint case, for Mr. Gehrs to be able					
5	to see that information that is directly responsive to					
б	the allegations that are made in the complaint.					
7	We agree it shouldn't be disseminated beyond					
8	Mr. Gehrs. That's not an issue whatsoever. Mr. Gehrs					
9	is willing to enter into the protective order. In fact,					
10	if you would prefer, we can have the judge issue as a					
11	component a protective order saying he cannot release					
12	it.					
13	MS. CARTER: I think the Commission's standard					
14	nondisclosure agreement would provide that, I believe.					
15	MR. ELLINGER: If you'd like that filed in					
16	advance, we can file that today. If you would prefer to					
17	wait until the discovery order is ruled upon, we can					
18	file it upon the issuance of the order, whichever way					
19	you all would prefer.					
20	MS. CARTER: Judge, whatever you feel					
21	comfortable with we'll be fine with. I think absent an					
22	order saying Mr. Gehrs can see it from you, Judge, it					
23	would be unlawful on Empire's end. So if the judge is					
24	comfortable with Mr. Gehrs seeing that directly.					
25	JUDGE JORDAN: Does staff have anything to add Page					

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1 to that? MS. ASLIN: Staff has no position on this. 2 MS. CARTER: There is another part to that. 3 Ι don't know if you want to go altogether. I would still 4 arque it's irrelevant what other customers were charged 5 in that Mr. Gehrs would lack standing. I did not read 6 7 the complaint as being brought as some sort of class action or on behalf of other customers, but it appears 8 9 based on the reply regarding discovery that Mr. Gehrs is 10 now asserting that his complaint is not about how he was 11 charged but is about how other customers were charged, and I would say Mr. Gehrs lacks standing to raise a 12 13 complaint on behalf of other customers. 14 JUDGE JORDAN: Empire? 15 MR. ELLINGER: She's Empire. JUDGE JORDAN: I'm sorry. Complainant? 16 17 MR. ELLINGER: Judge, the complaint clearly 18 says that Empire failed to follow their tariff. The 19 only way to get a tariff enforced and to ensure that a 20 regulated utility complies with their tariff is through 21 a complaint case. We've brought a complaint case. The 22 complaint does specify that they did not comply with 23 their tariff and has a number of factual statements that 24 go to how that was not complied with. We think it's 25 certainly -- When you look at the tariff, the tariff Page

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1	says apartments are supposed to be charged in a certain
2	manner and if they were in existence before 1981 there's
3	a different process. That's the basis of the complaint
4	that Empire has not complied with that complaint, and
5	frankly, Judge, the staff report I believe indicates
6	that they did not comply with the tariff. Whether that
7	was inadvertent or intentional
8	MS. CARTER: For other customers?
9	MR. ELLINGER: Whether that was inadvertent or
10	intentional, it's clear that they did not comply with
11	the tariff. So I think the basis of the discovery
12	directly goes to what the complaint alleges.
13	JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. Does staff have anything
14	to add to that?
15	MS. ASLIN: No, thank you.
16	JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. All right. That was the
17	relevant example.
18	MS. CARTER: Judge, if I may, just because we
19	were on the record and it says staff's memorandum said
20	Empire failed to comply with the tariff, I would say
21	that is not in any way what staff's memorandum said.
22	Staff's memorandum reached the opposite conclusion
23	regarding failure to comply with the tariff. They did
24	find, however, as Empire admitted from the beginning,
25	Mr. Gehrs raised the issue and because Mr. Gehrs for Page

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1	lack of a better word tattled on some of his friends, we					
2	found out, Empire found out that a couple of Mr. Gehrs'					
3	friends had not told Empire that they had changed their					
4	structure and were now a multi-unit without separate					
5	meters. So Empire has discovered that and is now					
6	billing Mr. Gehrs' friends just as they have been					
7	billing Mr. Gehrs.					
8	MR. ELLINGER: Which I think is indicative					
9	that they were not compliant with the tariff, Judge,					
10	because the tariff doesn't say if they're notified					
11	MS. CARTER: It actually does.					
12	MR. ELLINGER: It provides that the company					
13	shall comply with the tariff.					
14	JUDGE JORDAN: As the facts develop in this					
15	action As discovery proceeds, the facts will develop.					
16	As the facts develop, I think a supplement to the					
17	recommendation of staff may be in order. I think that					
18	that would be an element to include in a proposed					
19	procedural schedule. Things are either metered a					
20	certain way or they are not.					
21	MS. CARTER: Judge, we would ask for leave to					
22	further respond then to Mr. Gehrs' complaint. I in no					
23	way read Mr. Gehrs' complaint as attempting to raise the					
24	issue as to any customer other than Mr. Gehrs. The					
25	complaint reads that Mr. Gehrs says that he was not					

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charged properly pursuant to the tariff and that is how 1 2 we responded. JUDGE JORDAN: Well, the complaint says that 3 4 Empire has failed to uniformly assess multiple customer 5 charge fees to multi-unit apartment buildings in the 6 Joplin, Missouri area. 7 MS. CARTER: I read that as for himself, not 8 that he was seeking relief on behalf of other customers. 9 So I would ask leave apparently to respond with regard to if it is a class action or a group complaint. 10 I'm 11 not sure what that would be taken as in this context. 12 JUDGE JORDAN: That can certainly be another 13 component of the proposed procedural schedule in this action, and I think that leads nicely into the next 14 15 matter which is the motion to intervene. And I will ask 16 The Empire District whether it has any opposition to 17 that motion. 18 MS. CARTER: No opposition. 19 JUDGE JORDAN: Very good. Staff? 20 MS. ASLIN: No opposition. 21 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. I think that's all I 22 wanted to take up on the record. Is there anything that 23 anyone else would like to take up while we're discussing 24 these matters? 25 MS. CARTER: Related to the intervention, if

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we could get clarification from the gentleman 1 2 intervening if he is intervening as another party or as 3 a complainant. MR. ELLINGER: Okay. 4 5 MS. CARTER: It was unclear. He says he joins 6 in some way, but it's titled as an intervention, not as 7 a complaint. MR. ELLINGER: We're happy -- If the judge 8 would like something clarifying that, we're happy to do 9 so. 10 11 MS. CARTER: I would appreciate something 12 clarifying that. 13 MR. ELLINGER: In the end we're aligned -- I 14 mean the parties are aligned on the same issue. 15 JUDGE JORDAN: Right. What is it that you need clarification on? 16 17 MS. CARTER: It would change the relief being sought if he's a complainant. It would also change 18 19 issues as far as what he's -- if Empire needs to look 20 into what he's being charged if he's a complainant in the case as opposed to a traditional intervenor. 21 22 JUDGE JORDAN: I think I understand what 23 you're saying. I think I understand what you're saying. 24 You're thinking of intervention as in a rate action --25 MS. CARTER: Yes.

JUDGE JORDAN: -- where an intervenor may want relief as to some but not all issues. MS. CARTER: Correct. Or you could intervene in various positions, but being a complainant is something different in my mind at least. I would want clarification if he is a complainant in the case or not.

7 JUDGE JORDAN: I think a little extra pleading 8 would solve that, would it not?

9 MR. ELLINGER: We're certainly happy to do 10 that.

JUDGE JORDAN: That sounds like another ingredient for the proposed procedural schedule. What else can we talk about while I'm in the room and we have our court reporter recording these proceedings?

15 Judge, just to save it from MS. CARTER: 16 having to be an order before the Commission, Empire is 17 fine with producing the discovery now that there is 18 counsel subject to the objection that we believe it is 19 not relevant to the cause, but I could see that it could 20 fit within the standard of legal relevance that 21 something could be found there to somehow get to some 22 So subject to that objection, we'll produce the issues. 23 discovery now that there's counsel.

24 MR. ELLINGER: I presume then you still feel 25 you need the order for Mr. Gehrs to see that from the

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judge? 1 2 MS. CARTER: I think if he signs the standard nondisclosure agreement. 3 MR. ELLINGER: You're okay with that? 4 5 MS. CARTER: The new rule on confidentiality provides that employees I believe sign the Commission's 6 7 traditional nondisclosure agreement that just says they 8 will comply with the rule, and I would think that would 9 be. 10 MR. ELLINGER: That's good enough for you? 11 MS. CARTER: Yeah, it's one sentence. 12 MR. ELLINGER: It's good enough for us if it's 13 good enough for you. 14 JUDGE JORDAN: So you're talking about a 15 nondisclosure agreement? 16 MS. CARTER: Yes. So then he wouldn't 17 disseminate it. 18 MR. ELLINGER: Correct. JUDGE JORDAN: And then that would be filed 19 20 with the Commission? 21 MS. CARTER: Yes. 22 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. It sounds like I may not 23 have to issue -- I may not have to draft anything for 24 the Commission, the Commission would not issue anything 25 in this.

I'll summarize to make sure I understand what 1 2 the parties' understanding is. As to the intervention, no objection? Please speak out loud. 3 MS. CARTER: That is correct. 4 5 JUDGE JORDAN: With if or once the 6 nondisclosure agreement that we discussed is on file 7 with the Commission? 8 MS. CARTER: For discovery, correct. 9 JUDGE JORDAN: Correct. 10 MR. ELLINGER: That's our understanding, also, 11 Judge. 12 JUDGE JORDAN: Okay. And no opposition to the intervention if there is the extra pleading that we 13 talked about? 14 15 MS. CARTER: Correct. And actually there's no 16 objection to the intervention period. 17 JUDGE JORDAN: There's no objection to the 18 intervention anyway but we will do extra pleadings. 19 MS. CARTER: And then it would be helpful to 20 know if he's a complainant in the case. 21 MR. ELLINGER: Which we will take up in the 22 procedural schedule. 23 JUDGE JORDAN: Does anyone have anything further to add to this for Mr. Gehrs or the movant for 24 25 intervention, Mr. Higginbotham? Anything?

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1	MR. ELLINGER: Nothing from our side.					
2	JUDGE JORDAN: For The Empire District?					
3	MS. CARTER: Judge, did you give us a date for					
4	the procedural schedule?					
5	JUDGE JORDAN: I have not set a date for					
6	filing it. I hope that 10 days is a reasonable time.					
7	MR. ELLINGER: More than sufficient, Judge.					
8	JUDGE JORDAN: Very good. Very good.					
9	Anything further from staff?					
10	MS. ASLIN: No, thank you.					
11	JUDGE JORDAN: Well, I have nothing further,					
12	and with that then I will go ahead and conclude the					
13	on-the-record portion of this conference, and thank you					
14	all very much for coming and for being so extremely					
15	reasonable, and with that we will go off the record.					
16	MR. ELLINGER: Thank you, Judge.					
17	(Off the record.)					
18						
19						
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1	CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER			
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