

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

STATE OF MISSOURI

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

In the Matter of the Request)
of Liberty Utilities,)
(Midstates Natural Gas) Corp.)
d/b/a Liberty to Implement)
a General Rate Increase for) File No. GR-2024-0106
Natural Gas Service in the)
Missouri Service Areas of the)
Company)

August 27, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Hannibal High School - Cafeteria
4500 McMasters Avenue, Hannibal, Missouri 63401

Volume 3

CHARLES HATCHER, Presiding
SENIOR CHIEF REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

MAIDA J. COLEMAN,
JASON R. HOLSMAN,
GLEN KOLKMEYER,
JOHN MITCHELL,
COMMISSIONERS

REPORTED BY:
Shelley L. Mayer, CCR

Job No. 171328

1 APPEARANCES :

2 MR. PAUL GRAHAM
3 MS. ANDREA HANSEN
4 Public Service Commission
5 200 Madison Street
6 P.O. Box 360
7 Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0360
8 573.751.4140
9 For: Staff of the Missouri Public Service
10 Commission
11

12 MS. ANNA MARTIN
13 MR. MARC POSTON
14 Office of the Public Counsel
15 200 Madison Street
16 P.O. Box 2230
17 Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
18 573.751.5324
19 For: Office of the Public Counsel
20

21 MS. JERMAINE GRUBBS
22 602 South Joplin Avenue
23 Joplin, Missouri 64801
24 For: Liberty Utilities
25

1 (On the record at 6:23 p.m.)

2 JUDGE HATCHER: Good evening, everyone.
3 Our court reporter is online, so let's go ahead and
4 go on the record. I have checked, and we have three
5 of our commissioners on the Webex call and we have
6 Commissioner Coleman with us. I'll get to their
7 introductions in just a moment.

8 The Missouri Public Service Commission
9 set this date for a local public hearing to give
10 members of the public a chance to comment about
11 Liberty's General Rate Increase application. This is
12 File No. GR-2024-0106.

13 The Commission regulates the rates
14 charged by public utility companies in Missouri to
15 ensure that those rates are just and reasonable. The
16 Commission also regulates the quality of service and
17 safety of the operations of public utilities.

18 There are five commissioners. They are
19 appointed by the governor and confirmed by the
20 senate. The commissioners employ a staff of
21 engineers, accountants, attorneys, financial
22 analysts, and other specialists in the field of
23 utility regulation.

24 My name is Charles Hatcher and I am the
25 regulatory law judge that will preside over this

1 hearing. With me today are Commissioner Maida
2 Coleman. And as I said, on the Webex call we also
3 have Commissioners Jason Holsman, Glen Kolkmeyer, and
4 John Mitchell. The commissioners have not made any
5 decisions in this case and they cannot answer any
6 questions today because they need to remain impartial
7 until after all of the evidence is presented.

8 Let's go ahead and have the parties
9 introduce themselves. For Liberty.

10 MS. GRUBBS: Thank you, your Honor.
11 Jermaine Grubbs on behalf of Liberty Utilities,
12 Midstates Natural Gas Corp. doing business as
13 Liberty. I'm a director of legal services for
14 the central region at Liberty. My business address
15 is 602 South Joplin Avenue in Joplin, Missouri.
16 Thank you.

17 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. And for the
18 Commission Staff.

19 MR. GRAHAM: Paul Graham, senior counsel,
20 litigation, together with Andrea Hansen for the --
21 for the Staff of the Missouri Public Service
22 Commission.

23 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. And for the
24 Office of the Public Counsel.

25 MS. MARTIN: My name is Anna Martin. I

1 am here to represent the Office of the Public
2 Counsel. And Marc Poston is also here representing
3 the Office of the Public Counsel.

4 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. Now, everyone
5 has previously been in attendance for the question
6 and answer session. Because, as I mentioned, the
7 commissioners are making the decision in this case,
8 they did not get to hear any of that information. So
9 we rely on witnesses to testify to the commissioners.
10 And the process for this hearing will be to call the
11 names on our sign-up list; I understand we only have
12 one name thus far, so after we call our witness, I
13 will then open the floor for anyone who did not
14 preregister, but who would still like to testify.

15 Sir, if you'd like to come on down and
16 step up to the microphone. Give us your -- your name
17 and address.

18 If you could please state and spell your
19 name, please, for the record.

20 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, your Honor. Wes,
21 W-e-s, Mitchell, M-i-t-c-h-e-l-l.

22 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Mitchell.
23 If you would please raise your right hand.

24 (Witness sworn.)

25 WES MITCHELL,

1 having been first duly sworn, testified as
2 follows:

3 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. If you would
4 please go ahead and tell the commissioners your
5 comments.

6 THE WITNESS: Yes. Thank you for this
7 time. Fair and reasonable. That's a good question.
8 What is fair and reasonable. It's pretty subjective
9 I believe. It depends on your perspective. From my
10 perspective I think this rate increase is exorbitant.
11 I think it -- I would urge the Public Service
12 Commission to review this carefully and roll this
13 back because I think that rate increase that is
14 proposed is excessive. People are struggling, having
15 a hard time paying their bills already, and that
16 amount that Liberty is requesting is well in excess
17 of the rate of inflation. So I would submit that it
18 is excessive, and I would like to see that rolled
19 back by the PSC.

20 That's all I have to say, sir.

21 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. Are there any
22 questions from the commissioners? We do have one if
23 you'd hold on just a minute, Mr. Mitchell.

24 QUESTIONS

25 BY COMMISSIONER COLEMAN:

1 Q. Good evening, Mr. Mitchell. Thank you for
2 being here tonight. We appreciate your participation
3 in this hearing. One of the concerns I always have
4 when we deal with utility companies is the quality of
5 service that the customers receive. I appreciate
6 your comments, but can you give me any insight as far
7 as your feelings regarding its customer service.

8 A. **Regarding overall customer service?**

9 Q. Yes, sir. Your experiences.

10 A. Well, I --

11 Q. You are a customer of Liberty?

12 A. Yes, ma'am, I'm long-term customer.

13 Q. All right. Let's start there.

14 A. I live in Hannibal --

15 Q. All right.

16 A. -- and I didn't like the fact that they
17 closed the offices to make payments.

18 And I have found that it's very confusing
19 to find agents here locally. I looked on the website
20 of payment agents and called some of them, a couple
21 of pharmacies, called a couple of Dollar Stores that
22 were listed and only one said that they took the
23 payments and they knew very little about it. Now, I
24 know most people use electronic media to make their
25 payments, but not everyone has that. And I think

1 it's not the best customer service to not offer at
2 least a place to drop off a check, which they did
3 have until this spring. So I just feel like that is
4 a shortcoming as far as customer service, not having
5 a local office that you can deal with.

6 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you,
7 Mr. Mitchell.

8 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you, Judge.

10 JUDGE HATCHER: And are there any
11 questions from the commissioners online? And just a
12 reminder, if you have phoned in, it's Star 6 to
13 unmute.

14 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: No questions,
15 Judge.

16 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Commissioner
17 Holsman. All right. As promised, that was our one
18 witness that we had who signed up. Is any other --
19 is anyone else interested in testifying, providing
20 their comments to the commissioners tonight? It can
21 be a bit intimidating I understand. Let me go ahead
22 and give you the instructions if you or someone else
23 you know would like to make comments, but don't
24 necessarily want to come forward tonight to do that.
25 You can go to the PSC's website and that is

1 PSC.MO.gov. And in the upper right-hand corner it
2 will have a link that says Submit Comments. Just
3 make sure and enter in this case number and again,
4 that is GR-2024-0106.

5 Before we end our hearing for the
6 evening, I want to ask one last time if there's
7 anyone else who would like to come forward and offer
8 their comments?

9 All right. Hearing none, are there any
10 closing remarks from the commissioners before we
11 adjourn the hearing? Again, any commissioners online
12 would like to make any closing remarks and it's hit
13 Star 6 to unmute.

14 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Judge,
15 Commissioner Holsman here. Just want to thank
16 everybody for showing up tonight. We do appreciate
17 their input, and have a great evening.

18 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Commissioner
19 Holsman. Any other commissioner comments?

20 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Judge, this is
21 Commissioner Kolkmeier. I want to do the same, thank
22 everyone, also want to thank Mr. Mitchell for coming
23 forward for his testimony this evening. So hope
24 everybody has a good evening.

25 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Commissioner

1 Kolkmeier. I would also like to thank all of our
2 participants and attendees today just coming out to
3 listen to the testimony and learn about the rate
4 increase. I know that's important to everyone here.
5 And again, if you do have additional comments or know
6 of someone who did not make it tonight and would like
7 to comment, you can still comment on this case by
8 going to the Commission's website. And that's
9 PSC.MO.gov. If you would like to contact the Office
10 of the Public Counsel, their email address is
11 MOPCO@OPC.MO.gov. Again, that's MOPCO@OPC.MO.gov.

12 And with that, we will go ahead and
13 adjourn the hearing. We are adjourned and let's go
14 off the record.

15 (Off the record at 6:33 p.m.)

16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF MISSOURI)
COUNTY OF CALLAWAY)

I, Shelley L. Bartels, a Certified Court Reporter, CCR No. 679, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the transcript of proceedings; and that the foregoing transcript, pages 1 through 10, is a true record of my stenographic notes.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, or attorney, or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

DATED this 4th day of September, 2024.



Shelley L. Bartels, CCR 679

<hr/> 6 <hr/>	applicati on 3:11	charged 3:14	commissio ners 3:5,18, 20 4:3, 4 5:7,9 6:4,22 8:11,20 9:10,11	deal 7:4 8:5	exorbitan t 6:10
6 8:12 9:13	appointed 3:19	Charles 3:24		decision 5:7	experien ces 7:9
602 4:15	attendanc e 5:5	check 8:2		decisions 4:5	<hr/> F <hr/>
6:23 3:1	attendees 10:2	checked 3:4	companies 3:14 7:4	depends 6:9	fact 7:16
6:33 10:15	attorneys 3:21	closed 7:17		director 4:13	fair 6:7,8
<hr/> A <hr/>	Avenue 4:15	closing 9:10,12	concerns 7:3	Dollar 7:21	feel 8:3
accountan ts 3:21	<hr/> B <hr/>	Coleman 3:6 4:2 6:25 8:6,9	confirmed 3:19	drop 8:2	feelings 7:7
additiona l 10:5	back 6:13,19	comment 3:10 10:7	confusing 7:18	duly 6:1	field 3:22
address 4:14 5:17 10:10	behalf 4:11	comments 6:5 7:6 8:20,23 9:2,8, 19 10:5	contact 10:9	<hr/> E <hr/>	File 3:12
adjourn 9:11 10:13	bills 6:15	Commission n 3:8, 13,16 4:18,22 6:12	corner 9:1	electroni c 7:24	financial 3:21
adjourned 10:13	bit 8:21		Corp 4:12	email 10:10	find 7:19
agents 7:19,20	business 4:12,14		counsel 4:19,24 5:2,3 10:10	employ 3:20	floor 5:13
ahead 3:3 4:8 6:4 8:21 10:12	<hr/> C <hr/>	Commissio n's 10:8	couple 7:20,21	end 9:5	forward 8:24 9:7,23
amount 6:16	call 3:5 4:2 5:10,12	Commissio ner 3:6 4:1 6:25 8:6,9, 14,16 9:14, 15,18, 19,20, 21,25	court 3:3	engineers 3:21	found 7:18
analysts 3:22	called 7:20,21	commissio ner 3:6 4:1 6:25 8:6,9, 14,16 9:14, 15,18, 19,20, 21,25	customer 7:7,8, 11,12 8:1,4	ensure 3:15	<hr/> G <hr/>
Andrea 4:20	carefully 6:12		customers 7:5	evening 3:2 7:1 9:6,17, 23,24	Gas 4:12
Anna 4:25	case 4:5 5:7 9:3 10:7		<hr/> D <hr/>	evidence 4:7	General 3:11
	central 4:14		date 3:9	excess 6:16	give 3:9 5:16 7:6 8:22
	chance 3:10			excessive 6:14,18	Glen 4:3

good 3:2 6:7 7:1 9:24	hit 9:12	introductions 3:7	7:11	Martin 4:25	O
governor 3:19	hold 6:23	<hr/> J <hr/>	Liberty's 3:11	media 7:24	offer 8:1 9:7
GR-2024-0106 3:12 9:4	Holsman 4:3 8:14,17 9:14, 15,19	Jason 4:3	link 9:2	members 3:10	office 4:24
Graham 4:19	Honor 4:10 5:20	Jermaine 4:11	list 5:11	mentioned 5:6	5:1,3 8:5 10:9
great 9:17	hope 9:23	John 4:4	listen 10:3	microphone 5:16	offices 7:17
Grubbs 4:10,11	<hr/> I <hr/>	Joplin 4:15	litigation 4:20	Midstates 4:12	online 3:3 8:11 9:11
<hr/> H <hr/>	impartial 4:6	judge 3:2,25 4:17,23 5:4,22 6:3,21 8:9,10, 15,16 9:14, 18,20, 25	live 7:14	Missouri 3:8,14 4:15,21	open 5:13
hand 5:23	important 10:4	<hr/> K <hr/>	local 3:9 8:5	Mitchell 4:4 5:20, 21,22, 25 6:23 7:1 8:7,8 9:22	operations 3:17
Hannibal 7:14	increase 3:11 6:10,13 10:4	knew 7:23	locally 7:19	<hr/> M <hr/>	<hr/> P <hr/>
Hansen 4:20	inflation 6:17	Kolkmeier 4:3 9:20,21 10:1	long-term 7:12	M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L 5:21	p.m. 3:1 10:15
hard 6:15	information 5:8	<hr/> L <hr/>	looked 7:19	made 4:4	participants 10:2
Hatcher 3:2,24 4:17,23 5:4,22 6:3,21 8:10,16 9:18,25	input 9:17	law 3:25	<hr/> M <hr/>	Maida 4:1	participation 7:2
hear 5:8	insight 7:6	learn 10:3	M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L 5:21	making 7:17,24 8:23 9:3,12 10:6	parties 4:8
hearing 3:9 4:1 5:10 7:3 9:5,9, 11 10:13	instructions 8:22	legal 4:13	M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L 5:21	Marc 5:2	Paul 4:19
	interested 8:19	Liberty 4:9,11, 13,14 6:16	moment 3:7	make 7:17,24 8:23 9:3,12 10:6	paying 6:15
	intimidating 8:21		Mopco@opc.mo.gov. 10:11	making 5:7	payment 7:20
	introduce 4:9		<hr/> N <hr/>	names 5:11	payments 7:17, 23,25
			Natural 4:12	necessarily 8:24	people 6:14
			number 9:3		

7:24 perspective 6:9, 10 pharmacies 7:21 phoned 8:12 place 8:2 Poston 5:2 preregister 5:14 presented 4:7 preside 3:25 pretty 6:8 previously 5:5 process 5:10 promised 8:17 proposed 6:14 providing 8:19 PSC 6:19 PSC's 8:25 Psc.mo.gov. 9:1 10:9 public 3:8,9, 10,14, 17	4:21,24 5:1,3 6:11 10:10 <hr/> Q <hr/> quality 3:16 7:4 question 5:5 6:7 questions 4:6 6:22,24 8:11,14 <hr/> R <hr/> raise 5:23 rate 3:11 6:10, 13,17 10:3 rates 3:13,15 reasonable 3:15 6:7,8 receive 7:5 record 3:1,4 5:19 10:14, 15 region 4:14 regulates 3:13,16	regulation 3:23 regulatory 3:25 rely 5:9 remain 4:6 remarks 9:10,12 reminder 8:12 reporter 3:3 represent 5:1 representing 5:2 requesting 6:16 review 6:12 right-hand 9:1 roll 6:12 rolled 6:18 <hr/> S <hr/> safety 3:17 senate 3:20 senior 4:19 service 3:8,16 4:21 6:11	7:5,7,8 8:1,4 services 4:13 session 5:6 set 3:9 shortcoming 8:4 showing 9:16 sign-up 5:11 signed 8:18 sir 5:15 6:20 7:9 South 4:15 specialists 3:22 spell 5:18 spring 8:3 staff 3:20 4:18,21 Star 8:12 9:13 start 7:13 state 5:18 step 5:16 Stores 7:21	struggling 6:14 subjective 6:8 submit 6:17 9:2 sworn 5:24 6:1 <hr/> T <hr/> testified 6:1 testify 5:9,14 testifying 8:19 testimony 9:23 10:3 time 6:7,15 9:6 today 4:1,6 10:2 tonight 7:2 8:20,24 9:16 10:6 <hr/> U <hr/> understand 5:11 8:21 unmute 8:13 9:13	upper 9:1 urge 6:11 utilities 3:17 4:11 utility 3:14,23 7:4 <hr/> W <hr/> W-E-S 5:21 Webex 3:5 4:2 website 7:19 8:25 10:8 Wes 5:20,25 witnesses 5:9
--	--	---	--	---	--