

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

STATE OF MISSOURI

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) File No. GR-2024-0106
 Rate Increase for Natural Gas)
 Service in the Missouri Service)
 Areas of the Company)

Wednesday, August 28, 2024
 12:25 p.m. - 12:37 p.m.

Adair County Courthouse
 106 West Washington Street
 Kirksville, MO 63501
 and WebEx

VOLUME 4
 Pages 1 - 12

CHARLES HATCHER, Presiding
 SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

KAYLA HAHN, Chair,
 MAIDA J. COLEMAN,
 JASON R. HOLSMAN, (WebEx)
 JOHN MITCHELL,
 COMMISSIONERS

Stenographically Reported By:
 Beverly Jean Bentch, RPR, CCR No. 640

Job No. 171329

1 APPEARANCES:

2 On behalf of Staff of the
3 Public Service Commission:

4 Public Service Commission
5 200 Madison Street, Suite 800
6 P.O. Box 360
7 Jefferson City, MO 65102

8 BY: CAROLYN KERR, ESQ.
9 Carolyn.Kerr@psc.mo.gov

10 On behalf of Liberty Utilities
11 (Midstates Natural Gas) Corp.:

12 Liberty (MNG)
13 601 South Joplin Avenue
14 Joplin, MO 64801

15 BY: JERMAINE GRUBBS, ESQ.
16 Jermaine.Grubbs@libertyutilities.com

17 On behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel:

18 Office of the Public Counsel
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20 P.O. Box 2230
21 Jefferson City, MO 65102

22 BY: ANNA MARTIN, ESQ.
23 opcservice@opc.mo.gov

24

25

1 The following proceedings began at 12:25 p.m.:

2 JUDGE HATCHER: Let's go ahead and I will
3 bring our hearing to order. Let's go on the record.
4 Today is August 28, 2024, and the Missouri Public
5 Service Commission has set this time for a local public
6 hearing to give members of the public a chance to
7 comment about Liberty's general rate increase
8 application. That is File No. GR-2024-0106.

9 The Commission regulates the rates charged by
10 public utility companies to ensure that those rates are
11 just and reasonable. The Commission also regulates the
12 quality of service and safety of the operations of
13 public utilities.

14 There are five Commissioners. They are
15 appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.
16 The Commissioners employ a staff of engineers,
17 accountants, attorneys, financial analysts and other
18 specialists in the field of utility regulation.

19 My name is Charles Hatcher, and I am the
20 Regulatory Law Judge that will preside over this
21 hearing. With me today are Chair Kayla Hahn,
22 Commissioner Maida Coleman, Commissioner John Mitchell,
23 and we have on WebEx Commissioner Jason Holsman, and I
24 expect any minute to be joined also by Commissioner Glen
25 Kolkmeier.

1 The Commissioners have not made any decisions
2 in this case, and therefore they cannot answer any
3 questions that you might have as they need to remain
4 impartial until the introduction of all of the evidence
5 in the case.

6 We'll go ahead and start with entries of
7 appearance by the parties. First for Liberty.

8 MS. GRUBBS: Good afternoon. Jermaine Grubbs
9 appearing on behalf of Liberty Utilities (Midstates
10 Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty. I'm the Director of
11 Legal Services for the Central Region of Liberty, and my
12 business address is 602 South Joplin Avenue in Joplin,
13 Missouri. Zip code is 64801. Thank you.

14 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Ms. Grubbs. For
15 the Commission Staff.

16 MS. KERR: Thank you. My name is Carolyn
17 Kerr, attorney for Staff, and the address is 200 Madison
18 Street, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

19 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Ms. Kerr. And for
20 the Office of the Public Counsel.

21 MS. MARTIN: This is Anna Martin appearing on
22 behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel.

23 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Ms. Martin. The
24 process for this hearing will be to call the names on
25 the sign-up sheet in the order that they appear. When I

1 call your name, please go ahead and come forward. I'll
2 ask you to raise your hand and I'll place you under oath
3 and ask you to state and spell your name, and then I'll
4 ask you to go ahead and offer your comments to the
5 Commission.

6 After we're done with the witnesses that have
7 signed up, I will open up the floor for anyone else that
8 has decided that they would like to testify and make
9 sure that everyone has that opportunity. But to start,
10 I'll start with James Western.

11 Thank you, Mr. Western. If you would state
12 and spell your name for the record, please.

13 MR. WESTERN: James Dean Western.

14 JUDGE HATCHER: Can you spell your last name,
15 please?

16 MR. WESTERN: Pardon?

17 JUDGE HATCHER: Can you spell your last name
18 for the record, please?

19 MR. WESTERN: I can't hear very good. The
20 acoustics in here are terrible. Just like the
21 direction, W-e-s-t-e-r-n.

22 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, sir. I appreciate
23 it. Let me swear you in first. Please raise your right
24 hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the
25 testimony you're about to give will be the truth?

1 MR. WESTERN: Yes.

2 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. Please go ahead.

3 JAMES DEAN WESTERN,

4 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

5 MR. WESTERN: As I mentioned earlier, when we
6 got the notice from Liberty that they were going to
7 increase our gas prices, and sure enough comes December,
8 cold month, they increased them. Mine went up 300
9 percent. Now, 300 percent, like I said earlier, I can't
10 believe the Energy Commission would even allow an
11 increase like that.

12 He says they didn't get a penny of that. But
13 I don't know where it went. I mean, everything else has
14 gone up too but not 300 percent. The same thing with
15 just the other day when I was looking at their notice,
16 unless I misread it, I thought they said they were
17 wanting to raise it here 15 percent. And 15 percent,
18 now it's saying it's 20.6 percent. Maybe I misread it.
19 I'm not sure. But to me an increase of 320 percent over
20 two years, it just -- it's outlandish. How could the
21 Energy Commission even allow that. It just doesn't make
22 sense to me.

23 Other people I talk to, some of them their
24 bills went up from \$160 to 560. One gal went up 600 and
25 some dollars. Mine was averaging around 160 and it went

1 up to \$465. To me that's ridiculous. If you were to
2 buy a new house, you found just what you wanted, they
3 said well, the mortgage rate is \$1,500. That's not
4 outlandish for a real nice place. And then couple years
5 later they send you a notice saying the price has gone
6 up, now you need to pay \$4,750, what would you think, on
7 a mortgage rate for a month? But that's what I have to
8 say right now. Thank you.

9 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Mr. Western. Are
10 there any questions from the Commissioners? Thank you,
11 sir.

12 The next witness we have is Susan Limestall.
13 Thank you, ma'am. If you would please state and spell
14 your name for the court reporter.

15 MS. LIMESTALL: Susan, S-u-s-a-n, Limestall,
16 L-i-m-e-s-t-a-l-l.

17 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. And would you
18 raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm
19 that the testimony you are about to give will be the
20 truth?

21 MS. LIMESTALL: Yes.

22 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. Please go ahead
23 with your comments.

24 MS. LIMESTALL: Thank you.

25 SUSAN LIMESTALL,

1 having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:

2 MS. LIMESTALL: I was surprised to learn
3 during the Q&A part that there's been no great increase
4 since 2018, when I've been watching my bills go up even
5 though my usage is going down. So it's not the variable
6 purchased price increase. It's all these other things
7 that get added in. So if we're going to add an average
8 of \$15 a month to my bill, which is what their full
9 increase will do, that's a 20 percent increase, you
10 know, for the past year.

11 So I do track my usage from July to June. So
12 for the last three years, you know, my monthly costs,
13 this is the average, back in '21-22, it was \$67. Then
14 it went up an astronomical amount like Mr. Western just
15 talked about. I was \$106 a month on average even though
16 my usage was less. My usage has been less again for
17 this past 12 months, and yet still my monthly cost is up
18 to \$77 a month.

19 So costs are going up whether they get an
20 increase or not. I just hope that the Commission will
21 take that into consideration is that 20 percent increase
22 for the average bill is just too much.

23 JUDGE HATCHER: Ms. Limestall, is there
24 anything else that you'd like to say?

25 MS. LIMESTALL: No.

1 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you. Are there any
2 questions from the Commissioners? Thank you, ma'am.

3 MS. LIMESTALL: Thank you.

4 JUDGE HATCHER: Are there any other witnesses
5 who would like to come forward and give their comments
6 to the Commissioners? I know it can be a bit
7 intimidating. I'll give you the instructions if you
8 would rather make written comments. You can go to the
9 Commission's web page, and that is psc.mo.gov, and in
10 the upper right-hand corner is a link labeled submit
11 comments. Just make sure to include the file number for
12 this case and that is GR-2024-0106.

13 I'll call again, are there any other persons
14 who would like to come forward and give comments? All
15 right. And any closing comments from the Commissioners?
16 Chairwoman Hahn, go ahead.

17 CHAIRWOMAN HAHN: Thank you all for being here
18 today. Especially Mr. Western and Ms. Limestall.
19 Without your time to come to the meeting today, we
20 wouldn't otherwise have your comments or the information
21 you provided, and that's really helpful to us when we're
22 making decisions.

23 And also I'd like to take a second to thank
24 our parties and our staff for coming to set this up for
25 today for the public hearing. So just want to take a

1 minute to say thank you to everyone who participated in
2 the hearing. Appreciate it.

3 JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you, Chair. Any other
4 Commissioner comments? I know we have Commissioners
5 online. That's *6 to unmute.

6 Okay. That will bring our hearing to a close.
7 I would like to echo the Chair's comments and thank
8 everyone for attending, not just the parties and their
9 support staff but also everyone else who came out to
10 give their comments or just to observe. We really
11 appreciate that.

12 If you did have any contacts for the Office of
13 the Public Counsel, they represent the public in this
14 case, their email address is mopco@opc.mo.gov. That's a
15 tongue twister. I'll give that one more time.

16 Mopco@opc.mo.gov.

17 Again, thank you all for coming. This hearing
18 is adjourned. Let's go off the record.

19 (WHEREUPON, the proceedings concluded at 12:37
20 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF MISSOURI)

COUNTY OF COLE)

I, Beverly Jean Bentch, RPR, CCR No. 640, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing Public Service Commission Local Public Hearing and that the transcript, pages 1 through 11, is a true record of my stenographic notes.

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

Dated this 6th day of September, 2024.

Beverly Jean Bentch

Beverly Jean Bentch, RPR, CCR No. 640

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