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

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Cape Girardeau Public Library,
Oscar Christian Hirsch Community Room
711 Clark Street
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

VOLUME 9

KENNETH J. SEYER, Presiding
REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

KAYLA HAHN,
CHAIR
MAIDA J. COLEMAN,
JASON HOLSMAN
GLEN KOLKMEYER
JOHN MITCHELL,
COMMISSIONERS

Reported By:
PAULA D. HEFNER, RDR, CRR, CCR
LEXITAS LEGAL

1

2 (The following proceedings were had on September 11,
3 2024 beginning at 6:23 p.m.)

4 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Let's go on the record.

5 Today is September 11th, 2024, the time is 6:23, and
6 my name is Ken Seyer. I'm the Regulatory Law Judge with the
7 Missouri Public Service Commission, and I will preside over this
8 hearing.

9 The Commission has set this time for a local public
10 hearing to give members of the public a chance to comment about
11 Liberty's general rate increase application, which is Commission
12 File No. GR-2024-0106.

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

17 There are five Commissioners. They are appointed by
18 the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Commission
19 employs a staff of engineers, accountants, attorneys, financial
20 analysts, and other specialists in the field of utility
21 regulation.

22 With me today is Commissioner Maida Coleman, and
23 joining us online via the Internet is Chair Kayla Hahn,
24 Commissioner Jason Holsman, Commissioner John Mitchell, and
25 Commissioner Glen Kolkmeyer.

1 The Commissioners have not made any decisions in this
2 case and cannot answer any questions today because they have to
3 remain impartial until after all the evidence is presented at
4 the evidentiary hearing in this matter scheduled to begin next
5 month.

6 At this time would any of the Commissioners like to
7 make opening remarks?

8 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: I would.

9 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Commissioner Coleman.

10 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you, Judge.

11 So I would like to say thank you to those that are
12 here tonight. We appreciate your interest in this gas rate
13 case. We appreciate the customers that may be here tonight.
14 And we look forward to any questions -- well, to your testimony.

15 Also on behalf of Chair Hahn and the other three
16 Commissioners I would just like to say we appreciate being able
17 to provide this opportunity to come before the citizens of the
18 State of Missouri that are customers of Liberty. And we give
19 thanks to our staff and everyone else involved here tonight.

20 Thank you.

21 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you, Commissioner.

22 Would any of the other Commissioners like to make
23 opening remarks? Okay.

24 I believe you may have already been introduced to the
25 attorneys for the parties, but for the sake of the record would

1 each of the attorneys for the parties in the case identify
2 yourselves and state which party you are representing.

3 MS. GRUBBS: Good evening. Jermaine Grubbs on
4 behalf of Liberty Utilities Midstates Natural Gas Corporation
5 doing business as Liberty.

6 MR. STACEY: Scott Stacey representing the Staff
7 with the Staff Counsel's office.

8 MS. JOHNSON: Tracy Johnson also with Staff
9 Counsel's office.

10 MS. MARTIN: Anna Martin, Associate Attorney with
11 the Office of the Public Counsel.

12 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. And I understand -- I have
13 not been presented a list of -- a sign-up list, but there is
14 going to be one person that would like to testify tonight.

15 Is that you, sir?

16 BUD CRAVEN: Yes, sir.

17 JUDGE SEYER: If you could step up to the
18 microphone, please. What I would like to do is place you under
19 oath.

20 BUD CRAVEN: Correct.

21 JUDGE SEYER: And then you can offer your
22 comments and, like I believe you've been told already, there may
23 be questions from the Commissioners.

24 So if you would raise your right hand, please.

25 (Whereupon, Bud Craven was placed under oath by

1 Regulatory Law Judge Ken Seyer.)

2 JUDGE SEYER: What is your name, sir?

3 BUD CRAVEN: My name is Bud Craven. I am a
4 resident of Jackson. I am a retired school teacher with several
5 degrees.

6 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Mr. Craven, could you
7 for the sake of our Court reporter spell your last name?

8 BUD CRAVEN: C-r-a, V as in victory, e-n; first
9 name Bud, B-u-d.

10 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. Thank you.

11 All right. Go ahead.

12 BUD CRAVEN: Okay. As a teacher of government
13 and political science and economics for thirty-six years I've
14 been a person who has been interested in this all my life. And
15 then as a resident of Jackson -- and I actually taught at Cape
16 Central here -- I've always been very concerned about those who
17 are less affluent and well off.

18 And I'm always concerned with any kind in this case of
19 a raise in rates that unduly affect people that are virtually in
20 poverty. And even though we're a little bit above that rate
21 here locally in Jackson, the Liberty represents all the people
22 in the Bootheel. They are in poverty. It is well known -- the
23 whole state knows -- that the Bootheel is people in poverty.

24 As I was discussing earlier, I believe approximately
25 sixty-five percent of those people are on food stamps. And I

1 was raised in Dexter which is down in that area and my father
2 ran a shoe factory in Bernie, down in that area, so I've been
3 around those people in various ways -- and farming related
4 people, etc.

5 What disturbs me, I guess, is that I know natural gas
6 is the cheapest it's ever been. And I was talking earlier,
7 especially the way fracking has gone -- even though I don't
8 approve of that, but at least they are capturing the gas that
9 was just burned off years before. We're selling -- the United
10 States -- or companies out of the United States and
11 internationally are selling gas because it is so cheap -- to
12 Europe, which is good because of the Russian things that are
13 happening in Ukraine that is going on and we're able to support
14 them. And that's great that the United States and Canada has
15 been doing this and should be applauded for that.

16 But, my concern here is to have a thirty-eight percent
17 increase -- and this is what Liberty is saying -- is
18 preposterous, you know. I can live with five, six, seven.

19 And I know we have just been through -- and I applaud
20 you for bringing it up -- the pandemic and inflation, we know
21 inflation is just... I mean eggs at Aldi's here the other day
22 was three sixty-six. I mean are you kidding me?

23 So a variety of things happened. And then the supply
24 issues that occurred I'm sure affected your company, you know,
25 in a variety of ways with your equipment that you need.

1 So I would like to see -- and I was happy, reasonably
2 happy, with the Public Service Commission doing a study and
3 coming up with a percentage I think a lot more reasonable.

4 But, in my mind and my knowledge of economics, you
5 know, anything above seven percent is gouging and unfair. It's
6 especially unfair to the poor, ignorant people who live in
7 southeast Missouri.

8 And I know you want to make money. I love -- I love
9 capitalism. That's the reason we're a great country is because
10 of capitalism.

11 But, let's not gouge us. Let's not go to the point
12 that we take advantage, and especially not take advantage of the
13 people, the poor ignorant people of southeast Missouri. That's
14 what I'm upset about.

15 So I'm asking that the Public Service Commission work
16 hard to keep the numbers to seven, you know. That's where it
17 should be. That's reasonable.

18 And I know these are strange times. It would have
19 been nice if the United States government had taken care of
20 COVID originally like it should have. If we had gone -- we
21 wouldn't have lost a million people if the federal government
22 had jumped on COVID -- they knew what it was. But, what did
23 they do? We had ignorance abound there, and we have a million
24 people dead, and then we also have the cost that is just
25 unbelievable.

1 Inflation is strange. It's odd. It's all kinds --
2 supposedly we are coming out. I believe that we are coming out
3 of it so, therefore, you are not going to have as much cost
4 involved. It looks like the bank is going to lower the rates
5 and all that. And everybody, hopefully, will be better off and
6 hopefully we will be building homes like we should.

7 Okay. That's my request. Let's try to get to seven.
8 That's reasonable.

9 And especially remember who those people are. They're
10 probably not like we are. We're somebody else. And I know how
11 they are. They're poor, ignorant people. They're not here, are
12 they? Thank you.

13 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Mr. Craven, could I ask
14 you to stay at the microphone in case we have any questions.

15 BUD CRAVEN: Yes.

16 JUDGE SEYER: Do any of the Commissioners have
17 questions for Mr. Craven? All right.

18 Hearing none, do any of the attorneys for the parties
19 have questions for Mr. Craven? All right. Hearing none.

20 Thank you, Mr. Craven.

21 BUD CRAVEN: Thank you for your time.

22 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you.

23 JUDGE SEYER: Is there anyone else here who did
24 not sign up who would like to provide testimony? Okay.

25 If -- Mr. Craven, if you have further comments that

1 you would like to submit in writing or if there is anyone else
2 who is viewing this hearing and would like to submit written
3 comments you can submit them via the Commission's website; that
4 is psc.mo.gov.

5 And then on that web page on the right side is a --

6 BUD CRAVEN: Is that on one of these papers? I'm
7 sorry.

8 JUDGE SEYER: Maybe.

9 BUD CRAVEN: Okay. The communication guy says it
10 is. Thank you.

11 JUDGE SEYER: All right.

12 Then there is a link on the right-hand side of the web
13 page that says "Submit Comments." Once you click on that link
14 you can enter your comments. But, I just ask that you reference
15 this case number; it's GR-2024-0106.

16 And if you in the question/answer portion had any
17 contact with the attorney for the Public Counsel's office -- but
18 if you would like to contact them their email address is
19 mopco@opc.mo.gov.

20 Now, having said all of that would any of the
21 Commissioners like to make closing remarks?

22 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: I just would like to thank
23 you -- thank you, Mr. Craven, for coming and for your comments.
24 Certainly your information has been shared, of course, with the
25 other Commissioners that's listening in. And we appreciate your

1 time that you took to come out here tonight.

2 And, again, thank the Staff and everyone else who is
3 in attendance.

4 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Would any of the other
5 Commissioners like to make closing remarks? Hearing none.

6 All right. Then this hearing is adjourned and we will
7 go off the record -- oh, Mr. Craven.

8 BUD CRAVEN: One thing is that most people that
9 you serve live in Jackson so the words that I heard over there
10 was -- I'm sorry. I live in Jackson. And I was focusing on the
11 other people and they were perplexed that this meeting was being
12 held here in Cape which is not being serviced by Liberty like
13 Jackson and the area south. So they were upset about it being
14 in Cape Girardeau.

15 So I would ask for them to have the meeting over in
16 Jackson or somewhere.

17 There are other meetings, am I correct?

18 JUDGE SEYER: We had one actually earlier today
19 in Sikeston and one last night in Kennett.

20 BUD CRAVEN: Okay. That's good. People in
21 Jackson were upset that it's here instead of where they actually
22 live and serve.

23 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Question, Mr. Craven. Is
24 Jackson in Cape Girardeau County?

25 BUD CRAVEN: Correct. So that's why --

1 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: That may explain why it's
2 here, okay.

3 BUD CRAVEN: Whoever thought -- whoever thought
4 that through they should understand in the future that Cape is
5 not served by Liberty. That's important, I think.

6 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you. Point well
7 taken.

8 MS. MARTIN: I did also want to let you know --
9 and I don't know if this was online or how, but I do know that
10 we have, that Liberty has actually requested having an
11 additional hearing for this case. And if it's online or virtual
12 we will try and make sure that you also have that information so
13 that people can go there.

14 BUD CRAVEN: Thank you.

15 JUDGE SEYER: Yes. And that would be a hearing
16 that you can participate via the Internet or via phone.

17 So if there is nothing further I'll adjourn the
18 hearing and we'll go off the record.

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22 (Conclusion of Proceedings at 6:43 p.m.)

23

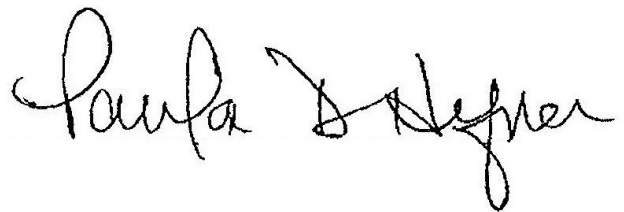
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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2
3 I, Paula D. Hefner, Registered Diplomate Reporter,
4 Certified Realtime Reporter, Certified Court Reporter for the
5 State of Missouri, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a
6 true and correct transcription of my stenographic notes of the
7 testimony taken by me in the matter of In the Matter of the
8 Request of Liberty Utilities (Midstates Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a
9 Liberty to Implement a General Rate Increase for Natural Gas
10 Service in the Missouri Service Areas of the Company, File No.
11 GR-2024-0106, said hearing held at Cape Girardeau Public
12 Library, 711 North Clark Street, Cape Girardeau, Missouri on
13 September 11, 2024, between 6:28 p.m. and 6:43 p.m., that said
14 proceedings were taken down in Stenotype, thereafter caused to
15 be reduced to writing by means of computer-aided transcription.

16 WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal
17 this 16th day of September, 2024.

18
19
20 
21

22
23 Paula D. Hefner
24 Certified Court Reporter No. 219
25 Registered Diplomate Reporter
Certified Realtime Reporter

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