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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)
Water) LLC d/b/a Liberty for) File No.
Authority to Implement a General) WR-2024-0104
Rate Increase for Water and)
Wastewater Service Provided in)
its Missouri Service Areas.)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024
6:00 p.m.

American Legion Hall
1424 West Broadway Street
Bolivar, MO 65613

VOLUME V

JOHN CLARK, Presiding
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

KAYLA HAHN, CHAIR (via WebEx)
MAIDA COLEMAN (via WebEx),
JASON R. HOLSMAN (via WebEx),
GLEN KOLKMEYER,
JOHN P. MITCHELL,
COMMISSIONERS

Reported By:
Jill A. Bleskey, RPR
Illinois CSR #084-004430
Missouri CCR #1467
Lexitas Legal Midwest
1.800.280.3376

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Appearing on behalf of Liberty Utilities:

Ms. Diana Clark, Senior Counsel
Mr. Tony Penna, Vice President and General
Manager
Ms. Cindy Wilson, Director, Rates & Regulations
Ms. Charlotte Emery, Sr. Director, Rates &
Regulations

Appearing on behalf of Office of Public Counsel:

Mr. Marc Poston
STATE OF MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & INSURANCE
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC COUNSEL
Governor Office Building, Suite 650
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Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
573.751.5324,

Ms. Casi Aslin
ASSISTANT STAFF COUNSEL
STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION STAFF
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Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
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casi.aslin@psc.mo.gov

1 * * * * *

2 (Starting time of Hearing: 7:41 p.m.)

3 * * * * *

4 JUDGE CLARK: All right. Let's go on the
5 record. Good evening. It's September 19th, 2024 and
6 the current time is 7:41 p.m.

7 The question and answer portion of the
8 local public hearing just ended. If you had
9 questions about this rate case I hope you were able
10 to get your answers from the parties that are here
11 today. And now we're starting the comment portion of
12 the hearing and that's this part.

13 The Missouri Public Service Commission has
14 set aside this time today for a local public hearing
15 in File Number WR-2024-0104 and that's a general rate
16 case captioned as In the Matter of Request of Liberty
17 Utilities, Missouri Water, LLC doing business as
18 Liberty for authority to implement a general rate
19 increase for water and wastewater service provided in
20 its Missouri service areas.

21 Now Liberty provides electric service as
22 well as gas service too. However this is only water
23 and wastewater case. So if you have comments about
24 Liberty's other utilities, if they don't relate to
25 wastewater this may not be the hearing for that.

1 My name's John Clark, I'm the regulatory
2 law judge overseeing this local public hearing today.

3 The Missouri Public Service Commission
4 regulates the rates charged by investor owned utility
5 companies in Missouri to ensure that those rates are
6 just and reasonable. The Commission also regulates
7 the quality of service and the safety of operations
8 of investor owned utilities.

9 Now the Commission is made up of five
10 commissioners, the Commissioner's Chair Kayla Hahn
11 and Commissioners Maida Coleman, Jason Holsman, Glen
12 Kolkmeyer, and John Mitchell. The Commissioners are
13 appointed by the Governor to a fixed term and
14 confirmed by the senate. The Commissioners employ a
15 staff of engineers, accountants, attorneys, financial
16 analysts, and other specialists in the area of
17 utilities regulation.

18 Now with me today in person are
19 Commissioners Glen Kolkmeyer and Commissioners John
20 Mitchell. The remaining Commissioners and the Chair
21 are participating in this hearing, they are listening
22 now live via WebEx.

23 Commissioner Kolkmeyer, would you like to
24 make an opening remark?

25 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Yes. Thank you,

1 Judge. Good evening and welcome everyone to
2 tonight's local public hearing. We are here to take
3 your comments, we're not able to answer any questions
4 as the Judge will tell you here in a minute, this is
5 only a comment section. We want to hear from you and
6 we will take this back to our hearings in our dealing
7 with this case.

8 So again, thank you on behalf of all the
9 Commissioners, I want to welcome you here this
10 evening. Thank you.

11 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Commissioner
12 Kolkmeier. At this time I'm going to ask the parties
13 to enter their appearance for the record starting
14 with Liberty Utilities.

15 MS. CARTER: Diana Carter for Liberty
16 Utilities Missouri Water, LLC.

17 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Carter. On
18 behalf of the Commission Staff.

19 MS. ASLIN: Casi Aslin for Commission
20 Staff.

21 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Ms. Aslin. On
22 behalf of the Office of Public Counsel.

23 MR. POSTON: Marc Poston for Office of the
24 Public Counsel.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Poston. Are

1 there any Intervenors or counsel for Intervenors
2 present? I hear and see none.

3 Now, for those of you that would like to
4 provide comments today I'm going to call the names
5 listed on the sign up sheet in the order they appear.
6 When I call your name, please come up to the
7 microphone and at that time I'll place you under oath
8 and you can give your comments to the Commission. I
9 would also ask you to state and spell your name for
10 the record.

11 Now, this is a fairly well attended
12 hearing, which is great as we want to hear from the
13 public. But I also want to give the people who are
14 going to be offering comments tonight an opportunity
15 to speak without -- without running too late so I'm
16 going to be limiting comments to about three minutes
17 per person. Also, you're going to -- a lot of people
18 will have similar comments that they want to make.
19 If somebody gets up and has said something and you're
20 going to get up and tell us essentially the same
21 thing, please just let us know, you know, earlier
22 somebody mentioned that there was erratic billing, I
23 too have experienced erratic billing. So there's no
24 need to overly expound on something that's already
25 been said but I would like to know what people's

1 experiences are.

2 I'm going to ask that you be polite and
3 courteous, I'm going to ask that you respect people's
4 opinions and give them, while they are offering their
5 comments, the same courtesy that I would hope they
6 would give you.

7 Now, as Commissioner Kolkmeyer said, the
8 Commission and myself, we can't answer your questions
9 tonight. At this point the Commission has to remain
10 impartial until such time as facts and evidence are
11 presented to them at the evidentiary hearing. And
12 that is precisely why we were not in the room during
13 the question and answer portion because we might hear
14 things that we're not supposed to hear yet.

15 If you have a question please speak to a
16 representative of Liberty, somebody from the
17 Commission Staff, or the Office of the Public
18 Counsel. And with that, I will call the names. If I
19 butcher your name please let me know, I certainly
20 don't mean to.

21 Dusty Ross. And Mr. Ross, you spoke at
22 the noon public hearing; --

23 MR. ROSS: I did.

24 JUDGE CLARK: -- is that correct?

25 MR. ROSS: This is Number 4 for me.

1 JUDGE CLARK: This is your fourth public
2 hearing in this case?

3 MR. ROSS: Well, no. Like twice earlier,
4 twice now. With Q and A and all that.

5 JUDGE CLARK: I understand. Would you
6 raise your right hand and be sworn.

7 * * * * *

8 DUSTY ROSS,

9 The witness, having been first duly sworn
10 upon his oath, testified as follows:

11 * * * * *

12 BY: JUDGE CLARK

13 Q. And would you state and spell your
14 name for the record?

15 A. **Dusty Ross, D-U-S-T-Y, R-O-S-S.**

16 Q. And what else would you like to tell
17 the Commission today?

18 A. **Couple things. You know, I hit on**
19 **the point earlier just with the large rate increase,**
20 **you know, we're talking 300 percent on average for**
21 **the water. Bolivar's a community that we've got**
22 **22 percent of the people that are below the, you**
23 **know, poverty line we've got -- you know, national**
24 **average is 11 -- 11 percent. Twenty-four percent of**
25 **Bolivar's seniors are above the age of 50 so a lot of**

1 times, you know, that age group is on a fixed income.
2 And so a rate increase of this size sometimes makes
3 them have to, you know, make tough decisions of
4 groceries, medicine, you know, or pay my water bill.

5 I understand, you know, Liberty's a for
6 profit company, their parent company hit a second
7 quarter profit of \$65 million this year and
8 shareholders had a return of 111 percent, you know,
9 on their stock. So I understand that, you know, they
10 want to make money. But it looks like, you know, at
11 the top they're doing okay. And I understand that
12 Liberty is separate from -- or, you know, a subsidiary
13 of a parent company.

14 But to the point of that increase that
15 quick and what we've been told time and time again is
16 a lot of that is to recoup their initial investment
17 up to \$18 million from the City of Bolivar. As a
18 business that's fine, you want to recoup your initial
19 investment but at the rate increase they're going to
20 do that in the first three, four years. You know,
21 spread that out over 15, 20, 25 years, don't hit us
22 with such a large increase all at once. We
23 understand you want to recoup, you know, your
24 investment but, you know, I'm under the impression
25 Liberty's never sold an asset before so I'm assuming

1 you plan on keeping it for 20, 30, 40 years. Once
2 that's paid off these rates aren't going to go away
3 they're going to continue to make that money and, you
4 know, get that income stream. Which again as a
5 business that's fine but, hey, don't hit us with it
6 at all once.

7 Probably one of the most alarming things
8 I've heard tonight is when the PSC was -- Staff was
9 talking about the audit that they did to try to get
10 to that number and they said they had to guesstimate
11 on some of the information because Liberty may not
12 have been as forthcoming or as eager to hand over
13 documents as they should have been. My thought is
14 how about we wait for any rate increase until we
15 actually get all the documents and have the accurate
16 information before we just estimate on their profits.
17 'Cause I asked the auditor like, you know, what
18 information were you guys lacking and they weren't
19 real forthcoming on number of customers and their
20 profits. To me those are the two things that would
21 determine a rate increase, how many customers you
22 have and how much money you're making. If you don't
23 have those numbers and you're just guessing, I mean,
24 it's up in the air. So I don't know how we're coming
25 to, you know, a \$60 increase when we don't even have

1 hard numbers for, you know, what their customers are
2 and what they're paying. So to me before we approve
3 any rate increase let's make sure we actually have
4 factual data before we can, you know, see what
5 they're saying. And I would just say don't rush to
6 judgment and if you do unfortunately, you know,
7 approve a rate increase, I mean, spread it out.

8 Again, this is -- from their own Q and A
9 this is them trying recoup their initial investment
10 for the most part. This is a long term gain for
11 them, they're going to have this for many years, let
12 them spread that out over many, many years. And, you
13 know, the citizens again, you know, a little bit at a
14 time is -- I mean, I think some of us can stomach
15 that but all of it at once that just seems like, you
16 know, a greedy corporation where we have no other
17 option to use except for them trying to recoup all
18 their investment at once off of the backs of a
19 community who's already twice the poverty level as
20 the national average. So that's all.

21 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you for your comments,
22 Mr. Ross. Eric Jones. Is there an Eric Jones here?
23 Ann Stewart. Ann Stewart.

24 And this is not an uncommon occurrence,
25 sometimes people get their questions answered at the

1 question and answer portion and realize that they
2 don't want to make any comments and they don't stick
3 around. But I'm going to go ahead and call the names
4 anyway.

5 Janine Drake. Janine Drake. Linda --
6 MS. ELLERBEE: Ellerbee.

7 JUDGE CLARK: -- Ellerbee. You knew where
8 I was going?

9 MS. ELLERBEE: I knew where you were
10 going.

11 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Ellerbee, did I say your
12 name right?

13 MS. ELLERBEE: Yes, sir, you did.

14 * * * * *

15 LINDA ELLERBEE,

16 The witness, having been first duly sworn
17 upon her oath, testified as follows:

18 * * * * *

19 BY: JUDGE CLARK

20 Q. Would you state and spell your name
21 for the record?

22 A. Linda Ellerbee, L-I-N-D-A,
23 E-L-L-E-R-B, double E.

24 Q. And what would you like to tell the
25 Commission this evening?

1 A. I'm not impressed with Liberty's
2 customer service, their bills are atrocious, when
3 there is an error you do not get credit. There was a
4 time period here a few months ago when the office
5 itself was closed for two months and if you wanted to
6 pay your bill you either stuck it in the hole or
7 mailed it, no one was in the office to take care of
8 it. That is not good customer service. I was taught
9 that you take care of your public, that is not
10 happening. The bill that I got two months ago was
11 incorrect, we never got a correction on it, we were
12 told it was too bad. They didn't want to talk to my
13 husband 'cause his name wasn't on it but it was
14 before we became customers of Liberty. They wanted
15 \$53 to put his name with my name so that he could
16 talk to them, we didn't pay it. So now if there's a
17 question I'm the only one that they'll talk to. So
18 I'm not impressed.

19 I liked where I was before this all
20 happened. And I'm an elderly, believe it or not.
21 I'm 73, I have a fixed income, my husband is on
22 social security and I'm not happy with the
23 300 percent increase.

24 Q. Do you remember what two months that
25 their office was closed?

1 **A. It was back in the spring.**

2 Q. And are you aware that if you have a
3 billing dispute that you are not satisfactorily able
4 to resolve that you can file a complaint with the
5 Public Service Commission?

6 **A. I am.**

7 Q. Thank you for your comments.

8 **A. Thank you.**

9 JUDGE CLARK: Meagan Woods. Would you
10 raise your right hand to be sworn.

11 * * * * *

12 MEAGAN WOODS,

13 The witness, having been first duly sworn
14 upon her oath, testified as follows:

15 * * * * *

16 BY: JUDGE CLARK

17 Q. And would you please state and spell
18 your name for the record?

19 **A. Meagan Woods, M-E-A-G-A-N, W-O-O-D-S.**

20 Q. And Ms. Woods, what comments do you
21 have for the Commission about this case?

22 **A. Well, so I have little children. And**
23 **I know for me I take my kids to my mom's house**
24 **sometimes just to save on our water bill, I've really**
25 **tried to watch it. And our bill was like 20**

1 something dollars and then with the customer charge
2 and all the fees it was \$75. With this I don't even
3 know if I can afford water let alone like everything
4 else. Thank God I have my husband, you know, he will
5 cover whatever I can't afford. But what about, like,
6 the single parents or the elderly.

7 I'm a cashier at Wal-Mart. I've seen so
8 many times where people on fixed incomes they just
9 can't afford things they need, necessities already
10 like as is in Bolivar. And I know that's not just
11 Liberty, it's just the world. But I think that
12 having such an increase is going to make it a lot
13 more difficult for us to survive. I see so many
14 people that are already homeless, like, you know, see
15 -- that's scary to me that that's a possibility if
16 all our bills just keep going up. But like minimum
17 wage is whatever it is, I don't know, I make -- I'm
18 \$14 an hour at Wal-Mart. That does not pay nothing.
19 You know what I am saying?

20 So that's really all I wanted to say.
21 It's a struggle, it's hard to raise children and
22 live.

23 Q. So you take your children over to
24 their grandparents' house to conserve on utilities?

25 A. Yes. My mom has well water so we

1 take baths out there sometimes just to try to save.
2 They have the off peak hours ten p.m. to six a.m. but
3 we go to bed at nine. I've tried staying up to do
4 laundry and stuff later in the evening and then get
5 less sleep. Stuff like that I've been trying to do
6 just to cut back on how much we use.

7 Q. Thank you for your comments.

8 A. Thank you.

9 JUDGE CLARK: Ed Kurtz. And Mr. Kurtz,
10 you spoke at the noon hearing, correct?

11 MR. KURTZ: I did. I had a lot of fun.

12 JUDGE CLARK: I'm going to have to swear
13 you in again.

14 * * * * *

15 ED KURTZ,

16 The witness, having been first duly sworn
17 upon his oath, testified as follows:

18 * * * * *

19 BY: JUDGE CLARK

20 Q. And would you state and spell your
21 name again for the record?

22 A. Ed Kurtz, E-D, K-U-R-T-Z.

23 Q. And what would you like to share with
24 the Commission tonight?

25 A. I'm going to try not to read my same

1 notes from noon to make it a little more interesting.
2 But I think the background for this stretches back to
3 a vote that took place in 2020 and the conversations
4 that happened between the City and Liberty Utilities
5 and the citizens of Bolivar in the public record. I
6 think the impression that the City had was that -- or
7 that the citizens had was that the City had
8 mismanaged the utility system to the point where it
9 was nearly broken and were looking for a way out. It
10 was established by one of the City staff that it was
11 going to cost the City \$9.3 million to upgrade the
12 sewer system alone in order to meet EPA challenges.
13 And at that same time Liberty told the public that if
14 they owned and managed the utilities their rates
15 would increase only in the range of \$8.22 to \$9.52,
16 or a 19 percent increase over the same 18 years that
17 the City was projecting a 38 percent increase. So
18 half of the rate of increase.

19 They had also established that upgrading
20 the sewer system alone was going to cost about
21 \$6 million because of their company culture and
22 contacts and they could get things done a little less
23 expensive. So overall I think Liberty Utilities did
24 their due diligence to sustain the needs that were
25 going to need to be met with the Bolivar

1 infrastructure. I feel like the conversations with
2 the City of Bolivar and with Liberty Utilities to the
3 voters prior to the vote were misleading and because
4 of that the vote was favorable at 62 percent.

5 My personal experience with Liberty
6 Utility I have had a billing matter with them since
7 May of 2024 where instead of an actual reading of my
8 usage and a base rate of \$30.03 I had an estimated
9 reading of my usage and a base -- a new base rate of
10 \$38.04. That's a difference of eight dollars and a
11 penny but it's also a 26 percent increase in my base
12 rate because of an estimated reading. Since then I
13 have not had another estimated reading but when I
14 called Liberty Utilities to discuss this with the
15 customer service rep I was told that my matter would
16 be forwarded to the appropriate team at Liberty and
17 that I should not pay my bill until that was
18 resolved. That's been four months ago, a little over
19 four months ago and I've called three times and
20 talked to different customer service reps with the
21 same response. And I have had no response from
22 Liberty Utilities' team about this matter. So --

23 Q. And Mr. Kurtz, your three minutes is
24 up.

25 A. Okay. What I'm going to say is now

1 they're looking at an increase of about \$60.71 which
2 is a 287 increase of my base rate. And I don't think
3 there's anybody in Bolivar that can afford that kind
4 of an increase over time. And it would make sense to
5 me that they would collect their return on investment
6 over time since they have a 20 year franchise
7 agreement with the City of Bolivar and it shouldn't
8 be at one time. Thank you.

9 Q. Quick question. You said that
10 Liberty had told you what they thought the -- had
11 told the City of Bolivar what they thought the
12 increase would be after they made the upgrades that
13 needed to be made to the system. When was that
14 public meeting you referenced?

15 A. That was in 2019 prior to the voting
16 in 2020.

17 Q. Do you remember what month?

18 A. I have it here, if you'd like me to
19 look it up. I want to say August.

20 Q. All right. Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: Judge, if I may.

22 JUDGE CLARK: Of course.

23 BY: COMMISSIONER MITCHELL

24 Q. Mr. Kurtz, I appreciate you coming
25 back and offering your comments again this evening.

1 I want to make sure that I understand it and get the
2 numbers correct here. So please go back to the
3 discussion with Liberty and the City where the City
4 projected what rate increase would be needed if the
5 City maintained -- or retained the utility and what
6 rate increase would occur if Liberty took over use of
7 it? I just want to make sure I get the numbers right
8 in my notes.

9 **A. So the City administrator at that**
10 **time in City of Bolivar who oddly is a Liberty**
11 **Utilities employee now outside of the public works**
12 **department stated that in order to recoup the**
13 **\$9.3 million that they would need to invest in the**
14 **sewer system alone it would require a 38 percent**
15 **increase over the next 18 years. And in response to**
16 **that a Liberty Utility official at the time in**
17 **Bolivar stated that their increase would be about**
18 **19 percent over the same time period.**

19 **Q. And that's for the wastewater system**
20 **only?**

21 **A. That's my understanding.**

22 **Q. Thank you very much.**

23 **A. Thank you.**

24 **COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Mr. Kurtz.**

25 **MR. KURTZ: Oh, sorry.**

1 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Yes, sorry.

2 MR. KURTZ: I'm going to talk to all of
3 you.

4 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Correct. Thank
5 you for your testimony.

6 MR. KURTZ: Thanks.

7 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: We're not able to
8 take written testimony but the numbers that you were
9 talking and what have you, Mr. Poston over here with
10 Office of the Public Counsel can take written
11 comment. And what I'm looking for is was this
12 printed in the local newspaper?

13 MR. KURTZ: That's where I got my
14 information, yes.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right here.

16 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: And if you have
17 that information, if you'd give it to Mr. Poston he
18 can make sure that he puts it in the record at the
19 appropriate time.

20 MR. KURTZ: I will do that. Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: I think we're all
22 curious of that same number.

23 MR. KURTZ: And I have had previous
24 conversations with Mr. Poston through the portal
25 about my concerns for this.

1 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Okay.

2 MR. KURTZ: So I do have that contact
3 information.

4 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Good. And I'm
5 glad you've made contact.

6 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Would you like my
7 newspaper?

8 JUDGE CLARK: Ed England.

9 MR. ENGLAND: I didn't know I signed up to
10 speak but I will.

11 JUDGE CLARK: You don't have to if you
12 don't want to but if you'd like to you're certainly
13 welcome to.

14 MR. ENGLAND: That's all right. I've
15 always got something to say.

16 JUDGE CLARK: Raise your right hand and be
17 sworn.

18 * * * * *

19 EDDIE ENGLAND,

20 The witness, having been first duly sworn
21 upon his oath, testified as follows:

22 * * * * *

23 BY: JUDGE CLARK

24 Q. And would you please state and spell
25 your name for the record?

1 A. Eddie England, E-D-D-I-E,
2 E-N-G-L-A-N-D.

3 Q. And what would you like to tell the
4 Commission?

5 A. Really the only issue I have is with
6 the -- since they've -- since Liberty has taken over
7 is the water is atrocious to drink. I drink a lot.
8 I love cold water so I drink a lot of water. My wife
9 doesn't drink it so she doesn't really notice it.
10 But the chlorine, the bleach smell -- I don't even
11 drink tap water. We spend a fortune in bottled water
12 just 'cause I won't drink it out of the tap. You can
13 smell it in the shower, you know. And it's even
14 worse in the evening. You get around seven, eight,
15 nine o'clock at night and you turn the tap on you can
16 just smell, smell the bleach. So I don't know -- and
17 it was discussed that maybe the -- oh, the
18 proportions were wrong, what's going in where. But
19 it would be nice to get that fixed.

20 MR. PENNA: Yes, sir.

21 MR. ENGLAND: And that's really the only
22 issue I have, other than the rate increase. But --
23 yeah, that's atrocious too. That's it. Thank you.

24 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. England.
25 Carol Binder.

1 MS. BENDER: It's Bender. It's Carol
2 Bender.

3 JUDGE CLARK: I apologize. Thank you, Ms.
4 Bender. Could you raise your right hand to be sworn.

5 * * * * *

6 CAROL BENDER,

7 The witness, having been first duly sworn
8 upon her oath, testified as follows:

9 * * * * *

10 BY: JUDGE CLARK

11 Q. And would you please state and spell
12 your name for the record?

13 A. Carol Bender, C-A-R-O-L, B-E-N-D-E-R.

14 Q. And what comments do you have for the
15 Commission tonight?

16 A. Well, like everybody else, the
17 300.38 percent is going to really damage my monthly
18 bills because food has already gone up 300 percent
19 for me and everything else. So I cannot really
20 afford this increase. The smell is atrocious, like
21 he said. I cannot even drink the water, I have to
22 get a filtered water and that increases of course.
23 So that is mostly what my concern is.

24 But can I ask you, as a citizen of
25 Bolivar, Missouri, can I drill my own well and sewer

1 **system? The water will be a whole lot better.**

2 Q. And I apologize. As I indicated at
3 the beginning, as much as I would like to answer your
4 questions, I cannot. We can't answer your questions
5 this evening, I apologize. But thank you for your
6 comments.

7 **A. Thank you.**

8 JUDGE CLARK: Pat Thurston. Pat Thurston.
9 Mildred Newton. Mildred Newton. Jerry Brown. Mr.
10 Brown, would you raise your right hand and be sworn.

11 * * * * *

12 JERRY BROWN,

13 The witness, having been first duly sworn
14 upon his oath, testified as follows:

15 * * * * *

16 BY: JUDGE CLARK

17 Q. And would you please state and spell
18 your name for the record?

19 **A. Jerry Brown, J-E-R-R-Y, B-R-O-W-N.**

20 Q. And what would you like to tell the
21 Commission tonight?

22 **A. We moved here six years ago. We have**
23 **a small beverage company, make mainly beverages with**
24 **honey and so water's important to us. And also**
25 **wastewater's important to us. And we actually looked**

1 at some places out in the country and so forth but
2 needed to have good water. And for the most part
3 I've been happy with the water. I do smell the
4 chlorine and I believe that's a lot of the reason
5 because they went from like gas to the liquid
6 chlorine part of it is what I was told.

7 I used to take care of a wastewater system
8 in Kansas years ago so I was State of Kansas potable
9 water certified operator. So I understand when you
10 own a beverage company and the water needs to be good
11 and clean. And we do reverse osmosis and everything
12 like that. But we need to make sure the water is
13 good because that's a base of everything that we
14 make.

15 Our big challenge is a 300 and some
16 percent increase. We've moved -- and again, we're a
17 small company and Bolivar's a big town for us because
18 I came from a town of 100 people. But we've moved
19 five families to Bolivar for our beverage company and
20 that 300 percent is going to be \$800 increase a month
21 for us. And I talked to my son just a little bit ago
22 who is owner -- part owner of the company and he says
23 we'll just move somewhere else if that's \$800. How
24 are we going to pass on our costs? We have
25 competition on our side of it, whatever we sell. If

1 my prices are too high nobody's going to buy it.
2 That doesn't happen here. So we need you guys to
3 keep that from being the 300. We're okay with some
4 increase, we understand everything's going up. 300
5 and some percent is not acceptable and we hope you
6 take that into consideration because it hurts small
7 businesses too besides people with fixed income and
8 so forth, it really hurts small businesses.

9 And if we all move out, all the small
10 businesses that effect, maybe some of the big
11 businesses, what's the price of property? If I own a
12 house here in town, what's the value of that going to
13 happen? Everything's going to go down. We need you
14 guys to help keep this regulated. Thank you.

15 Q. Thank you for your comments, Mr.
16 Brown. You make some good points.

17 JUDGE CLARK: I apologize. I'm having
18 problems with reading the first name. Is there a
19 Powell here, last name Powell? Sorry. Go ahead.

20 MR. POWELL: Philip, P-H- --

21 JUDGE CLARK: Philip?

22 MR. POWELL: Philip, yeah. It's
23 P-H-I-L-I-P, Powell, P-O-W-E-L-L. P-O-W-E-L-L.

24 JUDGE CLARK: Would you raise your right
25 hand to be sworn, Mr. Powell.

1 MR. POWELL: Yes, sir.

2 * * * * *

3 PHILIP POWELL,

4 The witness, having been first duly sworn
5 upon his oath, testified as follows:

6 * * * * *

7 BY: JUDGE CLARK

8 Q. Thank you. Please go ahead.

9 A. I am going to not be as loud as I was
10 in the previous meeting but I would just tell you
11 some thoughts. Again, you were asking -- I bring up
12 billing to you because one of the frustrating parts
13 since Liberty has moved in has been just poor
14 communication, a lack of getting things done when
15 they say they're going to get them done. So I'm
16 going to just go through this very quickly because
17 everybody's had this experience recently.

18 On August 6th of 2024 my bill was \$56.98.
19 That was for 2,950 gallons. Then in September my
20 bill was \$76.99 for 4,570 gallons. Well, then I get
21 the recent bill for 4,660 gallons for 72.53. Now,
22 let me tell you the difference. The first bill I
23 gave you was, quote, an actual reading. The next two
24 bills is what they refer to as estimated readings.
25 As I pointed out in the first part of this, I have a

1 neighbor and we share the hole where the two meters
2 are at. His bill was \$60 this month. He has a wife,
3 three children, four dogs and he also, on his spare
4 time, washes cars and does detailing. That has been
5 a complaint they have heard I am sure all night.

6 The other part though, as I shared with
7 these folks, is we live in Karlin Acres. Karlin
8 Acres is not Bolivar. Karlin Acres is on the
9 outskirts of Bolivar. We were told that, you know,
10 you have a choice in this. Well, we never even got
11 to vote for it, they -- we came to vote and the City
12 said, oh, no, no, that's just the people in Bolivar
13 will vote for that. But we're getting charged now
14 for that.

15 So I look at all of this -- and I shared
16 it in the first part, Bolivar people are frustrated.
17 There has been a poor service record for this
18 company. Going 300 percent on this community for the
19 elderly people that are in it and then we were
20 talking about businesses. We have a major hospital
21 expansion going on in Bolivar, major. That will
22 increase water usage. We have the college, which is
23 another area, a private college, that's going to add
24 expense to them. Plus all of the small businesses.
25 So I am totally opposed to a 300 percent increase

1 from this company partially because, as I said
2 earlier, their service has stunk. Thank you.

3 Q. Thank you, Mr. Powell.

4 JUDGE CLARK: Grace Devall. Pamela
5 Cornelius. Hold on just a second and we'll get
6 somebody to lower it for you.

7 MS. CORNELIUS: I've got it. Thank you.

8 JUDGE CLARK: Would you state and spell
9 your name for the record?

10 MS. CORNELIUS: Yes. Pamela Cornelius,
11 P-A-M-E-L-A, C-O-R-N-E-L-I U-S.

12 JUDGE CLARK: And would you raise your
13 right hand and be sworn.

14 * * * * *

15 PAMELA CORNELIUS,

16 The witness, having been first duly sworn
17 upon her oath, testified as follows:

18 * * * * *

19 BY: JUDGE CLARK

20 Q. Go right ahead.

21 A. Okay. This is from the grandma
22 section. I have a degree in biology, I have a
23 Missouri state teaching license in science, I worked
24 30 years for Natural Resource Conservation Service
25 designing livestock grazing systems, wells,

1 pipelines, you name it. So I know a little bit about
2 water.

3 During this meeting you said that you had
4 outsourced your billing to a vendor. I would like
5 the Commission to look into this vendor and see what
6 their track record is because they are a mess. Are
7 they a Canadian company, what are they, we would like
8 to know that. My billing in July was -- the total
9 bill was \$487. My bill is usually -- the total bill
10 is usually 200 or less. Two retired people living in
11 the house. We spend half our time in Dade County
12 which is another utility company because that's where
13 our family farm is. So we're only there half the
14 time. They told me that our bill in July was for
15 three -- three cycles of water and sewer and two
16 cycles of electric. And you tell me how that's a
17 good business practice. Last month our bill was for
18 \$76 for just electric. Not very good public service.

19 During this meeting they talked about the
20 fact that only Bolivar would be paying for Liberty's
21 acquisition of the Bolivar utilities here. But on
22 our bill every month we get billed for something
23 called the Asbury Plant closing, I would like that
24 looked into.

25 Also, if you get on Realtor Dot Com -- and

1 I swear this is my last statement. Right now on
2 Realtor Dot Com in Bolivar it already says on
3 Southwest utilities and a big explanation mark trying
4 to tell people that it's not on Liberty. You can ask
5 Dusty Ross right here.

6 Q. Say that again.

7 A. Yes. Realtor Dot Com for Bolivar is
8 listing houses that are not on Liberty. They make a
9 big deal of saying that it's on Southwest Utilities
10 because Liberty is going up and up and up and
11 Southwest is not. Bolivar has planned -- I went to
12 the city council meeting today, you can ask Mr. Ross
13 right here, he was at the meeting as well. Bolivar's
14 planning an east loop to go around the square.
15 There's going to be a lot of new buildings and a lot
16 of new commercial things going on that may not happen
17 if people decide to move out of Bolivar. Thank you.

18 Q. Ms. Cornelius, the Commission
19 appreciates your comments. Thank you.

20 A. Thank you.

21 JUDGE CLARK: And I apologize, I've having
22 difficulty reading this. Arville Kenniger
23 (phonetic).

24 MR. KRUGER: Kruger.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Kruger?

1 MR. KRUGER: No.

2 JUDGE CLARK: You don't want to speak?

3 MR. KRUGER: No.

4 JUDGE CLARK: Okay. Thank you, Mr.

5 Kruger. Jim Stearns. Jim Stearns. Daniel Biggers.
6 Mr. Biggers, would you state and spell your name for
7 the record?

8 MR. BIGGERS: Daniel Biggers, D-A-N-I-E-L,
9 B-I-G-G-E-R-S.

10 JUDGE CLARK: And would you raise your
11 hand to be sworn.

12 * * * * *

13 DANIEL BIGGERS,

14 The witness, having been first duly sworn
15 upon his oath, testified as follows:

16 * * * * *

17 BY: JUDGE CLARK

18 Q. Please go ahead.

19 A. I'm going to have to hurry to make my
20 three minute time limit, I apologize. For the last
21 four months -- for the last four months, from April
22 until August, for my water bill I have received
23 numerous numbers from Liberty, they're all the same.
24 But I got -- I want to stress they're actual readings
25 not estimated. There's been a lot of trouble up here

1 with estimated readings and stuff like that. I have
2 actual readings that are all incorrect.

3 For the last two years I've -- I shouldn't
4 say this on record but I have not paid a water bill.
5 I've paid a customer charge and that is all. Liberty
6 cannot bill me properly. I have gone to their office
7 multiple times, I've requested a new meter, I've
8 talked to the Public Service Commission Staff, they
9 advised me to tell Liberty to get a new meter and
10 test it and replace it. After one year, that was
11 when I realized what had happened and they tried to
12 bill me an exorbitant amount at all once. Went to
13 Liberty's office, talked to them -- 'cause I don't
14 read my bill I just pay it every month and I was just
15 paying customer charge and I didn't realize it. When
16 I requested them to change the meter they assured me
17 they would. Apparently that didn't happen because I
18 got one month of correct billing and then after that
19 it went right back to the same thing.

20 This second year was 2023 to 2024, current
21 year, they -- they closed their offices. When I went
22 in to tell them, hey, I noticed it was doing it again
23 couldn't go in to tell them. I said, hey, here's a
24 company that has to bill me, I'm pretty sure Public
25 Service Commission states they have to bill you

1 properly and if you can't bill me how am I going to
2 pay or know what to pay. They sent me a corrected
3 bill after we went through the issue. I got four
4 months of billing in one month, an \$1,800 bill.

5 I'm going to read off some numbers real
6 quick to you and I apologize. We go through 10,000
7 gallons one month, 13,000 gallons the next, 13,000
8 gallons the next, 13,000 gallons the next, 14,000
9 gallons. So we're all between 10 and 14,000 gallons
10 of actual -- on the bill actual usage. This is
11 stretching from April until August. We have a 9,300
12 some odd gallon swimming pool that we fill with the
13 water from the tap. We have a hose, we fill the
14 entire pool. We filled that in June. It doesn't
15 show on my bill at all. So they did not raise my
16 usage 9,000 gallons that I used, how is it an actual
17 reading after I've notified them multiple times.
18 They say that it's the correct one but it's not. I
19 don't understand how I have to pay for a bill and how
20 I'm expected to pay them.

21 And I spoke with Public Service Commission
22 in filing a formal complaint if they don't resolve it
23 themselves. Basically told them, hey, I'm not going
24 to pay anything from when it was broke until you
25 replaced the meter because I requested it two years

1 ago and you never did your job. It's your job to
2 bill me properly and show me how much water I'm using
3 if not then I shouldn't have to pay a meter fee.
4 Every year they've come back and said, oh, you've
5 used this much water. There's taxes charged on just
6 the meter fees alone. They tried to rebill me for
7 those taxes a second time plus the meter fee a second
8 time and sent me a bill for over a year of meter fee
9 tax, meter fee tax and then the usage as well. Which
10 it was used but double billing me for the meter fee
11 and the taxes. It took months of going to their
12 office complaining trying to get that resolved until
13 I could.

14 The second time around when I tried to go
15 to their office to get it resolved there's no one
16 there, the doors are locked. Sorry, we don't have
17 the staff. I get it the raise would help their
18 staffing but it's not helping me know how much water
19 I'm using and I can't put my own meter on the water
20 line. So we're -- we're not knowing what we're
21 using. Mine are actual readings that they claim but
22 aren't actual whatsoever. And I've brought it to
23 their attention over two years in time and we still
24 can't get it proper. And I have all the
25 documentation saved from those last two years.

1 The 2022 to 2023 section of no usage it
2 showed that I used 13,000,520 gallons, this was two
3 years ago the decimal point was wrong, not since the
4 new system came in. That was June of 2023, 13
5 million. Every month was 4 -- 3,000,720 gallons in
6 the lowest out of a three bedroom house and there's
7 three of us that live there and a toddler.

8 As far as water quality goes quickly. We
9 live on the far south side of town further --
10 furthest away from the treatment center there is
11 inside city limits basically, we're two blocks away
12 from the city limits. And it's so chlorinated when
13 we had our water tested the tech said that we could
14 run that swimming pool without adding chlorine to it.
15 We do not drink the water and I don't allow my kid to
16 drink the water either because of health issues.

17 Q. The billing issues you mentioned, you
18 at one point said resolved. Are these ongoing issues
19 that you're having?

20 A. Yes. My most recent bill I believe
21 -- I left it with my wife. We went to Liberty about
22 mid August, about a month ago, and brought this issue
23 to their attention again. They blamed it on the new
24 system even though it's been ongoing for two years.
25 I said, whatever, we need to just close this account

1 out and switch over to my wife's name because it was
2 only in my name. There was a little bit of a debacle
3 with that but we did get it switched over to my
4 wife's name. I believe the only bill we received in
5 her name on the account, which is a brand new
6 account, and I forcibly made them change the meter
7 out by saying I'm not paying a thing without the new
8 meter number, everything like that. But since they
9 have changed the meter out our first bill was zero
10 gallons used again. So I'm not sure if it's been
11 fixed or not.

12 Our meter is right by the stop sign, right
13 by the street in the edge of the yard, there's no
14 reading issues. There's not a car parked on top of
15 it, there's not a fence around it with a wild vicious
16 dog or wild boar, it's simply right there where
17 everybody walks by the house. It could easily be
18 accessed by anybody but our last bill did show as
19 zero gallons used. I was told it was because they
20 were all estimated. I don't know how you estimate a
21 brand new account that has zero usage. But now I'm
22 going to be double billed for that, next month I'll
23 have to pay for both months of usage.

24 And as far as the Public Service
25 Commission rules as far as past billing, if they

1 billed it incorrectly and they have to give you
2 double the amount of time to pay it back. They
3 didn't like that I knew the rules on it when I
4 brought it up to them and they say, well, we'll work
5 a payment plan with you and I said, no, you'll give
6 me 16 months to pay it back and we'll spread that out
7 evenly and this is the amount I'll pay back not all
8 this extra stuff that you don't know what my usage
9 is. 'Cause I could just as easily say, hey, we are
10 touring the country and going state by state for the
11 last two years and didn't use any water. They just
12 don't know what we use -- what we do and what we
13 don't use.

14 Q. Thank you, Mr. Bigger.

15 A. Thank you.

16 JUDGE CLARK: Ray Leininger.

17 MR. LEININGER: Ray Leininger, R-A-Y,
18 L-E-I-N-I-N-G-E-R.

19 JUDGE CLARK: And would you raise your
20 hand to be sworn.

21 * * * * *

22 RAY LEININGER,

23 The witness, having been first duly sworn
24 upon his oath, testified as follows:

25 * * * * *

1 BY: JUDGE CLARK

2 Q. Please go ahead.

3 A. The billing issues. I've had my own
4 billing issues, I will not get into those. The
5 Public Service Commission, when you evaluate a rate
6 increase request, when you evaluate that I understand
7 you have lots of numbers to wade through and lots of
8 those numerical issues to deal with to determine if
9 the request is legitimate. I don't know to what
10 extent you consider the customer service, customer
11 relations issues.

12 Liberty has failed in the billing area
13 obviously and they've obviously failed in the
14 customer relations area as well. This is a small
15 town, quote, unquote, several people have commented
16 how they love it. One reason, because you get
17 treated personally. The treatment with Liberty is
18 not personal. The young lady in the office is kind
19 and does her best but her hands are tied and what she
20 can do is extremely limited. But Liberty has failed
21 at relating to customers and if the -- it seems to me
22 any other business that increases costs, that
23 business, the people that run it, they're asking
24 themselves how's this going to come across to the
25 customer, how's this going to be received. It

1 appears to me that that question never crosses
2 anyone's mind with Liberty management, those making
3 the decisions. That is sad. People in Bolivar
4 aren't used to being treated like that. That's one
5 reason you have this resentment and all of the
6 complaints.

7 But someplace, even though they may
8 provide the best water, the best utility service, if
9 they can't relate to customers in a constructive
10 fashion it's a loss in the community and we don't
11 want that kind of loss. Thank you.

12 Q. Thank you.

13 JUDGE CLARK: Is it Darnell El Pasquet?
14 I'm going to skip over this one for a moment and come
15 back to it. If you don't -- I'm just having
16 difficulty reading it. I will come back to this at
17 the end. If I didn't call your name it's because I
18 couldn't read it. I apologize. Lucas Berk.

19 MR. ROBERTS: Lucas Roberts.

20 JUDGE CLARK: Roberts, I apologize.

21 MR. ROBERTS: No worries.

22 JUDGE CLARK: Would you spell your name
23 for the record?

24 MR. ROBERTS: L-U-C-A-S, R-O-B-E-R-T-S.

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LUCAS ROBERTS,

The witness, having been first duly sworn upon his oath, testified as follows:

* * * * *

BY: JUDGE CLARK

Q. Please go ahead.

A. Yeah. So I've lived here for 31 years. I was born in Springfield, moved here six months after I was born. Been here a long time. I got a degree in public relations before changing over to software engineering. But I spent enough time in public relations to know that I don't envy anyone on this side of the microphone but I do appreciate everyone being here.

There's a general sense of mistrust in this room when it comes to Liberty Utilities. If you go around town, go to Wal-Mart, stop anybody, someone's going to have an issue with how Liberty has conducted themselves in regards to their personal utilities account. You know, I've had billing issues as well. I've been lucky enough to not have the more erratic cases that you've heard tonight but I have had my fair share, you know, as well as with the estimate discrepancies and things like that.

Part of the mistrust in this room I think

1 comes from when the referendum came in 2020,
2 something like that, 2019, 2020. You heard the same
3 thing from Mr. Kurtz. They indicated -- City
4 indicated that there would be a 38 percent rate
5 increase for the wastewater and Liberty indicated
6 that it would be roughly half of that according to
7 Brian Bayhe (phonetic), I believe. He was the
8 central VP of the region at the time. That article
9 was dated December 11th, 2021 is what I pulled up on
10 the Bolivar Herald website. I would be --

11 Q. Say the paper again.

12 A. Bolivar Herald Free Press. And I'd
13 be happy to send that along to Public Counsel as
14 well. Connect with me after a while. Yeah. I'd be
15 okay with a 19 percent increase, I believe that
16 that's totally fair. I've owned businesses before, I
17 know that operating costs increase and you have to
18 increase revenue to match that. However, the parent
19 company, Algonquin, I saw today on a statement, had
20 net revenues north of 350 million dollars for last
21 year. So it appears a little disingenuous when we're
22 expected to pick up the cost of things when a
23 corporation from Canada is that far and above board,
24 right. The other mistrust that comes from that is
25 that the City administrator that was championing the

1 referendum at the time was Tracey Slagel (phonetic),
2 she is now an employee of Liberty Utility. Not
3 trying to insinuate anything but that does add to
4 distrust on paper, right.

5 This 300 percent rate increase that's been
6 proposed is going to affect us tremendously as a
7 community. 21.9 percent of people live under the
8 poverty line. So for me, I've been blessed with a
9 job that pays me well, we can stomach that rate
10 increase unfortunate -- you know, fortunately I mean.
11 Other people that are below that poverty line
12 certainly cannot. That means do we pay our water
13 bill or do we send little Jimmy to the field trip
14 that the school wants to go to, do we skip meals.
15 The line at the Community Outreach Ministry food
16 pantry get longer, I would suspect that it would with
17 that much of an increase. So definitely don't want
18 to see that happen here. I think it would have a
19 dramatic effect. I'm surprised someone from CMH or
20 SD isn't here today, two of the largest businesses in
21 town that would be affected by this as well.

22 The other thing I just want to drive home
23 is that, you know, I know we're not here to talk
24 about electric rates or anything like that, they are
25 40 percent higher than the Missouri average of 10

1 cents. Currently they're at 14 cents per kilowatt
2 hour. I would expect that that -- being that far
3 above the average for Missourians would allow them to
4 recoup some costs on the water side of that but
5 overall I just think the citizens of Bolivar were
6 misled at the referendum. I didn't vote for it
7 because I was concerned about something like this
8 happening, I didn't and I'm sorry to see that it's
9 come to fruition. That's all I have. Thank you.

10 Q. Thank you, Mr. Roberts.

11 JUDGE CLARK: Jamie Able. Jamie Able.
12 Lindy Davis.

13 MR. DAVIS: I'm sorry.

14 JUDGE CLARK: No. You go ahead.

15 MR. DAVIS: Lindy, L-I-N-D-Y. Davis,
16 D-A-V-I-S.

17 * * * * *

18 LINDY DAVIS,

19 The witness, having been first duly sworn
20 upon his oath, testified as follows:

21 * * * * *

22 BY: JUDGE CLARK

23 Q. And what would you like to tell the
24 Commission?

25 A. A personal fact, my wife and I,

1 senior citizens on limited social security only
2 income. And in looking at the figure on the handout
3 coming in, and it was in a paper, of 25.51 for the
4 current water rate increasing to \$86.22 post rate and
5 in taking the difference of the two rates it would be
6 an increase of \$60 a month that my wife and I would
7 have to adjust to. Plus we always go on a yearly
8 basis, that would be over \$7,000 that we're going to
9 have to adjust in order to pay the water bill. And
10 so it's going to cause an adjustment in reducing
11 somewhere else, whether it be grocery or gas, travel
12 but it's going to have an effect on us as well as
13 many other seniors in the community.

14 And a second thing I'd like to mention is
15 what was brought out earlier about the articles that
16 was in our city paper, biweekly paper. And the City
17 official that gave some of the figures to my wife and
18 I we voted to change based on that -- what was given
19 in our paper because it made it sound like more
20 appealing, that it would be better to change to
21 Liberty. And so that's why we voted for it only to
22 find out with 300 plus percent that it's going to
23 have a drastic affect upon us. And we have made some
24 internal reduction on water usage, bathing and that,
25 because of conserving -- trying to reduce what we pay

1 out 'cause we, like many seniors, do have to watch
2 our payouts. That's what I wanted to share. Thank
3 you.

4 Q. Quick question. Can I ask you a
5 quick question?

6 A. Yeah. I'm sorry. I'm not at the
7 best. Go ahead.

8 Q. When you say -- I keyed in on you're
9 going have to set aside an extra \$7,000 a year, is
10 that --

11 A. Well, that's what I'm calculating,
12 \$60 a month times 12 months.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 700.

14 JUDGE CLARK: Okay. I was trying to
15 figure out what you were talking about.

16 MR. DAVIS: I'm sorry then. I'm not the
17 best mathematician. So it is 700. I apologize for
18 that.

19 JUDGE CLARK: Okay. Thank you for
20 clarifying that. Thank you for your comments.
21 Sandra Raymond.

22 MS. RAMON: It's Ramon.

23 JUDGE CLARK: Ramon. I apologize.

24 MS. RAMON: It's okay.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Ramon.

1 MS. RAMON: Short people.

2 JUDGE CLARK: Would you please state and
3 spell your name for the record?

4 MS. RAMON: It's Sandra, S-A-N-D-R-A,
5 Ramon, R-A-M-O-N.

6 * * * * *

7 SANDRA RAMON,

8 The witness, having been first duly sworn
9 upon her oath, testified as follows:

10 * * * * *

11 BY: JUDGE CLARK

12 Q. Please go ahead.

13 A. Okay. I want to start with --
14 nobody's brought this up yet. But earlier there was
15 conversation, representatives of Liberty actually
16 said that there were -- they were having to do some
17 testing and stuff on the sewers, the sewer lines.
18 And last year, it was kind of a freak accident. But
19 I live in a duplex in a certain area of town and I
20 had family over and I started hearing my sink and
21 pipes gurgling. And so it was kind -- you know, I
22 told everybody to be quiet and I'm looking around
23 trying to figure out where it's coming from.

24 I get up because I hear it coming from the
25 guest bathroom and I see that the toilet is empty and

1 the tub is filling up with water. So I go into my
2 bedroom where I have a shower and a toilet and my
3 toilet is empty and the shower has overflowed and it
4 has completely flooded my bedroom. And it damaged
5 books that I've had since I was child that I had for
6 my granddaughters. And they may not be worth a lot
7 of money but there's sentimental value there that is
8 gone. My bookshelves was ruined, I had -- we went
9 into panic mode. I had to call the owner in to come
10 help me move furniture, peel the carpet up, soak
11 water up.

12 And so I called -- I called a plumber
13 because I couldn't figure out what caused the toilet
14 to empty and then water to shoot up out of the shower
15 and the tub, that didn't make sense. So I called a
16 plumber and I had them come out to diagnose the
17 problem and he told me it was Liberty Utilities, they
18 were running tests on the line because there was new
19 construction going on and they blow something through
20 the pipes, I guess. I don't understand it so I'm
21 just repeating what was said and that that's what
22 causes the water in the toilet to go down and then it
23 shoots up sewage, it's actual sewage that shoots up
24 out of the bathtub and the shower. And that was all
25 over my bedroom. And it took months to get the smell

1 of toilet water out of my carpet.

2 So I called Utility -- Liberty Utilities
3 after that happened and I asked them about this
4 because I expected them to compensate me for some of
5 the damage. I paid out-of-pocket for a plumber to
6 come out. And they -- the lady said I will check
7 with them and see if anybody was in the neighborhood
8 working on that day. She called back and she said,
9 oh, sorry, that wasn't us, nobody was working. So I
10 called the plumber back and asked him and he said
11 that was the lie. So that's the first thing. They
12 lied about that. I had stuff damaged that was never
13 replaced, okay. And I'm going to trust the plumber
14 over them because they can't keep their stories
15 straight. Okay.

16 So then the next thing that happened is I
17 -- I've been hearing people talking about the rates
18 and, you know, the issues and I just kept thinking,
19 oh, that's not happening to me, thank God. Well, it
20 did. So there was that estimated bill thing. So I
21 -- June the 15th I became a single person household.
22 My oldest daughter had opened her own business and
23 she moved out. This was June the 15th, that's the
24 exact date. I'm looking back at my water usage and
25 my sewage usage, okay, for -- and I'm going to go

1 back to April because in the end of March I broke my
2 leg and I had to work remotely from home. So I was
3 home more because I couldn't get up and walk, I was
4 in a wheelchair.

5 So in April my bill was -- I'm sorry, it
6 said I used 2.35 -- is TGL gallons, I think. I don't
7 know. 2,003 -- anyway. 2,350 gallons, I think
8 that's what it says, that's in April. That's when
9 I'm working from home, okay. In May it did go up a
10 little bit which I would expect, it went up to
11 3,500 gallons which I would expect because I was
12 working remotely from home, okay. Well, then in June
13 when she moved out it was 2,850 gallons, okay. She
14 -- she was a two times a day shower person and she
15 would wash her laundry and forget to put it in the
16 dryer and have to wash it again. There was a lot
17 more water used when she was there.

18 But after she moved out that should have
19 gone down, okay, significantly because, one, I spend
20 three weekends a month at home, the other one or two
21 weekends I stay in Springfield with my son, my
22 daughter-in-law and grandkids, okay. And then during
23 the week I work in Springfield because I -- because
24 this is a lovely community made up of people that
25 care about each other and will help each other and

1 always do but it's a poor community. We don't have
2 good salaries here and it's just that way. But we
3 love living here, okay. And so, you know -- but I'm
4 -- I'm not here, I'm gone 90 percent of the time.
5 And somehow my water bill went from 2,850 gallons in
6 July to in August almost 5,000 gallons and I wasn't
7 even hardly home. And so that made no sense.

8 Well, I looked at my bill and it was
9 estimated so I called them. I called the number and
10 I said this is estimated, this is wrong. In all the
11 years I've lived here even with more than one person
12 living here we've never used this much water. How
13 did you calculate your estimation? Shouldn't it be
14 on what we've used in the past? Well, they couldn't
15 answer me. So then she says, well, I'll have
16 somebody go out and read your meter for you. That
17 was on September 3rd, okay. I have called back once
18 a week since and I get pushed away, oh, sorry. Well,
19 they read your meter and they'll make calculations.
20 Your bill ends September 12th so you'll get a new
21 one. I still do not have an adjustment, I still do
22 not have a new bill. And when I call they still
23 don't know what happened. I am due a credit, I know
24 I am.

25 Okay. Not only that but my sewer was just

1 as high too. And actually when I -- that sparked
2 interest in me. I went back and looked at my bills
3 and I'm getting charged more in sewage every month
4 than I am in water, more gallons of -- how do you do
5 that? I mean, I don't even go to the bathroom that
6 much, come on, you know. My -- I wash dishes -- I
7 run the dishwasher once a week because I don't -- I
8 don't need to run it more than that, I'm hardly ever
9 home. I leave the home at seven a.m., I don't get
10 back to six or seven, if I go to church I don't get
11 back till nine and then I brush my teeth, take a
12 shower and go to bed. That's it. I do one load of
13 laundry a week. There's no way.

14 And they still have not fixed it, they
15 still have not adjusted it. And to sit there and to
16 act as though what they're doing is for the benefit
17 really it's mishandling of finances on their part.
18 This was an investment. They stated during the
19 question and answer that they knew full well when
20 they bought this contract that there were a lot of
21 issues and they misstated how much it was going to
22 cost to fix them. And now because they made a
23 mistake they're trying to turn that expense on the
24 rest of us. We can't afford that. We need your
25 support. We desperately need you to put an end to

1 what they're doing because it's unjust, it's not
2 okay. And I'm not as poor as a lot of the people
3 here but I -- I cannot afford for them to raise the
4 rates either. And so I just ask you, please, just
5 take these things into consideration.

6 Q. You had indicated that some of your
7 bills were estimated. I have April, May, June, July,
8 and August. Do you know which of those bills were
9 estimates?

10 A. The August bill was -- that's the one
11 that was -- had doubled. I went -- yeah. And it was
12 the same for my electricity. And that's the one that
13 they allegedly went and read the meter a couple weeks
14 ago but still haven't updated any information. They
15 -- and then the representative on the phone actually
16 got rude with me and said, well, you probably have a
17 water leak. And I said, no, I don't have a water
18 leak. You estimated, you need to fix this. You
19 know, she just was just not willing to help.

20 And so -- and I hear a lot of that trying
21 to blame it on somebody else or something else, a lot
22 like politics, politicians, it's not my fault, I
23 didn't do it, it's somebody else's fault. Stop
24 blaming and take responsibility, fix the issues.
25 There's way too many issues, this company is not -- I

1 don't even know how they're allowed to continue in
2 business, to be honest with you. I don't care what
3 they do in other places, in Canada, that's between
4 Canada and then. But what they're doing here is not
5 okay and it's hurting so many people. And there is
6 no customer service, we can't get help.

7 Q. All right. Thank you for your
8 comments.

9 A. Thank you.

10 JUDGE CLARK: Sheila Hastings. Dan
11 Hopkins. Mr. Hopkins, would you state and spell your
12 name for the record?

13 MR. HOPKINS: Dan Hopkins, D-A-N,
14 H-O-P-K-I-N-S.

15 * * * * *

16 DAN HOPKINS,

17 The witness, having been first duly sworn
18 upon his oath, testified as follows:

19 * * * * *

20 BY: JUDGE CLARK

21 Q. Please go ahead.

22 A. Start with, I'm not a comedian but
23 we're all here because of the Affordable Water Act.
24 It's not getting so affordable. Next thing I got I
25 had -- okay. I've been a real estate broker for over

1 30 years here in Missouri. If you buy an apartment
2 complex and you want to get it at a good price it's a
3 little ran down, you've got all kinds of different
4 ways to analyze your cost and effectiveness and what
5 it's going to be worth and how much you're going to
6 have to spend to fix it and the prices you're going
7 to be able to rent it for and do a cost analysis.
8 That was surely done, you would think, when they
9 bought this place -- bought our water. So if that
10 was done that would be like somebody buying an
11 apartment complex and then telling everybody we're
12 going to raise your rent \$4,000 a month and you're
13 going to have to get out or pay. And that's kind of
14 the situation we're in. Except I own a house in
15 Bolivar. Now I have to give full disclosure of this
16 huge water bill, you can't hide it, so the value of
17 your house is going to go down.

18 It's just -- the whole thing is -- it's
19 just kind of like a trap. Because the price of our
20 houses are going to go down in value, you won't be
21 able to sell because who's going to want to buy a
22 house with a \$200 water bill. We moved here in 2012,
23 I think my water bill was \$23. They increased the
24 price I'm sure to make it look more sellable to be
25 sold then it went up to about 40. Then the

1 Affordable Water Act now we've got an \$80 water bill.
2 That's just the water. I mean, this whole Affordable
3 Water Act has gone everything but affordable.

4 But it's up to -- somebody is going to
5 have to stop those people who bought that apartment
6 complex from pricing people out of the apartment
7 complex and it's going to be up to you guys or the
8 tender heart of the guy that bought the apartment
9 complex to make it affordable for people to live in
10 it because somebody's going to have to give because
11 the people of Bolivar, they're not going to be able
12 to take it. There's too many people here are not
13 going to be able to take it. I myself personally,
14 well, I've been here since '68 but I'm looking to
15 sell out, it's got me concerned, it really does. And
16 a lot of people that are way. And we do have some
17 hungry people in town. Just please consider that,
18 guys.

19 Q. Thank you, Mr. Hopkins.

20 JUDGE CLARK: I indicated when I got to
21 the end of the list that I would circle back. Is
22 there anybody who signed up to speak that did not get
23 to speak?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I want to speak.

25 JUDGE CLARK: Yes.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: May I?

2 JUDGE CLARK: I have two hands. I'll get
3 to you second, sir. Her hand went up first. And
4 ma'am, would you state and spell your name for the
5 record?

6 MS. ALDRICH: Mary Aldrich, M-A-R-Y,
7 A-L-D-R-I-C-H.

8 * * * * *

9 MARY ALDRICH,

10 The witness, having been first duly sworn
11 upon her oath, testified as follows:

12 * * * * *

13 BY: JUDGE CLARK

14 Q. And what do you want to tell the
15 Commission tonight?

16 A. Well, I moved here three years ago.
17 I've lived in lots of different places and I've had a
18 well once, which was nice not to pay anybody anything
19 except to put the pump in. I haven't paid as much
20 for water anywhere else as I have here. And I'm not
21 complaining about the service of the -- customer
22 service that I've had. I'm on budget bill and they
23 keep that pretty consistent so I haven't had any big
24 jumps up and down. But I'm listening to friends and
25 other people that were just -- I don't know how

1 they're going to pay their bill, you know, they're
2 just overwhelmed with the jumps and all that. So I
3 feel really bad for all that.

4 I am in my 70s, my husband's a disabled
5 vet, we're both retired, fixed income. Can't jump
6 around too much with the income, you know, 'cause we
7 don't have the option of going back to work, we're
8 both broken.

9 Every place else I've lived our water bill
10 was adjusted for like watering the lawn, watering
11 gardens. So from May through September there was a
12 standard adjustment on the bill to compensate for the
13 water that's not going through the sewer system. And
14 this place, they charge you for water that's watering
15 your lawn, not going through the system, not
16 stressing their system, not using their system and I
17 think that's highway robbery. I don't think it's
18 fair to charge me for something that I'm not using.
19 I have no problem with when I'm processing water
20 through their system paying for that, I have no
21 problem with that.

22 I have had businesses, I understand the
23 cost relation how you have to price things out to get
24 your profit back because you can't -- you know, it's
25 a for-profit business, you can't just give it away

1 and stay in business. But all my businesses have
2 been retail and the market sets the price and they
3 are, in this neighborhood, a monopoly, we don't have
4 an option to go somewhere else and be moved into the
5 other business in town that offers different rates.
6 I can't afford to move.

7 We moved here to Bolivar because it's a
8 nice quiet retirement town for us, my husband is very
9 broken. We bought a house with a 24 foot above
10 ground pool and a hot tub. I can't use it. We moved
11 in three years ago, we used it that summer. At that
12 time we was still under Bolivar's water. So they
13 would come out and read the meter. I could fill the
14 pool they'd come out and read the meter the next day
15 and charge me for just the water. They don't --
16 Liberty doesn't do that. So if I fill my 24 foot
17 round pool I'm paying for water and extra for the
18 sewage that's never going to go through. So my
19 husband can't use the pool for therapy, we can't use
20 the hot tub for his physical needs, his therapy and
21 he's in a lot of pain. And I think that's really a
22 wrong thing to do is charge for something that you,
23 you know, are not using.

24 And I'm not -- I understand maintenance
25 costs, I understand recouping when you make an

1 investment of something. I don't understand a \$300
2 increase to do that. There's no business that I know
3 of, any business I've ever run that I could afford to
4 keep open and expect to have customers if I had
5 something that, you know, I had to give 300 -- or
6 300 percent increase for them to pay me for them to
7 have something. Nobody does that.

8 So with, you know, what we've got going on
9 here right now it's like we can't afford to move,
10 can't sell my house. We have to pick between food,
11 what bills we're going to pay. I'm glad they have a
12 budget system, that's really great, that makes it
13 consistent. But if it's jumping up, you know, like
14 that and then they're going to keep increasing it
15 because they have to maintain and do the work, I
16 understand that too. But to try to get that recovery
17 so fast off the backs of people who don't have the
18 money to do it and have no other resources is just
19 wrong. And it should be spread out over a longer
20 period of time. They can wait.

21 In this little town, you want to grow,
22 they need people to grow, and come here and move and
23 grow and expand in order for them to grow and expand
24 and get more income. You can't do that when you ruin
25 the value of real estate by overcharging on a utility

1 that you absolutely have to have because if you don't
2 have water your house is condemned. You can't put a
3 well in your yard, you're in the city, you can't put
4 a septic system in, you can't make those changes,
5 it's not permitted. So you're stuck. And it's too
6 much of a burden I think on people. And I don't
7 fault them for needing to make the money back, that's
8 business. But it needs to be a more reasonable pay
9 back rate in order for Bolivar to survive. So, you
10 know, that's what I've got to say.

11 Q. Thank you, Ms. Aldrich. Did you say
12 that when the City of Bolivar owned the system there
13 was a seasonal?

14 A. No. Not -- every place else I've
15 lived they had that.

16 Q. Okay. That's what I thought.

17 A. But Bolivar had -- Bolivar had --
18 when I went to fill my pool, fill my hot tub they
19 would send somebody out to read my meter.

20 Q. And exclude that amount from your
21 sewer bill?

22 A. Yeah. Right. So then they'd come
23 back and read it the next day after I was done
24 filling everything and that amount of water -- I just
25 paid for just the water not for what it costs to run

1 it through the pipes which costs more than the water
2 does. So it was fair, you know, you paid for the
3 water, I didn't pay for the system to process it
4 through to get rid of it 'cause it was in the pool,
5 it wasn't going anywhere, you know.

6 So that's -- and I think when I'm watering
7 a garden or I'm watering a lawn that's not going
8 through their system, it's not stressing their
9 system, I'm just using their water not the sewer
10 system, not the wastewater system. So I shouldn't
11 have to pay for using the wastewater system that I'm
12 not doing, you know, for that my water. That's just
13 something I think -- if they worked that in, it would
14 be -- I wouldn't feel like we're being robbed and it
15 would be fair. You're paying for what you're getting
16 you're not paying for something that you're not
17 getting. I have no problem paying for what I'm using
18 but I really have a problem paying for something that
19 is not what I'm using. I'm not using their
20 wastewater system to process my pool water or my hot
21 tub water.

22 You know, I have this big ugly 24 foot
23 round pool that's empty in my yard, you know. Not
24 fair. That was our retirement and it's kind of
25 ruined 'cause we can't afford to do anything else

1 **now, so.**

2 Q. Thank you for your comments, Ms.
3 Aldrich.

4 JUDGE CLARK: There was another. Sir,
5 would you like to come up?

6 MR. JONES: May I be allowed to spoil the
7 evening by giving a good Liberty story?

8 JUDGE CLARK: It's for public comments so
9 whatever your comment is. So if you want to --

10 MR. JONES: It's a comment.

11 JUDGE CLARK: Would you please state and
12 spell your name for the record.

13 MR. JONES: Bill Jones, J-O-N-E-S.

14 * * * * *

15 BILL JONES,

16 The witness, having been first duly sworn
17 upon his oath, testified as follows:

18 * * * * *

19 BY: JUDGE CLARK

20 Q. Please tell us.

21 **A. One fateful afternoon here in Bolivar**
22 **at 610 West Summit we had Keystone cops. We are a --**
23 **a power line runs from our transformer across our**
24 **patio to our house, it's not underground. And we**
25 **live in a squirrely neighborhood and squirrels like**

1 that transformer and we don't -- we had some fried
2 squirrel a lot. And every time we did the power
3 lines would come down.

4 Well, one afternoon the power lines came
5 down almost on the patio. So we called Liberty in
6 Joplin and they sent us to Liberty in Arkansas,
7 Little Rock I believe, and a lady called back about
8 five minutes later said we have a bucket truck coming
9 in from Humansville. His partner's in Nixa and
10 they're already on their way. Okay. They get up
11 there very quickly.

12 They turn their truck in sideways next to
13 our fence, opens the bucket, guy is in it, goes over
14 the transformer across the lines and the bucket truck
15 falls. And those are big, big bucket trucks. The
16 guy was all right. He made a two foot hole in the
17 yard. But the whole neighborhood lost power. Well,
18 it wasn't very long until we get more help from
19 Liberty, they send all kinds of people. And they
20 worked all night, they worked hard. Some guys came
21 in from Liberty and Joplin and they're sitting in my
22 side yard smiling and laughing, said we never seen
23 anything like this before in my life.

24 Well, we started to get wreckers in.
25 First they bring a small wrecker truck in, they can't

1 budge it. These are big trucks. Bring a bigger
2 wrecker in, he can't budge it. They bring the
3 biggest wrecker they have in and they couldn't budge
4 it but they put two wreckers together and they pulled
5 the thing up. And those people were there all night
6 cleaning up that mess and I was really proud of them.
7 They put everything back, built a new fence and
8 replaced the vegetation that had been destroyed. And
9 I'm really thankful for them. We used to have Empire
10 District Electric here and the service was great but
11 these people have always been great for us in this
12 town. I appreciate them. Thank you.

13 Q. Thank you for your comments, Mr.
14 Jones.

15 MR. CLARK: As I indicated earlier, I have
16 reached the end of my list. Is there anybody else
17 who would like to make a comment? I see three.
18 Okay. Why don't we start with you.

19 MS. HATFIELD: Okay. My name is Sarah
20 Hatfield.

21 JUDGE CLARK: And would you spell that for
22 the record?

23 MS. HATFIELD: S-A-R-A-H, H-A-T-F-I-E-L-D.

24 * * * * *

25 SARAH HATFIELD,

1 The witness, having been first duly sworn
2 upon her oath, testified as follows:

3 * * * * *

4 BY: JUDGE CLARK

5 Q. Please go ahead.

6 A. I come from a social work background
7 so I kind of have that mentality and live in Bolivar
8 and have for about 20 years. But my biggest concern
9 about the water rate increase is, you know, we --
10 like Dusty said, we have about double the poverty
11 rate of the national level in this town. I looked up
12 some statistics. About 56 percent of us own our
13 homes and 44 percent of us are renters. I know a lot
14 of the rent houses in town are old, they've been here
15 a long time, they're not energy efficient. We have a
16 significant amount of working poor in our community.
17 And just from talking to people, from reading
18 comments that I see on Facebook these rates are
19 killing us. I'm talking about not only electric but
20 water. And going to 300 percent, that seems
21 unethical to me for our community.

22 It makes me sad, it makes me want to cry
23 right now thinking about how it's hurting our
24 families. It will be hurting our families in our
25 community, families that are already hurting from

1 inflation, from high groceries, from high gas costs,
2 all the other things that have gone up.

3 And I'm just begging you guys to think
4 about those people when you make this decision about
5 the rate increase on water. Think about if you lived
6 in our community and you had -- the only option you
7 had was working at Wal-Mart, you know. Just please
8 consider that over a multi-billion company or million
9 or whatever he said they're valued at and try to go
10 easy on our community. Because I'm afraid Bolivar's
11 going to turn into a ghost town with the property
12 rate increases, with businesses moving out. Real
13 estate agencies, like he said, are already listing,
14 oh, this isn't on Liberty, this is on Southwest. So
15 that's a really sad thing for our community. So
16 that's just all the things that have been jumbling
17 around in my head.

18 And I know there's a lot of people that
19 couldn't come tonight and a lot of people just, you
20 know, they don't think they have any power so it's
21 not worth coming. But I'm speaking for those people,
22 okay. Just please -- I hope -- I know you guys are
23 men of integrity and you will think about that when
24 you're making that decision. That's all I had.

25 Q. Thank you.

1 JUDGE CLARK: I saw two other people. Who
2 else wanted to comment? Please come up. And would
3 you please state and spell your name for the record.

4 MS. JULIEN: Carsyn Julien, C-A-R-S-Y-N,
5 J-U-L-I-E-N.

6 JUDGE CLARK: And would you raise your
7 right hand and be sworn.

8 * * * * *

9 CARSYN JULIEN,

10 The witness, having been first duly sworn
11 upon her oath, testified as follows:

12 * * * * *

13 BY: JUDGE CLARK

14 Q. All right. Please tell us your
15 comments.

16 A. Hi. My name is Carsyn Julien. I
17 bought my first home on May 10th of this year. I
18 live by myself. My first water bill was for
19 4,581 gallons of water for a service period of only
20 22 days. Every water bill I've gotten since then has
21 averaged 500 gallons. I have tried to fix my first
22 bill multiple times, or receive a credit, and it has
23 still not been fixed. It is September 19th so I have
24 lived in my house a little over four months. I still
25 have not received a single sewer bill. Same

1 situation, I tried to get it fixed multiple times and
2 it has not been fixed.

3 I work as an actuarial specialist for an
4 insurance company. My job is conducting rate reviews
5 at a state level for a given line of business my
6 company has and calculating our rate need. I know
7 the importance of data validation and credibility as
8 well as the standard each state's department of
9 insurance expects and holds all insurance companies
10 to. My state rate reviews require multiple years of
11 valid data that is checked by the department of
12 insurance. I am not familiar with the standard this
13 industry is held to but I think it is reasonable to
14 assume a similar standard applies.

15 Given the information I have provided, the
16 factual inaccuracy of Liberty's data that is still
17 happening as of today I am strongly asking the
18 Commission at the very least to push Liberty's
19 request out until they can provide the reliable data
20 that is necessary to approve the request. I also
21 implore the Commission to take first time homeowners
22 like myself into account. I have a math degree from
23 Missouri State University, I spent a lot of time
24 budgeting and planning for my home and I track my
25 monthly income and expenses. I knew to plan for

1 **billing increases and the extreme case I planned for**
2 **was a 100 percent increase. If you approve a rate**
3 **increase of over 300 percent I'm not confident myself**
4 **or others will be able to afford their bills. I**
5 **would like to state that if you were given accurate**
6 **data to evaluate I would expect a large decrease in**
7 **that rate need. That is all I had to say. Thank**
8 **you.**

9 Q. Thank you.

10 JUDGE CLARK: I believe I saw one other
11 person. Okay.

12 MS. HASTING: No. I apologize. Sorry.
13 My name is Sheila Hasting and I live here in town.

14 JUDGE CLARK: Ms. Hasting, would you
15 please spell your name for the record?

16 MS. HASTING: S-H-E-I-L-A, H-A-S-T-I-N-G.

17 * * * * *

18 SHEILA HASTING,

19 The witness, having been first duly sworn
20 upon her oath, testified as follows:

21 * * * * *

22 BY: JUDGE CLARK

23 Q. Please go ahead.

24 **A. Thank you. So I know this is like a**
25 **Q and A and I'm not like trying to put you down or**

1 anything. But we are a community and we are trying
2 to survive and we are on fixed incomes or, you know,
3 maybe we have good jobs or we don't. But, you know,
4 part of me wants to know like what programs are
5 available for those of us who can't afford you? You
6 know, you want to come in, you're like, oh, well, we
7 spent out so much money and we need you to pay for it
8 because we had to study this and we need to figure
9 out that and we didn't know what we were getting into
10 when we came in and so now it's our job to pay for
11 what you wanted to know. And that is okay too,
12 nobody's judging nobody.

13 But what about the programs? You know,
14 like what about the help with the widow who just lost
15 her husband and she doesn't know what to do and she's
16 got a home and she has a utility bill and a water
17 bill and a sewer bill. Or the mom who's trying to,
18 you know, not raise bills because she's building a
19 garden in her backyard and so she's planting tomatoes
20 and she's got some squash and she's got some whatever
21 to do what she has to do to build it and you guys are
22 charging her, you know, oh, this is wastewater. It's
23 not our wastewater. We put it into our grass, we put
24 it into our home, we put it into our kids, we put it
25 into our food and you're still taking that money and

1 we don't have that money.

2 What about the woman who just lost her
3 husband because he took the business, he took the
4 kids, he fucking ran away to a Section 8 apartment
5 and said, here, bitch, handle your bills, handle this
6 water, handle this wastewater, handle what you got
7 going on because I'm going to take our business, I'm
8 going to take our home, our family and you take our
9 family and pay for what we raised up and now you got
10 to go but I'm going to go over here and they're going
11 to pay for it. Or what about the -- you know, the
12 fathers who are disabled who've been in an accident
13 and their jobs and they broke their arm or their leg
14 or their foot and they don't know what to do.

15 Do you have programs for all of us people
16 who are struggling to move on through -- to move on
17 with, you know, our special needs kids or our
18 children who are just -- we're trying to raise up and
19 we're like, oh, look at this garden, we're planting
20 this garden and it's all going to -- here's some
21 tomatoes, here's some peppers, we're going to make
22 some salsa and then all of a sudden we have \$200
23 worth of water, wastewater.

24 Like how do you expect -- do you guys have
25 the programs, do you have a program for the single

1 mom, the widowed wife, the husband who took the
2 business and ran away but, you know, left the wife
3 and the children back here at home and she has to
4 handle the home.

5 Q. Ms. Hastings, you're at three
6 minutes?

7 A. Oh, well, I hope I make it good then.
8 You know, I apologize. Help me, Lord. I'm sorry.

9 But you know, what about us who are trying
10 to survive without the husband that took the
11 business, that took the kids, that took the home, and
12 left us with nothing else to give. Do you have a
13 program for us? For the widow who has nothing left
14 to give, for the mother who has nothing left to give,
15 for the senior citizen or the people just standing
16 here, we have nothing left to give to you. Do you
17 have something for us?

18 Do you have a program to help us move
19 through what you want us -- what you want to charge
20 us for because we're planting our gardens and our
21 water's running into the ground and not into your
22 sewer but you're charging us anyways, do you have
23 something for us? Do you have a program to help us
24 pay our bill that we cannot afford because we are on
25 a fixed income of less than what we can pay our rent.

1 We can't afford our 10, 12, 15 thousand, hundred
2 dollar rent. We can't afford our electric, our
3 water, our wastewater. We can't afford to raise our
4 children, we can't afford to grow a garden in our
5 backyard because you're charging us to throw away
6 water we haven't even put in your wastewater. Do you
7 have something to help us?

8 Q. Okay. Thank you, Ms. Hastings.

9 A. Thank you.

10 JUDGE CLARK: Before closing remarks.
11 Somebody indicated that there were people that were
12 unable to make it to either of the local public
13 hearings today. We do provide other methods for
14 which to provide comments to the Commission. We have
15 an email address that's P-S-C, it's Public Service
16 Commission Info at P-S-C dot Mo dot Gov, you can send
17 comments directly there. Or by contacting the Office
18 of the Public Counsel, that's Mr. Poston here that's
19 very gracious about helping -- about helping provide
20 comments to the Commission. Or if you go to the
21 PSC's web page there's a link to leave comments. If
22 you choose to leave comments, written comments
23 through that link you'll need to use the case number
24 which I said at the beginning and then again it is
25 WR-20 --

1 MS. HASTINGS: Twenty-four, 25.

2 JUDGE CLARK: -- 24, thank you. 0104.

3 That was the last one. And with that, Commissioner
4 Mitchell, would you like to make a closing remark?

5 COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: Thank you, Judge.
6 I would like to extend our thanks on behalf of the
7 entire Commission for you all coming out this evening
8 and sharing your thoughts and comments on this
9 matter. It's a very important part of the process
10 that we go through on our fact finding mission to
11 evaluate the entire case. So with that, we
12 appreciate you being here and have a good evening.

13 JUDGE CLARK: Thank you very much for your
14 information you provided us. Drive home safe. And I
15 will adjourn this meeting and go off the record.

16 (Hearing was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.)

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