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BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
STATE OF MISSOURI

In the Matter of File No. WR-2024-0320
Missouri-American Water Company's
Request for Authority to Implement
a General Rate Increase for Water
and Sewer Service in Missouri
Service Areas

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

VOLUME 1

LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING
BRANSON CITY HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
110 WEST MADDUX STREET
BRANSON, MISSOURI

October 28, 2024
6:00 p.m.

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Kenneth J. Seyer, Presiding
REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

COMMISSIONERS:

Glen Kolkmeyer
John P. Mitchell
Maida J. Coleman * via Webex
Jason R. Holsman * via Webex

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FOR MISSOURI-AMERICAN WATER:

Rachel Niemeier, Corporate Counsel
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ALSO PRESENT:

Forrest Gossett, Communications Director
Public Service Commission

Members of the public, press, and staff

VIDEO AND WEBEX OPERATED BY: Brian Lamons

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1 (Following open discussion with the public,
2 proceedings commenced at 6:54 p.m.)

3 P R O C E E D I N G S

4
5 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Good evening,
6 everyone. Let's go on the record. Today is October
7 28th, 2024. The time is 6:54 p.m. My name is Ken
8 Seyer. I am a Regulatory Law Judge with the Missouri
9 Public Service Commission, and I will preside over
10 this portion of the hearing this evening.

11 The Commission has set this time for a Local
12 Public Hearing to give members of the public a chance
13 to comment about Missouri American Water Company's
14 application for a general rate increase for water and
15 sewer service, which is Commission File WR-2024-0320.

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

21 The Commission is composed of five commissioners.
22 They are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by
23 the Senate. The Commission employs a staff of
24 engineers, accountants, attorneys, financial analysts,
25 and other specialists in the field of utility

1 regulation.

2 With me tonight is Commissioner Glen Kolkmeyer and
3 Commissioner John Mitchell, and joining us online are
4 Commissioners Maida Coleman and Jason Holsman.

5 The Commissioners have not made any decisions in
6 this case and cannot answer any questions today
7 because they have to remain impartial until after all
8 the evidence is presented at the evidentiary hearing
9 in this matter scheduled to begin on February 27,
10 2025.

11 Commissioner Kolkmeyer, would you like to make
12 opening remarks.

13 COMMISSIONER KOLKMEYER: Yes, thank you,
14 Judge. On behalf of all the Commissioners, I want to
15 welcome everyone here this evening. We welcome your
16 comments. We have several signed up on the signup
17 sheet and we will take your testimony. As like the
18 Judge said, we're unable to answer any questions.

19 This is the first process of the rate hearings.
20 So we have not heard from anyone else. This is step
21 one, is the Local Public Hearing. So here again we
22 welcome your comments. Thanks again for coming.

23 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you, Commissioner. As
24 you know, there are attorneys here today representing
25 the parties in this matter, but for the sake of the

1 record, would each of you identify yourselves and
2 state which party you're representing, with the
3 company.

4 MS. NIEMEIER: Yes, good evening. Rachel
5 Niemeier, representing Missouri American Water
6 Company. With me tonight is Rich Svindland, Missouri
7 American Water president.

8 MS. KERR: Carolyn Kerr, representing the
9 Missouri Public Service Commission staff.

10 MR. CLIZER: John Clizer on behalf of the
11 Office of the Public Counsel. My contact information
12 is with the Reporter.

13 JUDGE SEYER: And are there any other
14 attorneys here representing parties? All right.

15 The way we'll proceed tonight will be to call the
16 names listed on the signup sheet in the order that you
17 signed up. When I call your name, please go to the
18 microphone and I will place you under oath and ask you
19 to state and spell your name, and then you can offer
20 your comments to the Commission.

21 We will try to limit comments to five minutes per
22 person, although the signup list is not too extensive
23 today. But once you've finished your comments, please
24 remain at the microphone in case there are questions
25 from the Commissioners or the attorneys for the

1 parties.

2 So the first name on the list tonight is Bill
3 Hasler. Mr. Hasler, if you would step up, please. Am
4 I pronouncing that correctly?

5 MR. HASLER: It's Hasler, yeah.

6 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. Mr. Hasler, would you
7 raise your right hand, please.

8 BILL HASLER,
9 being first duly sworn/affirmed, testified as follows:

10 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you. If you would,
11 state and spell your name.

12 MR. HASLER: Bill Hasler, B-I-L-L
13 H-A-S-L-E-R.

14 JUDGE SEYER: Go ahead.

15 MR. HASLER: And I'm the general manager
16 for StoneBridge Village. We're a gated community in
17 Branson West, and we've been through a number of rate
18 changes, I think as you guys probably know. Since
19 Missouri American Water came in in 2011, '12, we've
20 had the rate increases in '13, '16, '18, '21, '23, and
21 then now. Hopefully those are all correct.

22 I know that one was filed in maybe the year prior
23 and then took place in the next year, but through that
24 time the residents, who are primarily retired, have --
25 their rates have just -- have gone up to a point where

1 a lot of them are -- definitely feel like they've got
2 hardship.

3 I know that, through the question and answer,
4 somebody mentioned that there was an assistance
5 program for poverty but that they probably can't apply
6 for, maybe they can. I'll try to get more information
7 on that later, but they're mainly retired and they do
8 have a limited income as far as the ability moving
9 forward.

10 But also during that time, Missouri American
11 Water's stock's gone from \$27 to \$150, and that's one
12 thing that I want to talk to the Commission and make
13 my comments to make sure that there's a focus on, you
14 know, reviewing the increases in light of regional
15 standards, you know, what the other utility companies
16 are doing and the standard increases that they're
17 applying for.

18 Everything seems to be around ten to -- or five to
19 ten percent for those improvements, and I know I just
20 learned tonight that this rate request is not for
21 future improvements, which I'd originally thought it
22 was -- I thought I'd read that it was -- to go through
23 2024, 2025, but I just want to make sure that the POC
24 reviews what the regional standards are, and I'm not
25 sure that that happens.

1 But also it seems like that the rate increase is
2 used, rather than seeking other financing options. I
3 know somebody said that they do finance and put into
4 capital reserves earlier, but it feels like, given the
5 company's financial health, that this would be a more
6 viable alternative, rather than placing the full
7 financial burden onto the rate payers, primarily those
8 that are retired.

9 And I know that the residents of StoneBridge
10 Village, and me as operating as the business, all have
11 felt that, you know, that whoever it is, whether
12 Missouri American Water or not, they're operating with
13 a kind of regulated monopoly, and they should have a
14 focus on making that commodity affordable, and just
15 with the amount of rate increases and the severity of
16 the rate increases, it doesn't feel like that that's
17 the objective. You know, it seems like it's more
18 profitability over custom -- customer affordability.

19 So I'm just making a comment to the council to
20 carefully consider the financial strain that the
21 increases put on our residents, especially vulnerable
22 populations like retirees.

23 As the authority, PSC has a responsibility to
24 ensure that the rates remain fair, reasonable, and are
25 in line with Missouri American Water's obligation to

1 serve the public affordably. That's all I have.

2 JUDGE SEYER: All right, thank you.

3 Mr. Hasler, for StoneBridge Village, does Missouri

4 American supply water and sewer or --

5 MR. HASLER: Both, water and sewer.

6 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Do the
7 Commissioners have any questions for Mr. Hasler? You
8 do, all right. Yes, Mr. Clizer?

9 MR. CLIZER: I saw that you were reading
10 from prepared statements.

11 MR. HASLER: Yes.

12 MR. CLIZER: Did you want to introduce
13 those as an exhibit?

14 MR. HASLER: Could I do that? But due to
15 the question-and-answer portion, I found out that a
16 couple of my statements might not be accurate.

17 MR. CLIZER: Well, in that case, I would
18 just recommend that you consider making a written
19 comment through the Commission's website.

20 MR. HASLER: Okay.

21 MR. CLIZER: On line.

22 MR. HASLER: Thank you.

23 JUDGE SEYER: Do any of the other attorneys
24 have any questions?

25 MS. NIEMEIER: No.

1 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you, Mr. Hasler. The
2 next name on the list is Gene Phipps.

3 MR. PHIPPS: Good evening, my name is Gene
4 Phipps. G-E-N-E --

5 JUDGE SEYER: Just a second. I think we're
6 gonna get your microphone adjusted. Take your time.

7 MR. PHIPPS: G-E-N-E P-H-I-P-P-S, and I am
8 also a StoneBridge resident.

9 JUDGE SEYER: Okay.

10 MR. PHIPPS: I moved there two years ago.

11 JUDGE SEYER: Now, before you go any
12 further, I'd like to place you under oath.

13 MR. PHIPPS: Oh, sure.

14 JUDGE SEYER: So if you would raise your
15 right hand, please.

16 GENE PHIPPS,
17 being first duly sworn/affirmed, testified as follows:

18 JUDGE SEYER: And your last name is spelled
19 P-H-I-P-P-S?

20 MR. PHIPPS: Correct.

21 JUDGE SEYER: And your first name is Gene,
22 correct, with a "G"?

23 MR. PHIPPS: "G," it's short for Eugene.

24 JUDGE SEYER: Gotcha. All right, thank
25 you. Go ahead.

1 MR. PHIPPS: Okay. So I moved here two
2 years ago, into the community --

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, we can't hear you.

4 MR. PHIPPS: I moved to StoneBridge two
5 years ago in October, and I've noticed so many
6 different changes in regards to water, compared to
7 California where I came from.

8 They do have a scale of how much usage you
9 actually do, which I brought proof. If you did that,
10 it might penalize the people that use the water more
11 and not the people that use the water less for the
12 same rate all the way across, okay?

13 Also in regards to the sewage, we share one sewage
14 grinder, you know, to grind up all of our waste, and
15 each of us are getting charged \$65 a month. That's
16 excessive, in my eyes. And I have it, proof right
17 here, a recent bill from American Water. And also
18 like I -- and it also shows that in California they
19 charge 85 cents a day, period, and that's like \$23 a
20 month, versus one -- 65, plus an additional ten
21 percent that you charge for a surcharge on top of the
22 wastewater. And so it gets dramatically expensive for
23 those retired people, and I hope to be one of them.

24 So if you don't mind, I can submit these bills and
25 show you the graphs from California versus here.

1 Maybe they can consider doing that because there is,
2 you know, different usage along the -- on the line of
3 persons and people in our community. Could be two
4 people in the house, could be eight people in the
5 house, the water is different, not straight out one
6 base.

7 JUDGE SEYER: Mr. Clizer?

8 MR. CLIZER: The witness asked himself, but
9 if you need me to, I would move that they be offered
10 as a hearing exhibit.

11 JUDGE SEYER: Mr. Phipps, if we do accept
12 these as exhibits, I would assume you would want us to
13 redact your personal information --

14 MR. PHIPPS: Sure.

15 JUDGE SEYER: -- address and so forth.

16 MR. PHIPPS: And they're on there.

17 JUDGE SEYER: Okay.

18 MR. PHIPPS: I've also highlighted the fact
19 that their CCF units is 748 gallons, estimated, per
20 CCF. And if you notice on those, I utilized 7 CCF per
21 month, which is approximately 5,000 gallons per the
22 month, and it's \$52 for that bill and that's including
23 waste. So it's for the month. Considering the other
24 one that I handed you was for one month, \$141; that's
25 almost triple. And you can see where it sounds like

1 they're just overcharging the senior community, and I
2 just want to make certain that we're treated fairly
3 along with everybody else.

4 JUDGE SEYER: Okay, Mr. Phipps, if you'll
5 hold there for a second. Do the Commissioners have
6 any questions for you? All right, any of the
7 attorneys for the parties? All right. Thank you for
8 your testimony.

9 MS. NIEMEIER: Sorry, Judge. We don't
10 object to those being admitted in the record, noticing
11 that California is a different jurisdiction.

12 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. All right.

13 MS. KERR: We have no objection, either.

14 JUDGE SEYER: All right. The next name on
15 the list is Dan Ward. Mr. Ward, good evening.

16 MR. WARD: Yes, evening. My name's Daniel
17 Ward.

18 JUDGE SEYER: And, Mr. Ward, would you
19 raise your right hand, please.

20 DANIEL WARD,
21 being first duly sworn/affirmed, testified as follows:

22 MR. WARD: I will try not to repeat what
23 Mr. Hasler covered. He covered a lot of the financial
24 information.

25 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. Before you go there,

1 before you get to that, last name is spelled W-A-R-D?

2 MR. WARD: Yes, sir.

3 JUDGE SEYER: And Dan short for Daniel?

4 MR. WARD: Yes, sir. And I'll put notes in
5 the EFIS system, as well, after this.

6 Yes, one of the things I noticed with American
7 Water and how the billing's done and how the rate
8 increase are done is that we're a separate district.
9 They have StoneBridge, St. Louis here, St. Louis
10 there, blah, blah, blah, blah.

11 Well, I notice the StoneBridge rates are
12 exorbitantly high compared to other rural areas within
13 the state. The last hearing, I was quite disturbed
14 during the last rate increase hearing, when a
15 Commissioner made an off-the-cuff comment that, Well,
16 that increase will not bother those wealthy people in
17 StoneBridge. I was irate by that, and I wrote a
18 statement to the Office of the Counsel about that, and
19 saying, you know -- because I monitored and I actually
20 sat in on the whole virtual meeting during that
21 hearing.

22 But anyway, that said, we are retirees. It's a
23 multiuse community. It also experienced bankruptcy
24 back in 2006, of which the -- we had to absorb all the
25 infrastructure for that community of three thousand

1 acres with barely half of the community developed. So
2 we have our own costs to maintain that because the
3 county does not give us any assistance. It's all done
4 privately.

5 It's a multiuse. We have everything from
6 efficiency apartments to large homes and -- but we
7 have more condos and more apartments and more rentals
8 than we do homes, unfortunately. It was designed to
9 have a lot of homes but unfortunately a bankruptcy, it
10 wasn't built out. So it is not an overly wealthy
11 community. It looks like it because we are proud of
12 it and we take care of it. Okay, so just -- I -- I
13 just want you to consider that.

14 The rates, what we're paying -- this is the CEO of
15 American Water's last quarterly report, and their goal
16 is to have the rates at less than one percent of the
17 annual income of the household. It's in this report
18 right there and there's the chart.

19 I would gladly take less than one percent of my
20 annual income as my water rate, because right now,
21 boy, I wish it was one percent. I wish my income was
22 my water bill times a hundred because, boy, I'd be
23 doing pretty darn good, I'll tell you, if that was my
24 monthly income.

25 So anyway, that's the goal. I think the State

1 ought to pick up and the Commission ought to pick up
2 on what the CEO of American Water works has as the
3 goal of that organization.

4 Also the rate increases that he's briefing to his
5 stockholders doesn't seem to match what is in the
6 proposal for rate increases for the State. So I think
7 the CEO of the company has to go back to the board of
8 directors and stockholders and redo his last filing.

9 That also, from what I see here, they want an
10 ROE -- the CEO wants an average ROE of 10.75 percent
11 for American Water, across the board. It looks like
12 here that the ROE looks like to be 9.75; is that
13 correct, that they're asking for? Okay. And the --
14 so that would be an increase of, what, .5 percent?
15 Which is pretty exorbitant for a corporation to ask
16 for a half a percent ROE increase from the public.

17 Let's see here. Yeah, I don't want to get too
18 much into what Bill did already. Oh, and the cap. So
19 the increase looks like it would cover, and this is
20 according to the CEO of the company, increase being
21 asked for would take and cover all the capital
22 investments in three years.

23 So that's a pretty quick return to cover all your
24 capital investments, and the capital investments,
25 according to him, go all the way out. So that would

1 cover any capital investments out to 2026, and the
2 amount he's saying would cover it in three years, that
3 the capital returns.

4 So I really think what they're asking for, in
5 summary, is pretty darn high and definitely, if you
6 look at the corporate financials, American Water is
7 not poor.

8 The other thing they're looking for -- oh, this is
9 a great chart here, to show what the objectives of the
10 public utilities are about.

11 This is what he briefed as the dividend. That's
12 American Water's dividend chart. That's where our --
13 that's where our money is going to. That's their
14 dividend chart. That's real and projected.

15 So what I'd like to see -- this is a public
16 utility, an essential service. That should be almost
17 flat. You know, if we're using ethical
18 decision-making, that should be pretty flat.

19 Anyway, what I'll do is -- that's the end of my
20 testimony and I'll put the notes in the EFIS system.
21 Thank you.

22 JUDGE SEYER: Mr. Ward, if you don't mind,
23 stick around in case there are questions. Do the
24 Commissioners have any questions? All right. All
25 right, thank you for your testimony.

1 MR. WARD: Thank you.

2 JUDGE SEYER: The next name on the list is
3 J. Cooper. Mr. Cooper, would you raise your right
4 hand, please.

5 JEFFREY COOPER,
6 being first duly sworn/affirmed, testified as follows:

7 JUDGE SEYER: Could you state and spell
8 your name.

9 MR. COOPER: Yes. Jeffrey, J-E-F-F-R-E-Y,
10 Cooper, C-O-O-P-E-R.

11 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you. And what service
12 area are you a customer of Missouri American Water?

13 MR. COOPER: I am outside the city limits
14 of Branson. I am here representing a different
15 demographic. I'm not retired, nor close to it. I am
16 a self-employed businessman. I have four children at
17 home, as well as an eight-month pregnant wife, and I
18 come from more of the, you know, the lower-income side
19 of town, and most of them are either at home, just
20 getting home from work, or still at work.

21 I don't need to give a lot of facts and figures.
22 The other gentlemen have done very well at that, but I
23 just want to thank the Commission for being here and
24 representing us.

25 My wife and I, to date this year, have spent

1 almost \$1400 in water and sewage. We have a
2 1200-square-foot home and, like I said, there's six of
3 us and one on the way. We do have a pool. We do have
4 some animals that we continually have to water, but
5 though our income is not fixed, with the economy and
6 everything else, we are underwater every month, having
7 to pick up side jobs. My wife's having to watch kids
8 and things.

9 Thank you for everything that you guys do to
10 protect us, but this is not a cell phone coverage,
11 where if you don't like the billing, you can go
12 somewhere else. We either have to use American Water
13 or we have to dig a well and spend in between twelve
14 and fifteen thousand dollars to dig our own well. So
15 we're kind of stuck.

16 And as you can imagine, with four kids under seven
17 and one on the way, we have to have water. There's no
18 way around it. So thank you guys for being here and
19 listening to us, and from the younger generations --
20 and I'm thankful for all the retired people here to
21 stand up, and they're on a fixed income and I
22 appreciate them, but there's a whole lot of us that
23 are working every day several jobs. I actually have
24 two businesses I run and still go backwards every
25 month.

1 So thank you for your consideration and time.

2 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Thank you,
3 Mr. Cooper.

4 Next on the list is John Gardner. Mr. Gardner,
5 would you -- you're apparently the same height as
6 Mr. Cooper. Would you raise your right hand, please.

7 JOHN GARDNER,
8 being first duly sworn/affirmed, testified as follows:

9 JUDGE SEYER: All right, could you state
10 and spell your name for the record.

11 MR. GARDNER: John Gardner, J-O-H-N
12 G-A-R-D-N-E-R.

13 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Go ahead,
14 Mr. Gardner.

15 MR. GARDNER: Not to plow the same ground,
16 maybe to use a Missouri term, but one comment. The
17 WSIRA, I would just ask the Commission to get control
18 over that process. I don't mean to infer that you
19 have no control, but when we hear there's WSIRAs
20 approved with no hearings, when we see WSIRAs jump
21 from 3.2 to 6.8 percent of our water bill with no
22 notice, apparently, and we wonder how that happens.

23 And I learned here tonight that we should probably
24 anticipate that WSIRAs will be perpetual. They will
25 be asked for every year. Whether they will be granted

1 or not will be another thing. Excuse me. But I would
2 encourage you to make that process a little more
3 transparent to the folks that are paying the bills,
4 because, you know, again, that's an eight percent
5 increase in our water bill since January.

6 And then we're faced with, my second point, and
7 that is more clear communications about this process.
8 We have seen here tonight that the rate increase, the
9 base rate increase, not counting the WSIRA or any
10 future WSIRAs, has been requested at 34 percent or 44
11 percent or potentially 50 percent, depending on who
12 you are as a customer. That's the first part of the
13 communication issue.

14 The second part is we now hear that this rate
15 increase is to pay for improvements in the ground,
16 when it clearly states in the communication that this
17 is for improvements through -- I forget the month, but
18 May, I believe, of 2026.

19 So, you know, as the customer here -- I would hope
20 that's how we're looked at -- we're confused, number
21 one, about what is the increase, what does it cover,
22 and how long is it going to last? Okay. So I would
23 ask that we do that.

24 My third point is that we have planetary alignment
25 for very high increased rate requests. We are coming

1 out of high inflationary times, we're coming out of
2 high interest times, and if you paid for that and then
3 you are going to depreciate that asset over -- I heard
4 up to eighty years, I thought, on a pipeline. Rich,
5 is that right?

6 MR. SVINDLAND: (Nodding head.)

7 MR. GARDNER: Thank you. He's nodding his
8 head, let the record show. Sorry, I was just on a
9 jury, and, you know, they do that often, so let the
10 record show.

11 JUDGE SEYER: The record shall reflect.

12 MR. GARDNER: So that when you have this
13 equation that John recently tried to explain to us
14 very briefly, I think we ought to look at all the
15 elements of that equation and say was this coming out
16 of a situation that would produce the highest possible
17 rate increase request here.

18 So I would reiterate another idea that I heard, I
19 think it was in the earlier session, and that is that
20 of relative or regional comparisons of water costs,
21 because there are a lot of water suppliers around that
22 we could base this comparison on to find out if we're
23 in the ballpark or not. It doesn't feel like we're
24 going to be in the ballpark with this new increase
25 request, so I would ask to do that.

1 I read on the DNR site yesterday that Missouri is
2 blessed with a number of wonderful aquifers with
3 high-quality water and that water takes very little
4 processing. We're standing on top of it right here
5 and most of the places where we live. And a lot of
6 those folks, at least where I live, can drill wells.
7 And if we're going to raise costs this much, we're
8 going to increase well drilling to avoid those costs,
9 and that's going to have an impact on our aquifer.
10 And a lot of the agricultural issues are already
11 showing up, I think, on some parts of the coun -- of
12 the state.

13 So my point there is I think we have to look at
14 the unintended consequences of this size of a rate
15 increase and say -- now, if you're a well driller
16 that's good. Maybe an entrepreneur would start that
17 business around here, but I think we have to look at
18 the unintended consequences of it -- that would be my
19 fifth point -- of high rate increases and people are
20 going to drill wells and avoid it altogether.

21 So and I think the last but not least is, you know,
22 Missouri is a state that's in the lower half of the
23 income brackets in the country. We shouldn't be
24 paying some of the highest water rates in the country.
25 Thank you.

1 JUDGE SEYER: If you don't mind sticking
2 around, Mr. Gardner, I just want to make sure I
3 understand. I believe it was your second point. Are
4 you saying that the reasons given for the rate
5 increase in the notice for this meeting is
6 inconsistent with what you heard tonight?

7 MR. GARDNER: Yes, and I would add to that,
8 we got a letter from Missouri American Water that
9 stated 34 percent and the time frame, which was into
10 2026, of the improvements.

11 Tonight there was a handout that had 44 percent in
12 it. I believe the time frame described was the
13 sign -- the same, from '23 to '26, but then we also
14 heard tonight that this increase is just paying for
15 improvements in the ground, I think was the way it was
16 phrased. So, does that answer your question?

17 JUDGE SEYER: Yes. Do the Commissioners
18 have any questions? Yes, Ms. Niemeier.

19 MS. NIEMEIER: I just want to make a
20 clarification. The company had this one notice.
21 Tonight's handout that you're referring to was created
22 by the Office of Public Counsel, and I just want the
23 record to show what you're referring to. Is that
24 correct?

25 MR. GARDNER: Yes. Yeah, the letter that

1 was up on the table, yeah. So the percentages were
2 different, but the time frames both have into 2026,
3 which apparently is not accurate. So ...

4 MS. NIEMEIER: Not saying --

5 MR. GARDNER: So -- so future improvements,
6 we should brace ourselves for more rate increase
7 requests. That's number six, maybe.

8 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. All right.

9 MR. GARDNER: Thank you.

10 JUDGE SEYER: Any other questions? Okay,
11 hearing none. Thank you, Mr. Gardner.

12 The next name on the list is Duane Roesch.

13 MR. ROESCH: That's a tough one, isn't it?

14 JUDGE SEYER: It really shouldn't be that
15 tough. Is it a German name?

16 MR. ROESCH: A little.

17 JUDGE SEYER: Okay, I was taught that two
18 vowels together in a German name, you pronounce the
19 second vowel. Anyway, how do you pronounce it?

20 MR. ROESCH: Uh, "rush."

21 JUDGE SEYER: Okay, Roesch. Mr. Roesch,
22 would you raise your right hand, please. Thank you.

23 DUANE ROESCH,
24 being first duly sworn/affirmed, testified as follows:

25 JUDGE SEYER: And would you go ahead and

1 state and spell your name for the record.

2 MR. ROESCH: My name is Duane, D-U-A-N-E,
3 last name R-O-E-S-C-H. I live in Riverside Estates in
4 Hollister, and I'm not going to go into what a lot of
5 these other gentlemen have said already.

6 We have issues with everything in the neighborhood
7 going on, it seems like. Our electricity, our water,
8 the neighbor's dog, uh, you know, it's -- it's -- we
9 moved here from western Kansas 25 years ago, thinking
10 it would be a nice place to retire, and for 22 of
11 those years I think we were right on the money.

12 But it's getting now, if you look around in here,
13 there's more white heads and bald heads than there are
14 young people. And I sometimes think they're busy
15 trying to make a living and just don't have time to
16 come to these things to say what's happening, or else
17 they're just paying the bills and let it go on.

18 We talk about this money that's wanted, how many
19 millions of dollars. We don't know if that's repair
20 of piping that's already in the ground or new lines.
21 There's nothing in there about how many new accounts
22 we're servicing. I know over by the Chateau, my,
23 there's a bunch of them over there, and all this will
24 amount to return on their investment.

25 What I would like to do, respectively, have you

1 consider not 44 percent, not 34 percent, but maybe 12,
2 14 percent. I called the power company once to ask
3 about fuel adjustment, and they said it's on there
4 because we can. And I get to looking at this
5 sometimes, thinking, Well, the price going up because
6 we can. And I'd like to stay here, but taxes and
7 everything really drove me out of Kansas, and I don't
8 think we want to get into the water problems that
9 Kansas and other states out west have.

10 We are blessed with the aquifers, and the water's
11 for the most part pretty clean and we'd like to
12 maintain that.

13 But with that, we'll again thank you for coming
14 and listening to our comments today.

15 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. And, Mr. Roesch, you
16 said you live in Hollister?

17 MR. ROESCH: Yes, sir.

18 JUDGE SEYER: And you're a water and sewer
19 customer or just water?

20 MR. ROESCH: My sewer, I pay on East 76.
21 I'm on a county sewer system. And there was a
22 gentleman in here talking about how many people were
23 on his grinder pump. We do have grinder pumps down
24 there, but there's just one pump per -- per home. We
25 are in the flood plain down there, and so that enters

1 into it, too. But all in all, that's my story and I'm
2 sticking to it.

3 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. Are there any
4 questions for Mr. Roesch?

5 MS. NIEMEIER: No.

6 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Thank you.

7 MR. ROESCH: Thank you again.

8 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Next on our list
9 is Rick Floyd.

10 MR. FLOYD: My name is Rick Floyd and I
11 live in StoneBridge.

12 JUDGE SEYER: StoneBridge?

13 MR. FLOYD: Yes.

14 JUDGE SEYER: Mr. Floyd, would you raise
15 your right hand, please.

16 RICK FLOYD,
17 being first duly sworn/affirmed, testified as follows:

18 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Thank you.

19 MR. FLOYD: I'm standing up here because I
20 can't hear very good and I misunderstood what that
21 sheet was I signed, so I don't have a whole lot to
22 have to say.

23 JUDGE SEYER: All right.

24 MR. FLOYD: But about a year ago, American
25 Water was at StoneBridge explaining to us about how

1 the new well would not be any increase in cost to our
2 rates or anything like that. And in one of those
3 meetings, one of the gentlemen actually kind of
4 chuckled and he said, "We have many, many well-paid
5 people who are in positions of committees and stuff to
6 plan for the future and we save for that. "We set up
7 budgets and we save to do that stuff, so you don't
8 have to worry about your rates being increased." And
9 here we are a year later and we're looking at rate
10 increases. That's really all I needed to say.

11 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. And for the sake of
12 the record, your last name is F-L-O-Y-D?

13 MR. FLOYD: Yes. And I signed my wife's
14 name up next and she don't want to talk.

15 JUDGE SEYER: Well, when I saw the names
16 back to back, I suspected that might be the case.

17 MRS. FLOYD: I was here for the door prize.

18 JUDGE SEYER: That right? Did you win?
19 All right. We only have one name left on the list and
20 that's Karen Michael; is that how you pronounce it?
21 Or is Ms. Michael here?

22 (No response.)

23 JUDGE SEYER: Okay, no one's coming
24 forward. All right. Is there anybody else who did
25 not sign up but would like to testify? All right, I'm

1 hearing none.

2 For those people that -- oop, sorry. For those
3 people that couldn't be here tonight, or if you'd like
4 to provide additional comments, the Public Service
5 Commission's website is psc.mo.gov, G-O-V, and on the
6 right side of the home page there's a link titled
7 "submit comments."

8 If you click on that link and submit your
9 comments, please make sure that you reference this
10 case number which is, again, WR-2024-0320.

11 And, Commissioner Mitchell, I believe, would like
12 to make some closing comments.

13 COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: I would, Judge.
14 And on behalf of the entire Commission, we thank you
15 for coming out tonight and sharing your thoughts and
16 opinions with us. This is -- this is a really
17 important part of the process, and it's important
18 because it's the only time in the process that we get
19 to hear directly from you. So I want to assure you
20 that that is very important to us and your comments
21 are taken seriously.

22 I also want to say that I -- we recognize that it
23 can be a little bit intimidating to stand up and make
24 comments in public, and I want to encourage you to
25 file your comments on the PSC website if you have any

1 additional comments or any additional information that
2 you'd like to share.

3 But again on behalf of the Commission, we'd like
4 to thank you for coming out tonight and sharing your
5 thoughts and opinions with us.

6 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Thank you,
7 Commissioner.

8 Thank you all for coming out tonight, and if
9 there's nothing further, this hearing is adjourned and
10 we'll go off the record. Thank you.

11 (Proceedings concluded at 7:38 p.m.)

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