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BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
STATE OF MISSOURI

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

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

Monday, November 4, 2024
06:00 P.M.

VOLUME II

Missouri Southern State University
Robert W. Plaster Free Enterprise Center
Cornell Auditorium
3950 Newman Road
Joplin, Missouri

KENNETH J. SEYER
REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

KAYLA HAHN, CHAIR
MAIDA J. COLEMAN
JASON R. HOLSMAN

Reported by:

COLIN WALLIS
LEXITAS LEGAL

1 * * * * *

2 (The hearing began at 6:48 p.m.)

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: All right,
4 let's go on the record. Today is November 4th,
5 2024. The time is 6:50 p.m. My name is Ken
6 Seyer, and I am a regulatory law judge with the
7 Missouri Public Service Commission, and I will
8 preside over this portion of tonight's hearing.

9 The Commission has set this time for a
10 local public hearing to give members of the
11 public a chance to comment about
12 Missouri-American Water Company's application
13 for a general rate increase for water and sewer
14 service, which is Commission number file
15 number, or it's Commission file number:
16 WR-2024-0320. The Commission regulates the
17 rates charged by public utility companies in
18 Missouri to ensure those rates are just and
19 reasonable. The Commission also regulates the
20 quality of service and the safety of the
21 operations of public utilities.

22 The Commission is composed of five
23 commissioners. They are appointed by the
24 governor and confirmed by the Senate. The
25 commissioner employs a staff of engineers,

1 accountants, attorneys, financial analysts and
2 other specialists in the field of utility
3 regulation. To my right tonight is
4 Commissioner Jason Holsman, and joining us
5 online is Chair Kayla Hahn and Commissioner
6 Maida Coleman.

7 The commissioners have not made any
8 decisions in this case and cannot answer any
9 questions today because they have to remain
10 impartial until after the evidence is presented
11 at the evidentiary hearing scheduled to begin
12 February 27th of next year. Commissioner
13 Coleman, at this time would you like to make
14 opening remarks? Commissioner Holsman, sorry.

15 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Thank you. Good
16 evening. On behalf of Chairwoman Kayla Hahn
17 and the entire commission, we want to welcome
18 you to this. We know there are many things you
19 could be doing. It's a stormy night. I don't
20 know if your Google or your Apple Maps took you
21 someplace else, but I know mine did so it was
22 difficult to find. But you're here. We know
23 you can be doing a lot of other things, kick
24 off for the Chiefs is in a half hour so you
25 could be doing that, but you're here to share

1 your thoughts with us. As the judge mentioned,
2 we can't answer any questions, but we haven't
3 made any decisions and so your testimony is
4 important and we do appreciate it, so we
5 welcome you to this local public hearing.
6 Thank you.

7 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Thank you,
8 Commissioner. There are attorneys here today
9 representing the parties in this matter, and
10 for the sake of the record, would each of you
11 identify -- excuse me, identify yourselves and
12 state which party you're representing?

13 MS. NIEMEYER: Sure. Good evening.
14 Rachel Niemeyer on behalf of Missouri-American
15 Water Company this evening. The court reporter
16 has our address. Alongside me is our Vice
17 President of Operations, Jody Carlson. We
18 appreciate you being here tonight. This is a
19 very important part of the process, and we're
20 glad you're here. Thank you.

21 MR. PRINGLE: Hi, my name is Travis
22 Pringle, and I am the attorney for the staff of
23 the Missouri Service Commission. Our contact
24 information is also on file with the court
25 reporter.

1 MR. CLIZER: John Clizer representing the
2 Missouri Office of the Public Counsel. My
3 contact information is in the record as well.

4 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: All right,
5 thank you. The way we will proceed with this
6 portion tonight will be to call the names of
7 the people that have signed up on the list in
8 the order you signed up. And I'm looking at
9 three names on the list. When I call your
10 name, I'll ask you to come up to the microphone
11 and I'll ask you to state and spell your name
12 and then I'll place you under oath and you can
13 then give your comments to the Commission. We
14 will try to limit comment to five minutes. And
15 once you've given comments, if you can remain
16 at the microphone in case there are questions
17 from the commissioners or the attorneys for the
18 parties, I would appreciate that. So, the
19 first name on the list is Austin Rose.

20 MR. ROSE: Good evening.

21 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Good evening.

22 (Austin Rose sworn.)

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Please state
24 and your spell your name for the record.

25 MR. ROSE: Austin Rose, A-u-s-t-i-n,

1 R-o-s-e. And am I ready to give my comments?

2 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Yeah, and if
3 I could ask you this, where -- what service
4 area, and do you receive water or sewer
5 service.

6 MR. ROSE: I see -- I receive water from
7 Missouri-American Water. I use the City of
8 Joplin for my sewer and trash.

9 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Got you.

10 MR. ROSE: All right. So, I am against
11 the proposed rate hike, or at least in the
12 terms of quantity they're asking. The
13 34 percent increase in the rate would be really
14 damaging for people and their fixed income and
15 low income specifically. People who are
16 struggling nowadays across the board and now
17 more than ever, a rate hike of this magnitude
18 would just really put people in a very
19 unfortunate position. There seems to be a lack
20 of transparency, at least currently in the
21 pricing structure of the projects that the
22 public have benefited from. I'm very curious
23 as to the efficiency and the effectiveness of
24 the projects and their expenses. I respect
25 that 1.5 billion has been spent or will be

1 spent, although I'm also very curious if the
2 timeliness of that was a factor or whether or
3 not some of it was spent a bit prematurely.

4 Regardless, I'd certainly be a proponent
5 of adjusting that rate hike over a longer term
6 to make it more manageable than taking such a
7 severe hike so -- so soon. Additionally,
8 there's public health and safety concerns. I
9 understand that there is a list of improvements
10 needed to be made and that's always going to be
11 the case. I think that it's important to have
12 really solid utilities and water quality, but
13 that should not be at the cost of our
14 resident's livelihoods. You've had significant
15 past rates (sic) in the past and this just
16 continues adding on to that. I understand that
17 rates will probably consistently rise, although
18 the rate at which they increase can certainly
19 be managed.

20 And then, finally, with the economic
21 timing, inflation's as high as it's ever been.
22 People's wallets are stretched tighter than
23 ever and I know I'm not the only one feeling
24 it. And I find it highly irresponsible to ask
25 for a such high increase and -- for such a

1 short time. Additionally, I'd look for higher
2 increase in, like, efficiency and effectiveness
3 and making sure that funding is used properly
4 instead of just wastefully. And, additionally,
5 if there's any sort of funding through the IRS
6 government grants -- not IRS, EPA or anything
7 along those lines, I'd be highly advocating for
8 the use of those funds rather than the increase
9 of customer rates. Thank you.

10 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: All right.
11 Commissioner Holsman, do you have --

12 MR. ROSE: Oh, actually, can I have one
13 more thing?

14 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Sure.

15 MR. ROSE: And you mentioned a lower rate
16 for 150 percent of the federal poverty line,
17 which is laughable. The federal poverty line
18 is \$15,000 for a person of one; 150 percent of
19 that is just over 20,000. So, a full-time
20 person working \$10 an hour would be -- who
21 would qualify for that, which I don't know
22 around the room who here is working for \$10 an
23 hour, but that makes all of us not qualified
24 for that reduced rate, so the assumption that
25 this will suddenly be beneficial for people on

1 fixed income, low income or who need that
2 economic need, there are going to be a lot more
3 people struggling than that 150 percent of the
4 poverty line. So, I want to put that as well,
5 though.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: All right.
7 All right, thank you. The next name on the
8 list is Justin Gill. Mr. Gill, would you raise
9 your right hand?

10 (Justin Gill sworn.)

11 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Could you
12 state and spell your name for the record?

13 MR GILL: My name is Justin Gill,
14 J-u-s-t-i-n; last name, G-i-l-l.

15 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Okay. Go
16 ahead.

17 MR. GILL: My name is Justin Gill, and I'm
18 the president of a local nonprofit called the
19 North Heights Neighborhood Group. It is a
20 little community in north Joplin over here by
21 Main Street. We represent, or at least help
22 serve in that area, about 2500 households of
23 different mixed incomes, and we have two
24 thousand people on our Facebook Group, and we
25 promoted this and talked about this a little

1 bit as a community. And one of the things that
2 we just want to voice to the Commission is,
3 that it was pretty universal across our entire
4 neighborhood of 2,500 households that this
5 would be a very untenable increase in cost for
6 them. That many of them are low income
7 families and households and that a consistent
8 increase in their utility bills is one of the
9 major burdens that they face as a family here
10 in Southwest Missouri. And that we would want
11 to voice to you as people who are trying to
12 build relationships and rebuild aspects of our
13 community, that we would want to voice to you
14 the burden that a consistent increase of 15 to
15 30 percent on a particular utility bill has on
16 a family in this area. So, we just wanted to
17 let you know.

18 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Okay, thank
19 you. All right, and there's one final name on
20 the list, but I cannot make out the last name
21 so, yeah. Yes.

22 (John Franklin Ockert sworn.)

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: Would you go
24 ahead and state and spell your name?

25 MR. OCKERT: Yes, my name is John Franklin

1 Ockert, J-o-h-n, F-r-a-n-k-l-i-n, O-c-k-e-r-t.

2 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: All right, go
3 ahead.

4 MR. OCKERT: I stand in negation of the
5 current rate increase as it stands. I would
6 request that they reevaluate the percentage
7 that is being requested, especially when it
8 comes to those who are using water, the natural
9 resource, in a conservative manner. Those seem
10 to be hit with the highest percentage of a rate
11 increase. I believe that they need to
12 reevaluate their proposed rate increase, so the
13 heaviest users, whether that be people with
14 bigger homes, pools, nondrinking or palatable
15 water usage, such as irrigation, those folks
16 and entities pay the biggest percentage of the
17 increase and not the bottom line.

18 I also would like for the Commission to
19 evaluate the profitability of the company and
20 perhaps they dip into their profits and
21 dividends to help offset the cost onto the
22 consumer, us the citizenry. And that's it.

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: All right, is
24 there anyone else who did not sign up but you
25 would like to testify? All right. If -- yes?

1 Yeah, if you have comments that you would like
2 to offer to the Commission, you can do that
3 online via the Commission's website,
4 psc.mo.gov, and then on the right side of that
5 page, that homepage, there's a link titled
6 Submit Comments. If you click on that, there
7 will be an area where you can type those
8 comments in, and I would just ask that you
9 reference this case number, that's
10 WR-2024-0320. Commissioner Holsman, would you
11 like make to any closing remarks?

12 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: Just wanted to say
13 thank you again. On behalf of the Commission,
14 we do appreciate you taking the time. Even if
15 you didn't make comments, your presence here is
16 noted, and we can see that you care about the
17 issue and for those of you who did make
18 comments, it's not always easy to get up in
19 front of a mic in front of your peers and say
20 how you feel; but it's welcome and appreciated
21 and we'll just -- we'll judge the case the best
22 we can and make an objective choice and we'll
23 see you guys next time.

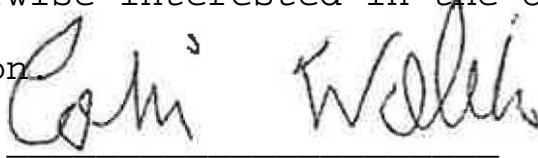
24 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE SEYER: All right.
25 Thank you all for being here tonight, and the

1 hearing is now adjourned. We'll go off the
2 record.

3 (Ending time of the hearing: 07:01 p.m.)

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1 I, Colin Wallis, in and for the State of
2 Missouri do hereby certify that the witness
3 whose testimony appears in the foregoing
4 Examination Under Oath was duly sworn by me;
5 that the testimony of the said witness was
6 taken by me to the best of my ability and
7 thereafter reduced to typewriting under my
8 direction; that I am neither counsel for,
9 related to, nor employed by any of the parties
10 to the action in which this examination was
11 taken, and further that I am not relative or
12 employee of any attorney or counsel employed by
13 the parties thereto, nor financially or
14 otherwise interested in the outcome of the
15 action.



17 within and for the State of Missouri
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<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">\$</p> <hr/> <p>\$10 8:20,22 \$15,000 8:18</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">0</p> <hr/> <p>07:01 13:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <hr/> <p>1.5 6:25 15 10:14 150 8:16,18 9:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <hr/> <p>2,500 10:4 20,000 8:19 2024 2:5 2500 9:22 27th 3:12</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <hr/> <p>30 10:15 34 6:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <hr/> <p>4th 2:4</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <hr/> <p>6:48 2:2 6:50 2:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <hr/> <p>A-U-S-T-I-N 5:25</p>	<p>accountants 3:1 adding 7:16 additionally 7:7 8:1,4 address 4:16 adjourned 13:1 adjusting 7:5 advocating 8:7 ahead 9:16 10:24 11:3 Alongside 4:16 analysts 3:1 Apple 3:20 application 2:12 appointed 2:23 appreciated 12:20 area 6:4 9:22 10:16 12:7 aspects 10:12 assumption 8:24 attorney 4:22 attorneys 3:1 4:8 5:17 austin 5:19,22,25</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <hr/> <p>began 2:2 begin 3:11 behalf 3:16 4:14 12:13 beneficial 8:25 benefited 6:22 bigger 11:14 biggest 11:16 bill 10:15</p>	<p>billion 6:25 bills 10:8 bit 7:3 10:1 board 6:16 bottom 11:17 build 10:12 burden 10:14 burdens 10:9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <hr/> <p>call 5:6,9 called 9:18 care 12:16 Carlson 4:17 case 3:8 5:16 7:11 12:9,21 Chair 3:5 Chairwoman 3:16 chance 2:11 charged 2:17 Chiefs 3:24 choice 12:22 citizenry 11:22 City 6:7 click 12:6 Clizer 5:1 closing 12:11 Coleman 3:6,13 comment 2:11 5:14 comments 5:13, 15 6:1 12:1,6,8, 15,18 commission 2:7, 9,14,15,16,19,22</p>	<p>3:17 4:23 5:13 10:2 11:18 12:2, 13 Commission's 12:3 commissioner 2:25 3:4,5,12,14, 15 4:8 8:11 12:10, 12 commissioners 2:23 3:7 5:17 community 9:20 10:1,13 companies 2:17 company 4:15 11:19 Company's 2:12 composed 2:22 concerns 7:8 confirmed 2:24 conservative 11:9 consistent 10:7, 14 consistently 7:17 consumer 11:22 contact 4:23 5:3 continues 7:16 cost 7:13 10:5 11:21 Counsel 5:2 court 4:15,24 curious 6:22 7:1 current 11:5 customer 8:9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <hr/> <p>damaging 6:14</p>
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