

1 BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

2 STATE OF MISSOURI

3
4 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

5 LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

6
7 In the Matter of Spire Missouri, Inc.,)
d/b/a Spire's Request for Authority to) File No.
8 implement a General Rate Increase for) GR-2025-0107
Natural Gas Service Provided in the)
9 Company's Missouri Service Areas)

10 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2025
11 12:00 p.m.

12 St. Joseph City Council Chambers
13 1100 Frederick Avenue
14 St. Joseph, Missouri 64501

15 VOLUME 5

16
17 KEN SEYER, Presiding
REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

18 JOHN MITCHELL
19 KAYLA HAHN, Chair (Via Zoom)
MAIDA J. COLEMAN (Via Zoom)

20 COMMISSIONERS

21
22 Reported by:
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1 (Proceeding commenced at 12:55 p.m.)

2 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Let's go
3 on the record. Today's Wednesday, June 4th, 2025.
4 The time is 12:55 p.m. My name is Ken Seyer. I'm a
5 regulatory law judge for the Missouri Public Service
6 Commission and I will preside over this portion of the
7 hearing today. The Commission has set this time for a
8 local board hearing here at St. Joseph to give members
9 of the public a chance to comment about Spire's
10 application to adjust its natural gas rates. It is
11 commission case number GR-2025-0107.

12 The commission regulates the rates charged
13 by public utility companies in Missouri to ensure that
14 those rates are just and reasonable. The Commission
15 also regulates the quality of service and safety of
16 the operations of the public utilities. The
17 Commission normally has five commissioners, however,
18 there is currently an unfilled vacancy on the
19 Commission and so there are currently four
20 commissioners. The Commissioners are appointed by the
21 Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Commission
22 employs a staff of engineers, accountants, attorneys,
23 financial analysts and other specialists in the field
24 of utility regulation.

25 With me today is Commissioner John

1 Mitchell. Also participating online is the chair of
2 the Commission, Kayla Hahn, as well as Commissioner
3 Maida Coleman and possibly Commissioner Glen
4 Kolkmeier.

5 The Commissioners have not made any
6 decision in this case and cannot answer any questions
7 today because they have to remain impartial until
8 after all the evidence is presented at the evidentiary
9 hearing in this matter which is scheduled to take
10 place beginning August 4th.

11 At this time Commissioner Mitchell, would
12 you like to make an opening statement?

13 COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: I sure would.
14 Thank you, Judge. Good afternoon, and on behalf of
15 Chair Hahn and the entire Public Service Commission, I
16 would like to welcome you and thank for you being here.
17 This series of local public hearings is the first step
18 in the commission's mission to fact find and evaluate
19 Spire's request. It's an important step because it's
20 the first time that we get to hear from you, the
21 consumers. Your testimony is very important to us.
22 It helps us to make the best decisions that we can.

23 I know that sometimes it can be a little
24 bit intimidating to speak in public. I would
25 encourage you do to so because the more information

1 that we can gather from you, the better decisions we
2 can make. If you happen to think of something that
3 you would have said or you wanted to say or didn't get
4 a chance to say, or if you have friends or neighbors
5 that would like to make comment and couldn't be here
6 today, the judge will have instructions for us on how
7 to file those comments in writing with the Commission.

8 And so, again, I appreciate you being here
9 and welcome your comments.

10 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you,
11 Commissioner.

12 As you know, there are attorneys here today
13 representing the parties in this matter. And so for
14 the sake of the record, will each of you identify
15 yourselves and state which party you represent.

16 Spire.

17 MR. ARIAS: Good afternoon. Antonio Aria
18 on behalf of Spire Missouri, Inc.

19 JUDGE SEYER: And on behalf of the staff
20 for the Commission.

21 MS. HANSEN: Good afternoon. Andrea Hansen
22 on behalf of the Missouri Public Service Commission.

23 JUDGE SEYER: And on behalf of the Office
24 of Public Counsel.

25 MR. CLIZER: John Clizer on behalf of the

1 Office of Public Counsel. Thank you.

2 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. The way we will
3 proceed today will be to call the names listed on the
4 signup sheet in the order that you signed up.

5 When I call your name, please step up to
6 the podium. I will place you under oath and ask you
7 to state and spell your name. Then you can offer your
8 comments to the Commission. Today we will try to
9 limit comments to three minutes per person. Once you
10 finish your comments, please remain at the podium in
11 case there are questions from the Commissioners or
12 attorneys for the parties.

13 So, the first name on the list is Richard
14 sharp.

15 Mr. Sharp, good afternoon.

16 RICHARD SHARP,
17 a Witness, being first duly sworn, testified under
18 oath as follows:

19 JUDGE SEYER: Could you go ahead and state
20 and spell your name?

21 MR. SHARP: It's Richard R-I-C-H-A-R-D,
22 Sharp S-H-A-R-P.

23 JUDGE SEYER: Go ahead with your comment.

24 MR. SHARP: I'm not trying to make anybody
25 mad but I hope I hit some nerves. Okay.

1 I have seven points. I'll make them in a
2 lot less than three minutes and if somebody wants to
3 come back and contradict me, please do.

4 Number one is has there ever been a rate
5 increase at the utility companies that the
6 Commissioner's didn't or don't like.

7 Number two, do the Commissioners have any
8 idea of what percentage increases they have approved
9 for the utility companies and dumped on the public.

10 Number three, and in case you didn't,
11 63 percent has been proposed. Whatever -- I'll just
12 give the benefit of the doubt and say you're not gonna
13 get what you proposed, so probably a 40 percent, okay,
14 and that's just a guess.

15 Number four is, do the utility companies
16 maintain any reserves to maintain their business? The
17 reason I ask this is because as a business owner, when
18 I make improvements to my business or my personal
19 property, I can't just go to a customer and ask for a
20 10 to 60 percent increase in prices or I would be out
21 of business. Perhaps some of the executives could
22 reduce their multi six figure salaries to help pay for
23 some of the bills.

24 Why would you schedule a meeting at noon
25 when the majority of people are at work? Number five,

1 I think we all know that answer. I don't need an
2 answer to that.

3 Number six, the Commission and the
4 government officials from the top down should be
5 ashamed of themselves that they have no regard for
6 their constituents or their customers. They resolve
7 problems at the trough of the taxpayer.

8 Number seven, I wish the press was here, I
9 don't know if they are, but please, if they are,
10 please do your public duty and not just say there was
11 a meeting at City Hall for Spire Gas increases. The
12 utility companies and government officials dumping on
13 the public. Report the truth and stop them, at least
14 let the public be informed of the gross inefficiency
15 of the utility companies and our Commissioners.

16 Now, I say these things, folks, because you
17 people just think it's an endless pot of money. You
18 run a business as though as soon as I need money, all
19 I need to do is just ask for it, and you may not get
20 15 percent but you probably didn't expect 15 percent,
21 you just asked for some number because the
22 Commissioners are going to give you something. All
23 right.

24 We out here don't get to go to Social
25 Security, of which I'm on, and ask for ten percent and

1 expect five. We usually get about two. So you folks
2 need to run your business as a business and stop
3 expecting the tax payer to pay your bills on
4 everything that you do. You should have some kind of
5 reserves out there.

6 And I will just say this as a last comment.
7 I have checked the exorbitant salaries that you people
8 make at the top levels and I'll tell you. I mentioned
9 it at the last utilities thing that I had, and as I
10 recall just off the top, \$800,000 a year. You
11 Commissioners need to put a stop to this, 63 percent
12 of a rate increase asked. I don't know what you're
13 going to give them. I'm talking about all utilities
14 combined. Where do you get something. Okay.

15 So I'll leave you with that thought. I
16 appreciate your time and I appreciate your effort.
17 And Spire, I don't have a thing against you. Okay.
18 As a matter of fact, I'm going to tell you, you're the
19 cheapest utility that we've got. All right. I'm
20 telling you, from a consumer, that we're getting
21 pretty fed up out here with utility companies coming
22 back every year, I want some kind of raise. I know
23 yours has been three years but it's pretty consistent
24 between the water companies and the sewer bills and a
25 this bill and a that bill. And as I said, add them

1 up. Don't take my word for it. I took it right off
2 your web pages. 63 percent is what you folks have
3 asked of the public.

4 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you. Mr. Sharp,
5 could you stay up there for just a minute?

6 Are there any questions from the
7 Commissioners?

8 All right. Thank you, Mr. Sharp.

9 MR. SHARP: Thank you.

10 JUDGE SEYER: The next name on the list I'm
11 not even going to attempt. First name is Russell.

12 MR. WOJTKIEWICZ: I didn't figure you'd
13 try.

14 RUSSELL WOJTKIEWICZ,
15 a Witness, being first duly sworn, testified under
16 oath as follows:

17 JUDGE SEYER: If you would, go ahead
18 and state and slowly spell your last name.

19 MR. WOJTKIEWICZ: Russell Wojtkiewicz,
20 W-O-J-T-K-I-E-W-I-C-Z. And I'm not from St. Joe, I'm
21 from Parkville, Missouri.

22 JUDGE SEYER: Go ahead.

23 MR. WOJTKIEWICZ: I stand in opposition to
24 any and all rate increases, especially this egregious
25 proposal for recovery of infrastructure investments,

1 inflationary costs, costs of services, weather, and
2 conservation impacts. What a load of complete bovine
3 scatology, to quote the great General Schwarzkopf.

4 As I look back and analyze Spire invoices,
5 I find that the charges for the product they are in
6 the business to sell and deliver to me is, at best, 50
7 percent of the total of the invoice and, at worst,
8 only 22 percent of their billing. Spire has delivery
9 and distribution charges on each monthly bill. These
10 include a customer charge of \$20 per meter. Thank
11 goodness I've only got one. Summer usage, when using
12 less than 50 CCF, whatever that measurement actually
13 is. Winter usage, which is on the same bill as the
14 summer usage. Pipeline upgrade charge, ISRS, for 20
15 out of 29 days. A second pipeline upgrade charge for
16 nine of 20 days. And WNAR, which I got earlier
17 defined what that is but it sounds like it's summer
18 and winter usage charges, just another way to add
19 another dollar to my bill.

20 My current invoice, dated 5/22/25, has a
21 total gas charge of \$9.32. I have lived in the same
22 home since October of 1984 and remember some summer
23 months billing to be a total of 13 to 15 dollars
24 because, of course, we are only using a hot water
25 heater and a cook range. Now my bills are at least

1 \$40 and have exceeded \$275 because of all the extra
2 line charges, not particularly the cost of gas being
3 supplied. What we have here is a chicken and egg
4 conundrum. If Spire doesn't build the infrastructure,
5 then Spire cannot sell me its supposed product,
6 natural gas. But as I see it, Spire is no longer a
7 utility supplying natural gas to customers but a
8 delivery and distribution company that perhaps should
9 be regulated in an entirely different manner and face
10 more regulatory scrutiny and costs. If Spire is a
11 natural gas supplier to residential and commercial
12 customers, then let them operate with oversight on a
13 margin of cost versus retail price and allow us, the
14 consumer, to choose from more than one company, energy
15 supplier, or form of energy. Also, the -- I also put
16 a lot of this on the -- I'm going to cut mine short
17 because I see I'm down to nearly the three minutes.

18 The Commission needs to also deny these
19 rate increases and try to get -- come up with some
20 reform of the way we're billed for these for the
21 kilowatt hour, for the pound of gas. It's got to be a
22 lot easier, cheaper, and more predictable for us in
23 budgeting, and will leave it with my thought there.

24 JUDGE SEYER: Can you stay there,
25 Mr. Wojtkiewicz?

1 Are there any questions from the
2 Commissioners? All right. Hearing none. Thank you.

3 RICHARD UNDERWOOD,
4 a Witness, being first duly sworn, testified under
5 oath as follows:

6 JUDGE SEYER: Go ahead and state
7 your name.

8 MR. UNDERWOOD: My name is Richard
9 Underwood. My last name is spelled U-N-D-E-R-W-O-O-D.

10 JUDGE SEYER: Richard is your first name?

11 MR. UNDERWOOD: Yes. I noticed all the
12 years my meter's never broke. It's never broken. And
13 you put out the expense of putting new meters on all
14 these homes and without any permission. I come home
15 and had a new meter on my house and it's a digital
16 meter, which is running some sort of electricity,
17 which is vulnerability of visibility throughout my
18 home due to the technology inside of it. Instead of
19 spending money and putting all these on every home in
20 America and making sure they're all there maybe
21 instead of repairing the pipe lines that need more
22 repair than we needed meters that never needed to be
23 replaced because they weren't broken in the beginning.

24 That's all I have to say.

25 JUDGE SEYER: Any questions? All

1 right.

2 Next on the list is Peter Osentoski. How
3 did I do? I got a thumbs up.

4 PETER OSENTOSKI,
5 a Witness, being first duly sworn, testified under
6 oath as follows:

7 JUDGE SEYER: Go ahead.

8 MR. OSENTOSKI: Peter Osentoski
9 O-S-E-N-T-O-S-K-I.

10 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you.

11 MR. OSENTOSKI: So, we're looking to up --
12 change the charge for ISRS, which is a structure
13 upgrade, and in 2003 I think the Commission enacted
14 this ISRS charge for infrastructure upgrade. But I
15 look at Spire's financial reports in the second
16 quarter of this year, the gas utility growth reflected
17 higher Missouri ISRS revenues of 8.7 million. So it
18 is it an infrastructure upgrade or a revenue stream
19 that we're talking about here because if I look at
20 Spire's financials, they're using ISRS as a revenue
21 stream and not actually just infrastructure upgrade.

22 I understand they sell gas for no mark up.
23 But as a company driven -- and it's a public company
24 so they're paying shareholders dividends, 55, 65, I
25 believe, and they have to get their profit from the

1 upper line and that's what we're talking here, WNAR,
2 ISRS, and delivery charges and meters, that's their
3 profit center. So now we're talking about bumping the
4 profit center 15 percent on ISRS when they're already
5 making a profit as they're telling their shareholders
6 they're making more profit in Missouri on ISRS.

7 And, actually, in her outlook they want to
8 -- Spire Missouri seven to eight percent rate growth
9 is an outlook to their shareholders because they want
10 to drive revenue five to seven percent. It's a
11 company, I understand we have growth, but we also have
12 inflation rates and we have to somewhere be close to
13 each other and 15 percent is not close to three.

14 That's all I have to say.

15 JUDGE SEYER: Mr. Underwood, when
16 you're referring to ISRS is that I-R -- I'm sorry,
17 I-S-R-S?

18 MR. UNDERWOOD: Yes.

19 JUDGE SEYER: All right. Any
20 Commissioner questions? Fair enough. Thank you.

21 Next on the list is Carolyn Niswonger.
22 Thank you. Can you raise your right hand?

23 CAROLYN NISWONGER,
24 a Witness, being first duly sworn, testified under
25 oath as follows:

1 JUDGE SEYER: Go ahead and state and
2 spell your name.

3 MS. NISWONGER: My name is Carolyn
4 Niswonger C-A-R-O-L-Y-N, last name is Niswonger
5 N-I-S-W-O-N-G-E-R. My name is different on the list.
6 I'm so sorry. I used my nickname.

7 Well, first, good afternoon members of the
8 Commission, and staff members, and the counsel for
9 various offices and organizations. I want to thank
10 you all for being here today and giving me the
11 opportunity to speak. I really do appreciate you
12 coming to our communities and allowing us to share our
13 thoughts. But I will apologize for using my phone. I
14 hope you will forgive me.

15 So I'm sure that I'll be echoing a lot of
16 what my fellow constituents have to say so I will keep
17 this short and sweet. But I'm here today as a
18 concerned rate paying member of the public who is
19 deeply alarmed and in opposition to the proposed rate
20 increase. Right now people in our communities are
21 struggling to keep up with the cost of living. Rent
22 is high. Groceries are expensive. Families are
23 making the impossible choice every day to pay the
24 utility bill or fill a prescription, putting food on
25 the table. Yet Spire, an essential utility company

1 with a considerable monopoly over the critical
2 service -- over this critical service, is proposing to
3 raise rates once again. We're not talking about a
4 company that is barely scraping by. This is not about
5 survival for them, it's about profit. People that are
6 paying the price for that profit are the families who
7 rely on them to heat their homes, to cook their food
8 and to take care of their kids.

9 Now, let's be clear, energy is not a
10 luxury, it is a human need and should be treated that
11 way. Raising rates in this economic climate is not
12 just irresponsible, it is immoral. This
13 disproportionately impacts our most vulnerable, which
14 consist of the elderly, low income families, those who
15 are on fixed incomes and people with disabilities.
16 And it sends a clear message that corporate profits
17 matter more than people's lives.

18 I urge the Commission to deny this rate
19 hike. If Spire wants to earn public trust, it should
20 look inward before asking struggling families to
21 shoulder more of the burden. We deserve an energy
22 system that works for the people and not one that
23 extracts every dollar from them.

24 Thank you all again so very much for the
25 opportunity today.

1 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you. Are there
2 any questions from the Commission? Hearing none.
3 Thank you.

4 Next on the list is Lynn Strough.

5 MS. STROUGH: My name is, actually,
6 Lynnette L-Y-N-N-E-T-T-E, Strough S-T-R-O-U-G-H.

7 JUDGE SEYER: Could I swear you in?

8 MS. STROUGH: Yes, sir.

9 LYNETTE STROUGH,
10 a Witness, being first duly sworn, testified under
11 oath as follows:

12 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you.

13 MS. STROUGH: I'm going to piggyback on
14 what a lot of my fellow concerned citizens has said.
15 And basically, it's coming down to, and I said it
16 before, how often are you guys actually checking your
17 pipelines?

18 JUDGE SEYER: I'm sorry. Checking
19 their what?

20 MS. STROUGH: Their pipeline.

21 JUDGE SEYER: Okay.

22 MS. STROUGH: The reason why I'm asking and
23 someone just brought it up a little bit ago --

24 JUDGE SEYER: Just a second. I hate
25 to interrupt you.

1 MS. STROUGH: I'm trying to be nicer than I
2 was earlier.

3 JUDGE SEYER: I wasn't here for that
4 but I do appreciate that.

5 MS. STROUGH: Someone just brought up that
6 they're being -- we're giving money to Spire on our
7 bills about infrastructure and everything. Okay. So
8 we really can't say, hey, they need a 14 percent raise
9 or a 15 percent raise here so we can go back and take
10 care of those pipelines. And mainly coming down to
11 they're just wanting to get a raise for their
12 shareholders and themselves.

13 And I noticed that there is a little bit of
14 conflict of interest on this because the Missouri
15 School Board Association, we're also, as citizens of
16 the State of Missouri, or any state, we already give
17 in taxes to the boards of education. All right. So
18 I'm having a little bit of issue saying, hey, since
19 they're a part of owning an investment in Spire, that
20 they need to have more given to them in profit. And
21 then I also had brought up, because it was said, that
22 they're needing to put on new meters on the house.
23 Well, I was at work and I had come home to have a new
24 meter put on and it had already been put on. But they
25 said they need to put some more new meters on the home

1 and they've already done it. So my thought is,
2 please, don't approve this raise, this \$14, basically,
3 a month. I mean, I'm on Social Security and that
4 don't mean nothing. And like this other person
5 says -- sorry about that. We're done. That was my
6 three-minute time. Okay.

7 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you Ms. Strough.
8 Are there any questions from the Commission? All
9 right. Thank you.

10 Next name on the list is Diane Waddell.

11 DIANE WADDELL,
12 a Witness, being first duly sworn, testified under
13 oath as follows:

14 JUDGE SEYER: If you could, state
15 and spell your name.

16 MS. WADDELL: Diane Waddell D-I-A-N-E
17 W-A-D-D-E-L-L.

18 JUDGE SEYER: Go ahead.

19 MS. WADDELL: I come here to represent
20 myself, as well as a group called Ecumenical Eco
21 Justice. The Eco standing for environment as well as
22 economics. But we -- and we stand with persons of
23 lower income who -- and persons who are on a fixed
24 income who are often health challenged, so persons of
25 lower or fixed income, and those persons who are

1 health challenged would be disproportionately affected
2 by rate hikes.

3 I worked as a nurse practitioner for many
4 years in a group clinic here in St. Joseph and I have
5 discussed with patients, even though we give them free
6 health care, they don't always get their medication
7 free. So they come in and maybe only take half their
8 diabetic medications or even none of their
9 medications. They've had to make choices between food
10 or utilities or medications. So I've seen that
11 firsthand.

12 One time I was volunteering taking
13 Christmas gifts, actually, to children whose parents
14 were incarcerated, and I know this isn't directly
15 related to natural gas, but the only heat which
16 appeared to be in the home was small room heaters with
17 these little children running around. Those two
18 events just have stayed in my memory for persons who
19 particularly need help, need to be supported and don't
20 need rate hikes for their utilities.

21 So I would appreciate that you would
22 remember just these issues and those disproportionately
23 affected by these hikes.

24 Thank you very much.

25 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you. Any

1 questions. All right. Hearing none, that's the last
2 name on the list but are there any people here in the
3 room that did not sign up but would like to testify?
4 All right.

5 If you have further comments after the
6 hearing or if you would prefer to submit your
7 comments, you may submit them via the Commission's
8 website. It is PSC.MO.GOV. On the right side of the
9 home page there's a link entitled "Submit Comments".
10 You click on that link to submit your comments. Make
11 sure that you reference this case number which is
12 GR-2025-0107.

13 Commissioner Mitchell, would you like to
14 make any closing remarks?

15 COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: Sure. Again, on
16 behalf of the Commission, thank you for being here and
17 we appreciate your testimony. All of the information
18 that you've provided us this afternoon is very
19 valuable to the Commission and helps us make the best
20 decisions that we can. So, again, thank you for being
21 here and sharing your time with us.

22 JUDGE SEYER: And I would like to
23 also thank you for your participation today. This
24 hearing is now adjourned and we are off the record.

25 (Proceeding concluded at 1:22 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Lori A. McIntosh, a Certified Court Reporter within and for the State of Missouri, do hereby certify that the witness whose testimony appears in the foregoing deposition was duly sworn by me; that the testimony of said witness was taken by me to the best of my ability and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this deposition was taken, and further that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



Lori A. McIntosh, MO CCR #1142

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