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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 The Empire District)
Electric Company d/b/a)
Liberty for Authority to)
File Tariffs Increasing) File No. GR-2024-0261
Rates for Electric Service)
Provided to Customers In Its)
Missouri Service Area)

July 25, 2025
12:00 p.m.

Webex

VOLUME IX

CHARLES HATCHER,
REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

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

COMMISSIONERS

Reported by:
Colin Wallis, Lexitas Legal, St. Louis, MO 63101

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(Starting time of the hearing: 1:15 p.m.)

REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Let's go on the record. Today is July 25th, 2025, and the current time is 1:15 p.m. The Commission has set this time for a local public hearing in this case, and the Commission sets the local public hearing into two parts. The question and answer portion, and the testimony or the comment portion. A question and answer portion, which you just participated in, has concluded, and we are now going to start the testimony or the comment portion. I mentioned this, because the commissioners will not be able to answer any questions. They need to be impartial until all the evidence is presented at the evidentiary hearing. We will now start the comment portion of the hearing.

The Missouri Public Service Commission has set this time for a local public hearing to give members of the public a chance to comment about the Liberty's request for a rate increase. This is case number ER-2024-0261. The Commission is made up of five commissioners, and we currently have one

1 vacancy. The Commission's chair is Kayla Hahn,
2 and there is also commissioners Maida Coleman,
3 Commissioner Glenn Kolkmeyer, and Commissioner
4 John Mitchell. They're appointed by the
5 governor and confirmed by the Senate. The
6 commissioner employs a staff of engineers,
7 accountants, attorneys, financial analysts and
8 other specialists in the field of utility
9 regulation.

10 The Commission regulates the rate charged
11 by public utility companies to ensure that
12 those rates are just and reasonable. The
13 Commission also regulates the quality of
14 service and safety of operations. My name is
15 Charles Hatcher. I'm the regulatory law judge
16 that will oversee this hearing. With me on the
17 WebEx today are Commission Chair Kayla Hahn,
18 Commissioner Maida Coleman and Commissioner
19 John Mitchell. I believe that Commissioner
20 Glenn Kolkmeyer will be joining us a little bit
21 later. Are there any commissioners that would
22 like to make any opening remarks?

23 CHAIR HAHN: Of course, thanks, Judge
24 Hatcher. Just want to take a minute and thank
25 for everyone getting online this afternoon to

1 participate in this local public hearing. We
2 know that you can do a lot of things with your
3 Friday afternoon, but we really look forward to
4 hearing your comments in this case and
5 appreciate your time, and, so, on behalf of all
6 the commissioners, welcome, and we look forward
7 to hearing from you. Thank you.

8 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
9 chair Hahn. Let's go ahead and turn to the
10 parties to enter their appearance for the
11 record. First for the company, Liberty.
12 Please go ahead.

13 MS. CARTER: Diana Carter for the Empire
14 District Electric Company doing business as
15 Liberty.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
17 And for the staff of the Commission?

18 MR. VANDERGRIFF: Good afternoon, I'm Eric
19 Vandergriff. Our business address is 200
20 Madison Street, P.O. Box 360 Jefferson City,
21 Missouri 65102.

22 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
23 sir, and the Office of the Public Counsel.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Nathan Williams, Chief
25 Deputy Public Counsel, appearing on behalf of

1 the public and the Office of the Public
2 Counsel.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
4 and this case has had several parties
5 intervene. If those parties are here, and
6 would like to introduce themselves for the
7 record, please do so now. Okay, hearing none,
8 this is a fairly well-attended hearing, and the
9 Commission does want to hear from all of you.
10 Therefore, we're going to need to limit
11 comments to three minutes each.

12 This makes sure that you have time to give
13 your comments, as well as time for your
14 neighbors who are attending to also make their
15 comments. You can feel free to let us that you
16 just echo some earlier remarks, and later on,
17 if you need to feel the need to give further
18 comments, I'll give instructions on how to give
19 those in writing on this case. I do ask that
20 everyone please be polite and courteous and
21 respect other people's opinions just as you
22 would hopefully expect the same courtesy from
23 them.

24 When I call your name, please unmute
25 yourself and let me know that you're here.

1 That will bring you to the front of our WebEx
2 screen. I will then place you under oath and
3 ask you to spell your last name for our court
4 reporter. With that in mind, I'll go ahead and
5 start calling names on our list. If you have
6 not signed up, once I finished with the persons
7 who have, then I'll open this up to the
8 audience and start allowing people who have not
9 preregistered to go ahead and give their
10 comments to the commission as well. The first
11 name I have on my list is Steve. Steve, if
12 you're on a phone, it is star six to unmute.
13 If you're on WebEx app on your phone or --

14 MR. COOPER: Yes, I'm here.

15 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
16 Steve. I appreciate that. Can I go ahead and
17 get your last name, sir.

18 MR. COOPER: C-o-o-p-e-r.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 and I'll go ahead and swear you in.

21 (Steve Cooper sworn.)

22 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
23 sir. Please go ahead with your comment.

24 MR. COOPER: Well, I was listening to the
25 questions and answers, and regarding the

1 comments made by, I forget her name, I am
2 sorry, but she was with Liberty. She was
3 talking about the profits in 2023, which they
4 are basing -- basing their rate hikes on, said
5 it was 150 million. They protected that the
6 want is 186 million. She also said that during
7 this time, they expected a 7.25 percent
8 increase.

9 According to my calculations doing simple
10 math, that's more of almost 35 percent. And I
11 just don't -- I listened to the explanations,
12 and it did not just sit with me. And they also
13 failed to, you know -- they talked about the
14 fact that the price for kilowatt per hour
15 wasn't going to go up that much, but at the
16 same time, they were talking about the service
17 charges going up \$3, which is basically another
18 25 percent of what it is right now. And I just
19 don't see that that justifies, according to my
20 flier that I received, a 39 percent increase.
21 I just don't understand. And that's all I have
22 to say. Thank you.

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
24 Mr. Cooper. I appreciate you taking time to be
25 here today. The next name I have is Andy

1 McNeff.

2 MS. MCNEFF: Could be it Cindy McNeff?

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Ah, yes. I
4 can't read my handwriting. Thank you very
5 much.

6 MS. MCNEFF: God bless you.

7 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Please
8 spell your name for our court reporter, ma'am?

9 MS. MCNEFF: C-i-n-d-y, last name, M as in
10 Mary, c, as in Charles, N, as in Nancy, Edward,
11 Frank, Frank.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Okay, thank
13 you very much. And let me go ahead and swear
14 you in.

15 (Cindy McNeff sworn.)

16 MS. MCNEFF: Absolutely, yes.

17 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
18 Please go ahead with your comments.

19 MS. MCNEFF: I understand that Liberty has
20 bought out Empire, and Liberty is owned by
21 Algonquin, a parent company. That it is a
22 company that is based on stock. Individuals
23 own stock, and so they owe their stockholders
24 an appropriate amount of return on their
25 investment. I will tell you that one in five

1 in my county, Jasper County are on fixed
2 income. Economic security corporations who
3 offers assistance with utilities are out of
4 funds until October.

5 There are some others that do -- some,
6 like every other year, but these are -- there
7 will be more and more people that are unable to
8 keep with all of the other costs that are
9 rising. The increase that is requested is in
10 excess of what we would -- we're being told
11 that cost of living is increasing.

12 I understand that the company is saying
13 it's not based on cost of living, but what are
14 they planning to do to benefit the end user? I
15 make -- I get 1,350 a month, pay 675 a month
16 for rent. That doesn't leave very much to pay
17 for utilities, and certainly not for what is
18 approaching a 30 percent increase. And that
19 doesn't cover those types of -- there are
20 several different line items on the bill that
21 can fluctuate depending upon the cost of the
22 market they have to pay to buy coal and other
23 items to produce their energy, their
24 electricity.

25 In the age of AI, nano technology, wind

1 energy and solar energy, why are people who are
2 at the brink of financial disaster being asked
3 to shoulder the responsibility of shareholders'
4 profits, and the ongoing prolific growth that
5 Liberty is seeing. In the Joplin area alone,
6 we've seen an incredible increase in the number
7 of large businesses in the south -- southern
8 part of town. I have no idea -- my internal
9 clock doesn't work very well, so I don't know
10 how much of my time I've utilized, but what
11 I'm -- my point is, you can't get blood out of
12 a turnip or a rock, and I will be 69 in
13 December. I can't go out and work due to
14 neurological events and deficits. I don't
15 understand how the company has the gall to
16 expect that we're going to absorb a 29.54
17 increase, and the people that use the least
18 kilowatt hours are paying the highest rate.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 Ms. McNeff. I appreciate your comments, and I
21 appreciate you being here today.

22 MS. MCNEFF: I -- God takes care of me,
23 and I thank -- I'm thankful every day. I thank
24 you for your participation, and I'm speaking
25 for people who are not able to articulate their

1 plight, and God will take care of me
2 regardless. Thank you for your time,
3 commissioners, and the real problem, I feel, is
4 a public --

5 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Ms. McNeff,
6 I need you to go ahead and finish your thought.
7 Your time has expired, though.

8 MS. MCNEFF: I appreciate that. The
9 Public Commission -- the oversight of the --
10 are able -- the ability of the public attorneys
11 to oversee Liberty is limited. There are
12 already 800 questions that are out there
13 unanswered, so I appreciate what can be done to
14 hold Liberty and Algonquin accountable for
15 their actions and activities. God bless and
16 good day.

17 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
18 Ms. McNeff. I appreciate you being here today.
19 That is all the witnesses I have who
20 preregistered to testify. What I'll do now is
21 open it up to anyone who is in the audience who
22 would like to testify. It is WebEx, so it's a
23 little bit unique, but what we've been doing is
24 kind of go ahead and let you speak up, and then
25 I'll ask you your name. Please be a little

1 patient, since we don't have exactly an order
2 that we're following here. But we will try and
3 make sure that everyone gets their chance to
4 speak. So, if you're on a phone and would like
5 to give your comments to the Commission, it is
6 star six. You press star six to unmute, and if
7 you're on the WebEx app, there's just an unmute
8 button there. Would anyone else like to give
9 their comments to the Commission on this rate
10 increase request?

11 MR. HUTCHINSON: Yes, I would.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, I have
13 a name of Aaron. Can give me your last name?

14 MR. HUTCHINSON: Hutchinson,
15 H-u-t-c-h-i-n-s-o-n.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
17 sir. And let me swear you in.

18 (Aaron Hutchinson sworn.)

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 sir. Please go ahead with your comment.

21 MR. HUTCHINSON: Basically, I asked the
22 question earlier about the profit margins.
23 2023, it was \$150.8 million. Then in '24, she
24 stated they did some projects, and it was 70.5
25 million, and basically the profit will come

1 back because the projects are done. I also
2 live in a very poor county, and the rate
3 increase of 30 to 40 percent, you know, just a
4 little background: my wife is a teacher. She
5 doesn't get that kind of raise, you know. She
6 never has. Most people don't, and 30 to
7 40 percent increase on utility bills will hurt
8 a lot of people. It's going to create a lot
9 of, you know, I hate to say this, it could
10 create some debt and everything else, because
11 people can't afford it.

12 But anyway, I just think it's kind of
13 ludicrous of the rate increase. I don't deny
14 any business to make a profit. However, I
15 think it should be regulated to, you know, 3 to
16 5 percent max yearly or something of that
17 nature. But not to oversee a certain amount in
18 such a short period of time. Basically, that's
19 all I got.

20 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
21 Mr. Hutchinson. I appreciate you being here
22 today. Do we have anyone else who would like
23 to give their comments to the Commission? I
24 forget that WebEx has that Raise Your Hand
25 button, but just speak up or do the raising

1 your hand. Either will work. If you're on the
2 phone, it is star six to unmute.

3 MS. ROOFFENER: I have a comment. Can you
4 hear me?

5 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes. I
6 have a first name of Michelle. Can you give us
7 your last name, ma'am?

8 MS. ROOFFENER: It's spelled Rooffener,
9 R-o-o-f, as in Frank, E, as in Edward, n, as in
10 Nancy, e, as in Edward, r, as in Robert.

11 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Okay, thank
12 you. Let me swear you in.

13 (Michelle Rooffener sworn.)

14 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
15 Please go ahead with your comment.

16 MS. ROOFFENER: I concur with many of the
17 comments that have made. We do not get paid
18 pay increases at a rate from anywhere from 29
19 to 39 percent on our pay. This is an extreme
20 amount of money that it is very difficult for
21 most people to come up with. I will have to
22 make cuts in other areas to be able to afford.
23 I think my dissatisfaction with this, the fact
24 that, as somebody that's been responsible, I
25 change out my lightbulbs, and I unplug plugs.

1 I, you know, don't keep my lights on when I
2 leave a room. I can down a huge list of
3 changes I have made since last increase to
4 reduce the kilowatts that I use. I -- and to
5 be punished because I am being a responsible
6 energy user is, quite frankly, I hate use to
7 use the term because it sounds like I'm a
8 victim, but I'm going to use it, it's not fair.
9 And for those who are on a fixed income, it's,
10 you know, they -- they just don't have the
11 means to pay for this.

12 And I think that that's really all -- I
13 just feel like that I -- I'm hearing the
14 comments about the shareholders. That does
15 disturb me. That some of this money to try and
16 reimburse the shareholders, get more money from
17 them, versus -- and, so, as customers we are
18 helping them. That doesn't set very well with
19 me either. What about bonuses? What about
20 things like that? Is there not cuts that can
21 be made in other ways? As a company, is there
22 no ways that they can make cuts to help with
23 the costs instead of putting the burden on the
24 customers?

25 I think that that needs to be looked at

1 and addressed, and I think that is all I have
2 to say. Thank you for giving me the time.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
4 I appreciate your being here today.

5 MS. ROOFFENER: Thank you.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: We'll open
7 it back up. If there is anyone else who would
8 like to give their comments to the Commission,
9 otherwise we'll be closing our hearing. If
10 you're on a phone and you called in, it is star
11 six to unmute, and just start speaking up.
12 I'll go ahead and get your name and swear you
13 in. If you're on the WebEx, there's a button
14 that is just mute and unmute. Okay, if we
15 don't have any other witnesses coming forward,
16 I'll go ahead and start my process of closing
17 out the hearing.

18 MS. MCNEFF: How do we submit written
19 information?

20 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Let me --
21 yes, that's an excellent idea. Let me go ahead
22 and make that announcement. If you would like
23 to submit written comments or someone that you
24 know would like to submit comments that
25 couldn't be at one of our local public

1 hearings, and you can go to the PSC's webpage.
2 And that PSC.mo.gov. Again, that's
3 psc.mo.gov. And then the upper right hand
4 corner of that webpage, is a link labeled
5 Submit Comments. And just press on that link
6 and make sure to enter in the case number for
7 this case. And that case number is
8 ER-2024-0261. Again, that's ER-2024-0261.
9 Those last four numbers are the most important
10 0261.

11 I'll call again, if there are any other
12 attendees who would like to provide their
13 comments live to the commissioners, now is that
14 time. If you're on the phone, it's star six to
15 unmute. Otherwise, we'll be ending the
16 hearing. Okay, hearing no volunteers, I'll ask
17 for any closing remarks from the commissioners.

18 CHAIR HAHN: Sure, thanks, Judge. Just
19 appreciate everyone coming out this afternoon
20 again. I appreciate the comments that were
21 made. They help us make more informed
22 decisions, and we will make sure we take those
23 into consideration before any decision is made.
24 So, on behalf of the Commission, thank you all.

25 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, I

1 would like to thank everyone for their
2 attendance, the council and the commissioners,
3 and with that, we are adjourned. And let's go
4 off the record.

5 (Ending time of the hearing: 1:38 p.m.)

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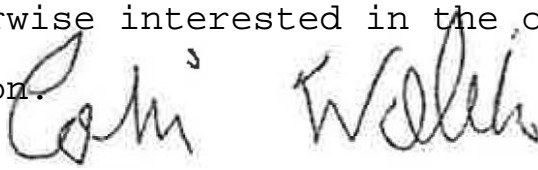
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1 I, Colin Wallis, in and for the State of
2 Missouri do hereby certify that the witness
3 whose testimony appears in the foregoing
4 Examination Under Oath was duly sworn by me;
5 that the testimony of the said witness was
6 taken by me to the best 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.



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