

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

In the Matter of Evergy Metro, Inc. d/b/a Evergy)
Missouri Metro’s Request for Authority to) Case No. ER-2026-0143
Implement A General Rate Increase for Electric)
Service)

EVERGY’S RESPONSE TO OPC’S PROPOSED PROCEDURAL SCHEDULE

COMES NOW, Evergy Metro, Inc. d/b/a Evergy Missouri Metro (“Evergy Missouri Metro” or “EMM”), by and through counsel, and files its *Response to OPC’s Proposed Procedural Schedule* (“Response”) and states as follows:

1. On March 9, 2026, the Office of the Public Counsel (“OPC”) filed its Proposed Procedural Schedule and Suggestions in Support of Proposed Schedule. OPC’s proposal is in response to Staff and EMM’s Joint Proposed Procedural Schedule which was filed on March 6, 2026. For the reasons stated herein, EMM requests that the Commission adopt the Joint Proposed Procedural Schedule proposed by Staff and EMM and reject the OPC’s Proposed Procedural Schedule.

2. This Response will address the following issues related to OPC’s Proposed Procedural Schedule: (1) OPC’s proposal to schedule local public hearings (“LPHs”) before the filing of Non-Company Direct testimony on revenue requirement and rate design issues; and (2) OPC’s proposal to schedule evidentiary hearings a week earlier than those proposed by Staff and EMM.

LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE

3. In its Proposed Procedural Schedule, OPC has requested that the Commission modify its standard approach to the scheduling of LPHs by moving the dates for the LPHs to

approximately a month before the filing of Non-Company Direct Testimony on revenue requirement issues and about six weeks before the filing of Non-Company Direct Testimony on rate design issues. OPC justifies its proposal by arguing that early LPHs would allow OPC and Staff to investigate issues raised by the public at LPHs in their pre-filed direct testimony. In particular, OPC mentions that it expects “affordability” and “rate shock” to be issues in the case. (OPC Suggestions, pp. 3-4).

4. While rate affordability and rate impacts on customers are important and fundamental issues in most rate cases before the Commission, it is not necessary to hold early LPHs to address these concerns. In this case, EMM witness Darrin Ives has specifically addressed rate affordability and customer impacts of the proposed rate increase in his direct testimony. (See Ives Direct, pp. 3-11) OPC and other parties may respond to this testimony in their rebuttal testimony.¹

5. Second, it is not necessary for the Commission to modify its standard practice of scheduling LPHs after the filing of the Non-Company direct testimony to allow OPC to address issues raised at LPHs. The testimony of customers at the LPH will be part of the record and will be considered by the Commission. Such testimony is expected to be more helpful if the customers who testify have a more complete understanding of the issues in the case. In past rate cases, OPC has also addressed the testimony of the public at LPHs in its rebuttal testimony.² In the recent Empire District electric rate case, the Commission considered LPH testimony and addressed it in

¹ OPC witness Geoff Marke addressed affordability and customer impact issues in rebuttal testimony in the recent Empire District Electric case, File No. ER-2024-0261. (Ex. 204, Marke Rebuttal, pp. 5-13).

² See e.g., Rebuttal Testimony of Lisa Kremer, File No. ER-2024-0189, p. 14 (filed August 6, 2024).

its *Report and Order* even though the LPHs occurred after the filing of the Non-Company direct testimony on revenue requirement and rate design issues.³

6. Third, Staff and OPC typically provide a summary of their cases to the attendees at the LPHs.⁴ The summary of Staff and OPC direct cases at the LPHs allows the public to better understand the real differences between the public utility and Staff/OPC regarding the overall rate increase and rate design issues. If the LPHs occur prior to the filing of the direct testimony by Staff and OPC, as proposed by OPC in this case, it will be more difficult for Staff and OPC to summarize their direct cases which would not have been filed at the time of the LPH.

7. There is also a fundamental logistical issue related to OPC's proposal in this case. As Staff noted in the Joint Procedural Schedule, the Company must have the Commission approval of the bill insert that includes the dates for LPHs at a minimum of two months before the LPHs are scheduled so that the bill inserts may be timely inserted into customer bills in the billing cycle in advance of the LPHs.⁵ If the LPHs are scheduled in the first week of June, as proposed by OPC, then the dates and locations of the LPHs will need to be secured by the Regulatory Law Judge and approved by the Commission by April 1, 2026. The approval of the bill insert by April 1st will be expected to be challenging for the Regulatory Law Judge and the Commission, given the past difficulty of finding and securing appropriate locations for the LPHs in EMM's service area.

³ See *Report and Order*, pp. 32-37, 53-37, 61-64, Re Empire District Electric Company, File No. ER-2024-0261 (filed Jan. 24, 2026); See also *Order Setting Procedural Schedule, Re Empire District Electric Company*, File No. ER-2024-0261 (Dec. 20, 2024).

⁴ See *Joint Proposed Procedural Schedule*, p. 2.

⁵ See *Joint Proposed Procedural Schedule*, p. 2, para. 3.

8. For all these reasons, the Commission should reject the OPC's proposal to modify the Commission's standard practice of scheduling LPHs after the filing of the Non-Company direct testimony on revenue requirement and rate design issues.

9. On March 11, 2026, OPC also filed its Motion For Expedited Treatment and Suggestions For Local Public Hearing Locations in which OPC suggested that the Commission hold a total of four in-person LPHs and two virtual LPHs. Given the level of participation by the public at LPHs in EMM's last rate case, EMM believes that one in-person LPH and two virtual LPHs will be preferable and more convenient to give the public the opportunity to participate in the rate case process while mitigating rate case expenses for the Commission and the parties.⁶

SCHEDULING OF EVIDENTIARY HEARINGS

10. In the Joint Proposed Procedural Schedule, the Staff and EMM proposed that evidentiary hearings be scheduled to commence on October 5, 2026. This date is one week later than the date included for evidentiary hearings in the Commission's recent procedural order.⁷ EMM believes that a slight delay in the commencement of evidentiary hearings would be helpful to the parties to allow them to attempt to narrow or resolve the contested issues, prior to the commencement of hearings. In past rate cases, additional time has been necessary to reach agreement among the parties on a wide range of issues. If sufficient time is not provided for such settlement discussions, then it is necessary to address multiple pages of issues in the List of Issues and Position Statements even though resolution of a large number of the issues would have been

⁶ In EMM's last rate case, File No. ER-2016-0285, a total of 17 customers testified at the LPHs as follows: Martin Community Center, Marshall—1 customer; Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, Kansas City, Missouri—6 customers; Gladstone Community Center, Gladstone, Missouri—2 customers; Gregg/Kline Community Center, Kansas City, M—8 customers. (Vol. 2-5 of transcripts).

⁷ *Order Suspending Tariff, Giving Notice of Contested Case Status, Delegating Authority, and Scheduling Evidentiary Hearings*, File No. ER-2026-0143 (filed Feb. 19, 2026).

possible if there had been more time in the schedule for settlement discussions. In addition, the True-Up Direct testimony is not expected to be filed until September 10, and additional time will be helpful for the parties to complete the reconciliation which facilitates settlement discussions. For these reasons, EMM has supported the Joint Procedural Schedule filed by Staff which has evidentiary hearings commencing on October 5 rather than one week earlier.

11. For these reasons, EMM respectfully requests that the Commission approve the Joint Procedural Schedule which has evidentiary hearings proposed for October 5-16, 2026.

WHEREFORE, Evergy Missouri Metro respectfully requests that the Commission accept the Joint Procedural Schedule filed by Staff and EMM in this matter on March 6, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Roger W. Steiner

Roger W. Steiner, MBN 39586
Cole Bailey, MBN 77268
Evergy, Inc.
1200 Main – 17th Floor
Kansas City, Missouri 64105
Phone: (816) 556-2314
roger.steiner@evergy.com
cole.bailey@evergy.com

Karl Zobrist, MBN 28325
Jacqueline M. Whipple, MBN 65270
Chandler Hiatt, MBN 75604
Dentons US LLP
4520 Main Street, Suite 1100
Kansas City, MO 64111 Phone:
(816) 460-2400
karl.zobrist@dentons.com
jacqueline.whipple@dentons.com
chandler.hiatt@dentons.com

James M. Fischer, MBN 27543
Fischer & Dority, P.C.
2081 Honeysuckle Lane
Jefferson City, Missouri
65109 Phone: (573)353-8647
jfischerpc@aol.com

Attorneys for Evergy Missouri Metro

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the above and foregoing document was served upon counsel for all parties on this 13th day of March 2026, by either e-mail or U.S. Mail, postage prepaid.

/s/ Roger W. Steiner

Roger W. Steiner