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Service Commission

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Debt) Expense  
Witness: Amanda C. McMellen  
Sponsoring Party: MoPSC Staff  
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Case No.: ER-2004-0034  
HR-2004-0024 (Consolidated)  
Date Testimony Prepared: February 13, 2004  
as Modified: February 27, 2004

**MISSOURI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

**UTILITY SERVICES DIVISION**

**SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONY**

**OF**

**AMANDA C. MCMELLEN**

**AQUILA, INC. d/b/a AQUILA NETWORKS-MPS (Electric)**

**CASE NO. ER-2004-0034**

Exhibit No. 1027  
Case No(s) ER-2004-0034  
Date 3-1-04 Rptr RL

Jefferson City, Missouri  
February 2004


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

In the matter of Aquila, Inc. d/b/a Aquila Networks    )  
L&P and Aquila Networks MPS to implement a    ) Case No. ER-2004-0034  
general rate increase in electricity.                    )

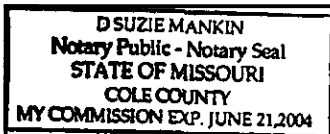
AFFIDAVIT OF AMANDA C. MCMELLEN

STATE OF MISSOURI    )  
                                  )        ss.  
COUNTY OF COLE    )

Amanda C. McMellen, of lawful age, on her oath states: that she has participated in the preparation of the following surrebuttal testimony as modified on February 27, 2004, in question and answer form, consisting of 8 pages to be presented in the above case; that the answers in the following surrebuttal testimony as modified on February 27, 2004, were given by her; that she has knowledge of the matters set forth in such answers; and that such matters are true and correct to the best of her knowledge and belief.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Amanda C. McMellen

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 26<sup>th</sup> day of February 2004.



  
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**AQUILA, INC., d/b/a AQUILA NETWORKS-MPS (Electric)**

**CASE NO. ER-2004-0034**

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**SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF**  
**AMANDA C. McMELLEN**  
**AQUILA, INC., d/b/a AQUILA NETWORKS-MPS (Electric)**

**CASE NO. ER-2004-0034**

Q. Please state your name and business address.

A. Amanda C. McMellen, 200 Madison Street, Suite 440, Jefferson City, MO  
65102.

Q. Are you the same Amanda C. McMellen that previously filed direct and  
rebuttal testimony in this case?

A. Yes, I am.

Q. What is the purpose of this testimony?

A. I will address certain aspects of the Aquila Networks-MPS (MPS)  
, division of Aquila, Inc. (Aquila or Company) rebuttal filing  
regarding electric revenues for MPS and uncollectible (bad debts) expense for MPS

**REVENUES**

Q. Did Aquila address the issue of revenues in its rebuttal testimony?

A. Yes. Aquila witness Eric L. Watkins, on pages 2 and 3 of his rebuttal  
testimony, criticizes the method used by the Staff to adjust rate codes MO710 and MO711  
and presents a new method the Company proposes to use to calculate the Company's  
adjustments to these rate codes.

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1 Q. Why are the adjustments to rate codes MO710 and MO711 an issue?

2 A. Rate codes MO710 and MO711 are small commercial customers. MO710  
3 includes those customers who do not have demand meters while MO711 includes the  
4 customers who do have demand meters. Customers are switched from MO710 to MO711  
5 when demand meters are installed. When the two rate codes are analyzed individually, each  
6 rate code's growth calculation is misleading because these customers are likely to have an  
7 average usage that is higher than the average usage of MO710, but lower than the average  
8 usage of MO711. The Staff chose to combine these rate codes to get a more accurate result.

9 Q. What is the method Aquila used to calculate the adjustments to rate codes  
10 MO710 and MO711, that is described in Mr. Watkins' rebuttal testimony on pages 2 and 3?

11 A. The Company proposes to use the kWh usage and revenue per customer per  
12 month from rate code MO710 to calculate growth for both MO710 and MO711. In other  
13 words, Aquila assumed that the average usage per customer for rate code MO710 is the same  
14 for all new customers in rate code MO711. Then, Aquila added the results of the two growth  
15 calculations for MO710 and MO711 together for the total Company adjustment of  
16 \$1,059,073.

17 Q. Does the Staff have concerns with Aquila's method?

18 A. Yes. First, use of the kWh usage and revenue from MO710 for new customers  
19 and for the customers switching to MO711 from MO710 certainly understates revenues.  
20 There was no information provided to the Staff to justify an assumption that the customers  
21 that switched from MO710 to MO711 would have the exact same normalized usage and  
22 revenues as the average customer in MO710. The actual usage for customers in the MO711  
23 rate code was ignored in the calculation proposed by Mr. Watkins. Also, a significant number

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1 of new customers in MO711 were added in the period analyzed (test year ending  
2 December 31, 2002 and update period through September 30, 2003) that were not customers  
3 switching from MO710. Even if all the customers that left MO710 did switch to MO711,  
4 there is still customer growth of around 1,500 customers in MO711.

5 Q. Does the Company have concerns with the Staff's method?

6 A. Yes. In Mr. Watkins' rebuttal testimony on page 2, he states:

7 If the actual average kWh usage and revenue are used for the customers  
8 that are switching to Mo711 is dramatically different than the average  
9 kWh usage computed with Ms. McMellen's approach, then revenues  
10 will be overstated or understated.

11 Q. How do you respond?

12 A. Mr. Watkins' criticism applies equally to both the method the Staff used and  
13 the method the Company used to annualize growth for these rate codes. If the combination of  
14 the MO710 and MO711 kWh usage and revenue are different than the actual average, then the  
15 Staff's revenues will be overstated or understated. However, the Company's method of using  
16 the average kWh usage and revenue from MO710 to calculate growth for MO711 is definitely  
17 more likely to understate revenues because the actual average should be more than the  
18 MO710 average but less than the MO711 average. By considering the actual usage per  
19 customer for both rate codes, the Staff's method is based upon more factual data than  
20 Mr. Watkins' method, which ignores all usage data for rate code MO711.

21 Q. Why wasn't the actual average used for the customers that switched from  
22 MO710 to MO711?

23 A. The actual average for the customers that switched is unknown at this time. If  
24 the actual average was known, the Staff would have used it in this case. In order to calculate  
25 the actual average, the Staff needed all the monthly data (customer, usage, revenue, etc.) for

1 each customer that switched. Although this information has been provided recently, there has  
2 not been enough time to do an analysis for purposes of this testimony filing. The Staff  
3 reserves the right to alter this adjustment if the new information warrants a change.

4 Q. What is the Staff's recommendation?

5 A. The Staff believes combining rate codes MO710 and MO711 is still the most  
6 accurate method available at this time because it reflects all the customers in both rate codes.

7 **UNCOLLECTIBLE (BAD DEBT) EXPENSE**

8 Q. Did Aquila address the issue of uncollectible (bad debt) expense in its rebuttal  
9 testimony?

10 A. Yes. Aquila witness Dennis R. Williams, in his rebuttal testimony, critiques  
11 the method the Staff used to calculate the Company's adjustments to uncollectible (bad debt)  
12 expense for MPS.

13 Q. What was the Staff's method?

14 A. The Staff used a three-year and nine-month average for MPS  
15 of actual net write-off rates, multiplied by the Staff's  
16 normalized revenue, to calculate bad debt expense.

17 Q. What is Aquila's concern with the Staff's method?

18 A. In Mr. Williams' rebuttal testimony on page 21, he states:

19 By including only the first 9 months in 2003 in the average  
20 uncollectible rate calculation, Staff has arbitrarily excluded the  
21 Company's net write-offs recorded during the fourth quarter of 2003.  
22 Historically, in the past two years, fourth quarter net write-offs have  
23 been higher than the first three quarters. The exclusion of fourth  
24 quarter write-offs results in an understatement of the total net write-offs  
25 for 2003 by approximately 50 percent for MPS. As  
26 such, it is not reasonable to disregard fourth quarter net write-offs  
27 because this will significantly skew the average uncollectible rate.

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1 Q. How do you respond?

2 A. The Staff has decided to update the uncollectible (bad debt) expense  
3 adjustment. Now the Staff is using the most current three-year period of October 2000  
4 through September 2003 for MPS  
5 . By updating the averages to include the most current  
6 three-year period, the Staff has addressed the Company's concern of the exclusion  
7 of fourth quarter net write-offs, without going outside the test year update period. There are  
8 now three full years (MPS) of data for bad debts expense reflected  
9 in the Staff's adjustment. The Company proposed using the period of September 30, 2003 as  
10 the test year update period in this case and the Commission ordered such a period. Also, the  
11 data used by Mr. Williams for the last three months of 2003 is just the net write-offs, which is  
12 only one piece of the puzzle. The net write-offs should be compared to revenues to calculate  
13 the average effective uncollectible rate used to make the adjustment to uncollectible (bad  
14 debt) expense.

15 Q. Does the Staff plan to update its adjustment through to December 31, 2003?

16 A. No. December 31, 2003 falls outside of the Commission ordered test year and  
17 update period, January 1, 2002 through September 30, 2003. Updating just the uncollectible  
18 (bad debt) expense should be considered an isolated "out of period" adjustment.

19 Q. Why are isolated "out of period" adjustments not appropriate for inclusion in  
20 rates?

21 A. An isolated "out of period" adjustment violates the principles established in the  
22 Suspension Order and Notice issued July 22, 2003. The Commission on page 2 stated:

23 The Company's proposal should also specify a complete list of  
24 accounts or items of expense, revenues, and rate base designed to



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1 prevent any mismatch in those areas. The Commission will not  
2 consider a true-up of isolated adjustments, but will examine only a  
3 "package" of adjustments designed to maintain the proper revenue-  
4 expense-rate base match at a proper pointing in time. [See *In re Kansas*  
5 *City Power & Light Company*, 26 Mo. P.S.C. (N.S.) 104, 110 (1983)]

6 Q. Did any party recommend a true-up in this case?

7 A. No. No party to this case, including the Company, requested a true-up.

8 Q. Who recommended the update period of September 30, 2003?

9 A. The Company recommended the update period of September 30, 2003, as  
10 explained in the Order Concerning Test Year and True-up, Resetting Evidentiary Hearings,  
11 Adopting Procedural Schedule, and Concerning Local Public Hearings, dated October 12,  
12 2003, as follows:

13 Aquila filed its test year recommendation as directed on August 5, and  
14 proposed the 12 months ending December 31, 2002. Aquila also  
15 recommended that that [sic] test year be updated for known and  
16 measurable changes through September 30, 2003.

17 Q. Why is there an established test year and update period?

18 A. Test year and update periods are established to provide a period of time for  
19 review and analysis of the utility's operations to determine the reasonableness and  
20 appropriateness of the rate filing. The test year forms the basis for any adjustments necessary  
21 to remove abnormalities that have occurred during the period and to reflect any increase or  
22 decrease to the accounts of the utility. Adjustments are made to the test year level of  
23 revenues, expenses and investment to determine the proper level of investment on which the  
24 utility is allowed to earn a return. After the recommended rate of return is determined for the  
25 utility, a review of existing rates is made to determine if any additional revenues are  
26 necessary. If the utility's earnings are deficient, rates need to be increased. In some cases,  
27 existing rates generate earnings in excess of authorized levels, which may indicate the need

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1 for rate reductions. The test year and update period are vehicles used to evaluate and  
2 determine the proper relationship between revenue, expense and investment. The relationship  
3 is essential to determine the appropriate level of earnings for the utility.

4 Q. What is an update period?

5 A. The use of a test year update period allows test year data to remain current  
6 through the update period for changes in material items that are known and measurable. Such  
7 items could include plant additions and retirements, payroll increases and changes in  
8 employee levels, customer growth, changes in fuel prices, etc. All elements that make up the  
9 revenue requirement are considered and the result may be an increase or decrease from  
10 previous levels. Test year amounts are adjusted to enable the parties to make rate  
11 recommendations on the basis of the most recent auditable information available.

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Q. Has the Company maintained consistency in its use of the update period ordered by the Commission?

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A. Unfortunately, no. The September 30, 2003 update period the Company suggested and adopted by the Commission has not been adhered to by Aquila. The Company has requested consideration in rates for the following items that will occur outside the test year and update period of September 30, 2003:

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- An April 1, 2004 payroll increase (see testimony of Staff witness Dana Eaves)
- A small increase in coal prices occurring on January 1, 2004 (see testimony of Staff witness Graham Vesely)
- An increase in property taxes for plant additions that won't be paid until December 31, 2004 (see testimony of Staff witness Trisha Miller)
- An increase in jurisdictional allocations for the loss of the city Odessa from wholesale customers in March or April 2004 (see testimony of Staff witness Alan Bax)

The Company has not made any effort to stay within the period of time to set rates that it originally requested from the Commission.

Q. Does this conclude your surrebuttal testimony?

A. Yes, it does.