

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

Rebecca Stark,	)	
	)	
Complainant,	)	
	)	
v.	)	<u>File No. WC-2026-0290</u>
	)	
Missouri-American Water Company,	)	
Respondent.	)	

STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

COMES NOW the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission (“Staff”), by and through the undersigned counsel, and tenders the following Staff Report and Recommendation. Staff states as follows:

I. Procedural History

1. On April 23, 2026, Rebecca Stark filed a formal complaint against Missouri-American Water Company (“MAWC” or “Company”). The complaint concerns disputed water and sewer charges arising from alleged excessive water usage after meter changes at the service address.

2. On April 27, 2026, the Commission issued its Corrected Order Giving Notice of Complaint and Directing Response. The order directed MAWC to file its answer by May 26, 2026, and directed Staff to file its report by June 15, 2026.

3. MAWC filed its Answer on May 26, 2026. Staff thereafter investigated the complaint, including review of customer statements, Company records, meter reading information, service orders, customer interaction notes, and meter test materials.

4. On June 4, 2026, Staff served data requests seeking additional meter-related information. On June 15, 2026, Staff filed a preliminary report and request for additional time because discovery responses remained outstanding. The Commission granted Staff an extension until July 3, 2026, to file its Report and Recommendation.

II. Complaint and Company Answer

5. Ms. Stark generally alleges that MAWC installed faulty meters or otherwise relied on faulty meter readings, causing water usage to be billed at levels she contends could not have occurred. The complaint identifies disputed water charges and related increased charges from the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District, and seeks reimbursement, interest, and other relief.

6. Ms. Stark further alleges that she was not living in the home during the primary disputed period; that she disputed the usage; that she requested inspections; and that she disagreed with Company's explanations attributing the usage to possible leaks, a toilet flapper, or customer-side conditions.

7. MAWC admits that it provides water service to the service address and that it is a public utility subject to the Commission's jurisdiction. MAWC denies that it installed faulty meters, produced faulty readings, or billed Ms. Stark for excess water charges.

8. MAWC admits that meters were installed at the residence on January 7, 2024, and May 20, 2024. MAWC also admits the usage amounts billed for the disputed billing periods, including 15,200 gallons for January 8, 2024, through January 25, 2024; and 19,200 gallons for January 26, 2024, through February 26, 2024. MAWC further admits approximately 8,300 gallons of usage for May 24, 2024, through June 25, 2024.

9. MAWC states that its personnel inspected the property, that the meter was found to be operating properly, that Company representatives did not observe leaks within the premises during their visits, and that all charges were based on actual meter readings obtained in the ordinary course of business.

III. Staff Investigation

10. Staff's investigation is described in the Staff Investigation Report attached hereto as **Exhibit A**. Staff summarizes that investigation here and incorporates the technical analysis in that memorandum into this Report and Recommendation.

11. Staff interviewed Ms. Stark and reviewed the information provided by the parties. Ms. Stark told Staff that she was not living in the home during the disputed January and February 2024 usage period, that she entered the home periodically to clean or make repairs, and that she did not hear running water. She identified only two small drips, which she states were not sufficient to account for the recorded usage. She also stated that the home is a small one-bedroom, one-bathroom residence and does not have several features that might otherwise explain sustained or extreme water use, including a dishwasher, ice maker, sprinkler system, or furnace humidifier.

12. Staff reviewed meter reading data, customer interaction records, service orders, and meter test results. Staff did not visit the property because the relevant events occurred in 2024, the meter had already been replaced, and Ms. Stark is no longer receiving unusually high-water bills.

13. The Company's records show high usage during January and February 2024. The records also show that later usage dropped substantially. Staff notes that a Company

representative manually read the meter on April 15, 2024, and documented that the meter had registered only approximately 400 gallons since March 25, 2024. The next bill, covering March 26 through April 23, 2024, was for approximately 700 gallons, and the following reading reflected approximately 600 gallons before the May 20, 2024, meter replacement.

14. Staff also reviewed Company service notes. Those notes contain statements suggesting that the Company could not find running water at the premises, that the toilet did not run while the representative was present, that usage had gone down, and that there “might have been something happening with meter during this time.”¹ Other Company notes referred to a possible toilet flapper problem and to the customer’s continued belief that the meter was wrong.

15. Staff reviewed the hourly and daily meter data. Staff found that the January-February usage showed a period of near-continuous use beginning shortly after installation of the January meter and then declining over time. Staff considered that pattern unusual for a conventional leak, because Staff would expect a leak ordinarily to be more continuous rather than steadily decreasing hour by hour over an extended period.

16. Staff also reviewed usage after the May 20, 2024, meter replacement. The replacement meter again showed periods of continuous or high usage, including some high hourly readings during times when residential use would ordinarily be less expected. Staff notes that some readings, if caused by actual water flow, would represent substantial flow that might ordinarily be noticeable within the residence.

¹ See Staff Memorandum, p. 3, footnote 4.

17. Ms. Stark requested that the meter be tested. MAWC performed a meter test on May 24, 2024. The test results showed the meter to be accurate at the time of the test under the applicable accuracy tolerance. Staff notes, however, that the test occurred after the disputed January-February billing period and after the meter had reportedly returned to low usage for several months.

18. Staff also notes a factual dispute concerning notice of the meter test. Staff's report states that Rule 16D of the Company's tariff provides that a customer-requested meter test will be witnessed by the customer, owner, or authorized representative, and that a certified copy of the test will be provided. MAWC states the customer was notified that the old meter would be tested, while Ms. Stark states that she was not notified and did not receive the test card.

IV. Staff Factual Findings

19. Staff did not receive evidence conclusively establishing that a leak existed during the disputed billing periods. Staff also did not receive evidence conclusively establishing that the meter or meter reading equipment failed during the disputed billing periods. A Commission decision on these issues will require the Commission to weigh the evidence and make witness credibility determinations.

21. The meter tested accurately at the time of the May 24, 2024 test, but that test does not conclusively establish how the meter or reading equipment functioned during the earlier disputed periods.

22. The usage data and Company records include facts supporting Ms. Stark's concern, including the vacancy of the home during the disputed period as described

by Ms. Stark, the later return to low usage, Company notes that no active leak was observed during later visits, and the unusual pattern of usage declining over time.

23. The usage data also include facts supporting MAWC's position that water passed through the meter, including actual meter readings, AMI data, and a later meter test showing accuracy within the applicable tolerance.

24. The present record therefore contains material factual disputes that cannot be resolved without Commission credibility and weight of the evidence determinations.

V. Staff Conclusions

25. Staff cannot determine from the present record whether the disputed usage was caused by a customer-side leak, a meter or meter-reading problem, or some other condition.

26. Staff is concerned by the usage pattern reflected in the meter data. If there had been a leak, Staff would generally expect more consistent usage. Some of the data appear consistent with a leaking toilet flapper, while other hourly readings appear unusually high and potentially inconsistent with an ordinary residential toilet leak.

VI. Staff Recommendation

29. Staff recommends that the Commission order the parties in interest to file such replies or other pleadings as they may deem necessary within a time certain and thereafter set a status hearing or issue such orders as the Commission deems appropriate.

WHEREFORE, Staff respectfully requests that the Commission accept this Staff Report and Recommendation as compliant with the Commission's orders.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Paul T. Graham

Paul T. Graham #30416

Senior Staff Counsel

P.O. Box 360

Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0360

(573) 522-8459

paul.graham@psc.mo.gov

Attorney for the Staff of the

Missouri Public Service Commission

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that copies of the foregoing have been mailed, hand-delivered, transmitted by facsimile, or electronically mailed to all counsel of record as reflected on the certified service list maintained by the Commission in its Electronic Filing Information System this 2nd day of July, 2026.

/s/ Paul T. Graham

Case No. WC-2026-0290

EXHIBIT A
Staff Investigation and Report

HAS BEEN DEEMED

CONFIDENTIAL

IN ITS ENTIRETY