M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Missouri Public Service Commission Official Case File
Case No. EO-2026-0306, In the Matter of the Application of Ryan Edwards for a Change of Electrical Supplier to Ozark Electric Cooperative, Inc. from The Empire District Electric Company, d/b/a Liberty

FROM: Alan J. Bax, Engineer – Engineering Analysis Department

/s/ Alan J. Bax / 08-17-2026
Industrial Analysis Division / Date

SUBJECT: Staff Recommendation

DATE: August 17, 2026

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission ("Staff") is not able to definitively recommend that the Missouri Public Service Commission ("Commission") approve the Application of Mr. Ryan Edwards, filed on May 4, 2026, for a Change of Electric Service Suppliers from The Empire District Electric Company, d/b/a Liberty ("Liberty") to Ozark Electric Cooperative, Inc ("Ozark") regarding his property located in Lawrence County, Missouri, (6406 W Farm Road 94, Springfield, Missouri 65803) ("Application"). The Application contains the filing requirements included in 20 CSR 4240-2.060 and 20 CSR 4240-3.140.

Staff recommends that the Commission not finally dispose of the Application in its present procedural posture. It is the Staff's recommendation that the Commission treat this matter as both an application for change of supplier and a complaint case under 20 CSR 4240-2.070, using the record already developed here as a starting point and requiring such supplemental pleadings, evidence, or procedures as the Commission determines appropriate; issue a procedural schedule order; and set the matter for an evidentiary hearing.

OVERVIEW

In his Application, Mr. Edwards indicates having customer service and payment/billing issues regarding the electric service delivered by Liberty to his property located in Lawrence County, Missouri, (6406 W Farm Road 94, Springfield, Missouri 65803) ("Property") that have reportedly caused confusion, financial disruption, and loss of confidence. He asserts experiencing missing and duplicative bills, multiple charges on particular bills and submitting a duplicative payment following a processing error. More recently, Mr. Edwards adds that a $0.00 autopay triggered a shut-off notice and ultimately cancelled his balanced billing program. He contends that numerous contacts with Liberty have not been effective in resolving said issues.

Ozark stated in its Response that it had "…an overhead line running along the road frontage of Applicant's property and could provide the requested service at this location." While being hesitant to support a change of supplier in this situation, Ozark indicates it would not oppose the Applicant's request and is willing to serve the Property. This was based upon the Applicant paying any applicable charges associated with obtaining such electric service from Ozark, which included a $1,000 extension fee.

Liberty acknowledges that Mr. Edwards does not indicate a rate differential as the reason for seeking a change in electric service providers as is prohibited by applicable

Missouri State Statutes. However, Liberty asserts that the reasons cited in the Application[1] would not justify a change of supplier in this case. Thus, Liberty contends its belief that "…the Applicant has received safe and reliable electric service…" and that "granting a change of supplier in this case would be contrary to the public interest…."

Ozark is a rural electric cooperative organized under Chapter 394 RSMo to provide electric service to its members in all or parts of nine Missouri counties, including Lawrence County. Although the Commission has limited jurisdiction over rural electric cooperatives, Ozark is subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission in this case under Section 394.315 RSMo 2021. As a rural electric cooperative, Ozark is not required to file annual reports or pay assessment fees. Further, Staff is not aware of any pending or final unsatisfied judgments against Ozark from any state or federal court involving customer service or rates within three years of the date of this filing.

Liberty is an electrical corporation subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission pursuant to Chapters 386 and 393, RSMo. Empire is authorized to provide electricity in and around the area that is the subject of this Application. Empire is current on all assessment fees and annual report filings. Staff notes an active investigation into customer service and billing issues concerning Liberty (OO-2025-0233), as well as a recent rate increase request case (ER-2024-0261) that addressed customer service and billing issues.

[1] Staff notes that Liberty's Response to the Application was filed prior to the issues experienced by Mr. Edwards associated with Liberty's June 2026 billing cycle that Mr. Edwards illustrated in his Response to Staff Data Request No. 0002.

DISCUSSION

An application requesting to change electric service providers can be filed with the Commission by any customer of an investor-owned utility ("IOU") such as Liberty, a member of a rural electric cooperative ("Cooperative") such as Ozark, or a citizen of a city with a municipal electric system ("Municipal"). As previously noted, such applications requesting to change electric service providers must include reasons that are considered to be in the public interest other than a rate differential.[2]

Historically, such requests made by electric customers with the Commission are in conjunction with problems associated with the electric service being provided by their current electric service provider. However, in this Application, Mr. Ryan Edwards has requested a change in electric service providers from Liberty to Ozark citing ongoing billing and customer service issues. He asserts to have contacted Liberty multiple times in attempting to address his concerns, obtain an explanation as to what had happened, receive clarifications as to the status of his account as he reports to have had to restore his budget billing parameters, and/or what actions were being taken or needed to be taken to correct these issues.[3] Mr. Edwards contends that information available on the bills was often unclear or inconsistent necessitating continual contact with Liberty personnel "to make sense of the situation". More recently, in his Response to Staff Data Request

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[2] The type of electric utility and its associated statute concerning electric service providers is as follows:

IOUs such as Liberty – 393.106.2 RSMo 2021
Cooperatives such as Ozark – 394.315.2 RSMo 2021
Municipals – 91.025.2 RSMo 2021

[3] These various contacts with Liberty were included in the Response to Staff Data Request No. 0001. Confidential Schedule AJB-1 includes the Cover Sheet to the Response to Staff Data Request No. 0001.

No. 0002,[4] Mr. Edwards details receiving ** [redacted] ** in Liberty's June 2026 billing cycle. He also illustrates that he was ** [redacted] **.[5] In addition, he also indicates that he has neighbors immediately on the east side and behind the Property that are current members of Ozark.

In Paragraph 5 of its Response to the Application, Liberty states, "…Liberty, however, is unaware of any facts that would justify a change of supplier in this case. Liberty reviewed the Applicant's customer account, including all recorded calls, and Liberty believes the Applicant has received safe and reliable electric service from Liberty and that granting a change of supplier in this case would be contrary to the public interest." Staff sought background information that Liberty was referencing in making the above assertive statement.[6] In reviewing Liberty's Response to Staff Data Request No. 0001, attached to Staff Recommendation as previously noted, Staff sought to identify instances of Mr. Edwards's contentions that he listed in his Application within these documents. Liberty has acknowledged in recent Commission hearings conducted in conjunction with its rate increase request case (ER-2024-0261[7]) as well as within documents associated

[4] Staff Data Request No. 0002 is attached to this Staff Recommendation as Confidential Schedule AJB-2.

[5] Liberty acknowledged Mr. Edwards receiving another customer's bill in its Response to Staff Data Request No. 0208 in Case No. OO-2025-0233.

[6] In its Response to Staff Data Request No. 0001, Liberty states, ** [redacted] **

[7] The Commission, in ER-2024-0261, found that Liberty had satisfactorily met billing and customers service metrics, and ordered its rates go into effect. See the Order: 882870 (EFIS Item 678).

with an investigatory docket initiated by the Commission regarding said billing issues (OO-2025-0233) that it has had multiple billing irregularities occur. Liberty maintains that authorizing a change of electric service providers in this case, as requested in the Application, would be contrary to the public interest.[8]

More recently in his Response to Staff Data Request No. 0002, Mr. Edwards illustrated ** [redacted] ** in the June 2026 billing cycle ** [redacted] ** as well as ** [redacted] ** that was included in one of the five billing statements received. Mr. Edwards indicated that this latest experience has only increased his desire to seek a change in electric service providers to Ozark.

Staff issued Data Requests Nos. 0207 and 0208 to Liberty in the investigatory docket (Case No. OO-2025-0233) concerning these latest problems associated with its June 2026 billing cycle.[9] Mr. Edwards was part of at least ** [redacted] ** by Liberty Utilities.[10] In its Response to these Data Requests, Liberty identified that both of these issues ** [redacted] ** was a result of ** [redacted] .**[11] Liberty contends that Mr. Edwards was ** [redacted]

[8] Liberty Response to the Application Paragraph 5.
[9] Staff Data Request Nos. 0207 and 0208, in Case No. OO-2025-0233, are attached to this Staff Recommendation as Schedule AJB-3 and Confidential Schedule AJB-4 respectively.
[10] The Empire District Gas Company, The Empire District Electric Company, Liberty (MO Water), and Liberty (Midstates Natural Gas).
[11] Staff Data Requests Nos. 0207 and 0208 in Case No. OO-2025-0233, along with Liberty's Responses are attached to this Staff Recommendation as Schedule AJB-3 and Confidential Schedule AJB-4.

[redacted] ** in its Response to Staff Data Request No. 0208 in Case No. OO-2025-0233.

In a change of supplier request case (EO-2017-0277), the Commission, in its Order, listed ten factors that it considers in analyzing the "...meaning of "public interest" for a change of supplier." These ten factors, along with Staff's analysis, are:

> (1) Whether the customer's needs cannot adequately be met by the present supplier with respect to either the amount or quality of power;

Mr. Edwards does not identify experiencing any problems with either service reliability or quality, and thus Staff has no reason to believe that Mr. Edwards's needs with respect to the amount or quality of electricity provided by Liberty have not been met. Liberty asserts it has provided Mr. Edwards with safe and reliable service at just and reasonable rates.[12] In response to Staff's investigation into its billing and customer service practices, Liberty acknowledged delay in necessary corrective actions taking longer than expected resulting in negative customer experiences.[13] While Liberty has made improvements in recent months, there was a recent abnormality in their billing and customer service processes, as evidenced by Mr. Edwards' experience with the June 2026 billing cycle. Although Mr. Edwards continues to challenge Liberty's billing processes and lack of customer service, Liberty maintains the Application would be contrary to the public interest. As footnoted above, the Commission has found that Liberty has met certain metrics regarding its billing and customer service practices and has Ordered rates to go into effect

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[12] Liberty Response to the Application Paragraph 5.
[13] Liberty Response to Staff Investigation Report, page 1-2.

in ER-2024-0261. Additionally, the Commission was made aware of the June 2026 billing cycle issues during the July 8, 2026 on-the-record presentation for ER-2024-0261.

(2) Whether there are health or safety issues involving the amount or quality of power;

Mr. Edwards has not indicated experiencing any power availability or quality issues, nor any health or safety issues.

(3) What alternatives a customer has considered, including alternatives with the present supplier;

Liberty has indicated Mr. Edwards called Liberty's customer service on ** [redacted] **.[14] Mr. Edwards filed his Application on May 4, 2026, noting that Ozark has a line routed along the street fronting the Property. These frustrations and concerns noted by Mr. Edwards in his Application have only been underscored by his experience regarding Liberty's June 2026 billing cycle.

(4) Whether the customer's equipment has been damaged or destroyed as a result of a problem with the electric supply;

Mr. Edwards has not identified any issues regarding damage or destroyed equipment resulting from problems with electric service supplied by Liberty. He contends experiencing issues with Liberty's billing and customer service in making his request to change electric service providers.

(5) The effect the loss of the customer would have on the present supplier;

[14] Liberty Response to Staff Data Request No. 0001.

Liberty would experience a minimal loss of revenue associated with Ozark providing electric service to the Property. However, there is the possibility that approving this Application may provide cause for thousands of other existing Liberty customers experiencing problems with Liberty's billing and customers service to similarly seek an alternative electric service provider, which could adversely effect Liberty.

> (6) Whether the change in supplier would result in a duplication of facilities, especially in comparison with alternatives available from the present supplier, a comparison of which could include: (i) The distance involved and cost of any new extension, including the burden on others – for example, the need to procure private property easements, and (ii) The burden on the customer relating to the cost or time involved, not including the cost of the electricity itself;

With Ozark having an existing line routed along the street fronting the Property that could deliver the requested electric service should the Commission approve the Application,[15] there would be no duplication of facilities to consider in evaluating whether authorizing the Application would be in the public interest.

> (7) The overall burden on the customer caused by the inadequate service including any economic burden not related to the cost of the electricity itself and any burden not considered with respect to factor (6)(II) above;

Mr. Edwards indicates experiencing numerous problems associated with the billing processes of Liberty and is not satisfied with the customer service responses received in attempting to remedy these ongoing issues. Mr. Edwards has not cited a rate differential as a reason to seek a change in electric service providers as prohibited by Missouri Statutes

[15] Ozark Electric Cooperative Response to the Application Paragraph 8.

and associated Regulations. Liberty reviewed Mr. Edwards' account and believes approval of the Application would be contrary to the public interest.[16]

(8) What efforts have been made by the present supplier to solve or mitigate problems;

Liberty indicated in the aforementioned hearing conducted in its recent rate case that it had made improvements regarding these billing problems. The Commission has determined that Liberty has sufficiently met certain metrics regarding its billing and customer service practices in ER-2024-0261.

(9) The impact the Commission's decision may have on economic development, on an individual or cumulative basis;

The effect of transferring electric service from Liberty to Ozark of a single, residential customer is essentially/effectively de minimis. However, if approval of this Application provides cause for other existing customers to seek alternative electric service providers, then effect on Liberty could be more substantial.

(10) The effect the granting of authority for a change of suppliers might have on any territorial agreements between the two suppliers in question, or on the negotiation of territorial agreements between the suppliers.

The Application would have no effect on any existing territorial agreements or prospective negotiations of like agreements.

[16] Liberty's Response to Application, paragraph 5.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Edwards filed his Application on May 4, 2026, citing billing issues and ineffective/inconsistent customer service. While Liberty has made improvements in its billing processes, Mr. Edwards asserts to still be experiencing similar issues as is indicative of receiving ** [redacted] **. Ozark, while stating it is hesitant in recommending approval of the Application, nevertheless reports having an existing line routed along the street fronting the Property with ample capacity to provide requested electric service to the Property. Liberty reviewed Mr. Edwards' account and believes approval of the Application would be contrary to the public interest.[17]

An approval of the Application may be viewed as allowing thousands of other Liberty customers to similarly file change of electric provider requests, which could adversely affect Liberty. Thus, Staff recommends the Commission schedule an upcoming hearing. Should the Commission approve the Application, Staff recommends the Commission order Liberty to file revised tariffs that reflect the contents of the Application.

[17] Liberty's Response to Application, paragraph 5.

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

In the Matter of the Application of Ryan Edwards for Change of Electric Supplier to Ozark Electric Cooperative, Inc. from Empire District Electric Company d/b/a Liberty	)))))	File No. EO-2026-0306

AFFIDAVIT OF ALAN J. BAX

STATE OF MISSOURI)
) ss.
COUNTY OF COLE)

COMES NOW ALAN J. BAX and on his oath declares that he is of sound mind and lawful age; that he contributed to the foregoing *Staff Recommendation* in memorandum form; and that the same is true and correct according to his best knowledge and belief.

Further the Affiant sayeth not.

Alan J. Bax

ALAN J. BAX

JURAT

Subscribed and sworn before me, a duly constituted and authorized Notary Public, in and for the County of Cole, State of Missouri, at my office in Jefferson City, on this 14th day of August 2026.

D. SUZIE MANKIN
Notary Public - Notary Seal
State of Missouri
Commissioned for Cole County
My Commission Expires: April 04, 2029
Commission Number: 12412070

D Suzie Mankin

Notary Public

File No. EO-2026-0306

SCHEDULE AJB-1
and
SCHEDULE AJB-2

HAVE BEEN DEEMED

CONFIDENTIAL

IN ENTIRETY

Data Request Received: 2026-07-16 **Response Date:** 2026-08-05
Request No. 0207 **Witness/Respondent:** Amy Walt
Submitted by: Tyrone Thomason, Tyrone.Thomason@psc.mo.gov

REQUEST:

This data request applies to all Liberty utilities and references the June 2026 incident during which customers received duplicate bills over a period of several days. Please describe in detail the circumstances surrounding the event, including answers to the following:

1) What sequence of events produced the incident and when did they occur?
2) How and when did the Company become aware of this issue?
3) Please provide the number of customers impacted, separated by utility company. How did the Company derive the total number of impacted customers? What distinguishes the impacted customers from the rest of Liberty's customer base?
4) Please explain why the Company's existing system and manual controls did not prevent this incident from occurring[SG1.1][TT1.2].
5) Please provide any known customer-facing impacts, included but not limited to multiple bills, that resulted from the incident.
6) Please provide all steps the Company has taken to prevent this issue from reoccurring, including but not limited to the cancellation of third party contracts.

RESPONSE:

1. Sequence of Events and Timing

Event / Date	Description
June 26, 2026, original invoice processing	• The invoice XML files were transferred to a Kubra SFTP folder via an automated IT process. The file should have been moved to the archive folder. The XML files were not moved.
June 29, 2026, duplicate reprocessing	• The unarchived June 26 XML files remained in the outbound folder and were picked up during the June 29 merge/print processing cycle, causing the same invoice files to be resent. • June 29 invoice files also did not archive as expected.

June 30, 2026, duplicate reprocessing and final archive	• The remaining unarchived June 26 files and the June 29 files were picked up during the June 30 processing cycle. The files were ultimately archived correctly after the June 30 processing cycle.

2. Company Awareness

Liberty became aware of this Incident INC0027849 on July 6, 2026 due to customer calls stating they had received duplicate invoices. Liberty Leadership was made aware on July 7, 2026.

3. Customer Impact and Impact Derivation

The number of customers impacted was derived by comparing the relevant SAP invoice/XML output counts with OpenText/KUBRA processing results and then breaking the affected accounts down by the utility company. Analysis identified two affected production batches. The June 26 batch resulted in the same invoice being sent three times to impacted customers (original plus two duplicate sends). The June 29 batch resulted in the same invoice being sent twice (original plus one duplicate send) to impacted customers. Below is a breakdown of the June 26 and June 29 batches for those Missouri customers.

Company	June 26 Batch Impacted Accounts	June 29 Batch Impacted Accounts	Totals
The Empire District Gas Company	107	24	131
Liberty Utilities (Midstates Natural Gas) Corp.	23	26	49
The Empire District Electric Company	6845	4665	11510
Liberty Utilities (Missouri Water) LLC	596	123	719
	7571	**4838**	**12409**

- These billing batches occurred because t impacted customers had printed invoice XML files included in the affected June 26 and/or June 29 batch populations that remained in the outbound folder after transmission and were subsequently reprocessed.

4. Why Existing System and Manual Controls Did Not Prevent the Incident

- The failure to archive the data resulted in a warning/error message within the batch job log. However, it was not identified during the daily monitoring process.
- Existing monitoring did not identify that files remained in the outbound folder after processing.
- The manual reconciliation process did not catch the difference between expected invoice counts and XML/OpenText/KUBRA processing counts for the affected days.
- Follow-up technical review identified additional contributing factors, including excessive file counts in the directory, lack of an automated alert notification email when failure to archive the data, and reliance on manual reconciliation steps that are susceptible to human error.

5. Known Customer-Facing Impacts

- For the June 26 batch population, affected customers received the invoice three times: the original bill plus two duplicate sends.
- For the June 29 batch population, affected customers may have received the invoice twice: the original bill plus one duplicate send.

- The bills were correct and the affected customers were impacted by receiving duplicates of the same bill

6. Corrective and Preventive Actions

- Daily manual monitoring was implemented for the outbound and archive folders.
- The retention period for XML files was reduced to 60 days as an interim control. This reduces the total number of files in the archive folder, which will improve the archival process.Liberty is evaluating automation to validate the outbound folder before and/or after batch processing and to send an alert notification email to the appropriate teams if files remain unarchived.
- Liberty is considering automatic generation of a high priority incident in ServiceNow when archive failures occur.
- Liberty is evaluating changes to the merge process / related monitoring logic to provide XML output counts and support automated reconciliation between SAP invoice counts, XML file counts, and OpenText/KUBRA processing counts.
- Liberty is evaluating whether a separate exception-handling program should be implemented.
- Liberty is reviewing with internal and external stakeholders whether additional safeguards can be implemented in SAP and/or downstream KUBRA/OpenText processes to prevent duplicate invoice transmission if similar file-handling conditions arise.
- Liberty is considering and reviewing a new process that would avoid the need for archiving invoice XML files .

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SCHEDULE AJB-4

HAS BEEN DEEMED

CONFIDENTIAL

IN ITS ENTIRETY