

Docket No. UE-200115 - Vol. V

In the Matter of the Application of Puget Sound Energy

October 8, 2020



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LACEY, WASHINGTON; OCTOBER 8, 2020

6:01 p.m.

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CHAIR DANNER: Let's be back on the record. This is Thursday, October 8th, and this is the evening portion of our public comment hearing.

We have been in recess since this afternoon when we began taking public comment. And this is Docket UE-200115. And this is the application for an order authorizing the sale of all of Puget Sound Energy's interest in Colstrip Unit 4 and certain of Puget Sound Energy's interest in the Colstrip transmission system.

I'm Dave Danner. I'm Chair of the Commission. I'm joined by my colleagues Commissioner Ann Rendahl and Commissioner Jay Balasbas.

I am -- first, I want to reintroduce our public counsel for the State of Washington, Lisa Gafken.

Lisa, are you there? Can you turn your video on and introduce yourself?

MS. GAFKEN: Yes.

Good evening, Chair Danner. My name is Lisa Gafken, and I am here on behalf of Public Counsel. Public Counsel represents the customers in this matter; residential and small business customers.

1 In the last session, I did provide my e-mail
2 address.

3 Chair, would you like me to go ahead and do
4 that now as well?

5 CHAIR DANNER: I think that would be great.
6 If there are people who are attending now who weren't
7 able to attend this afternoon.

8 MS. GAFKEN: Perfect.

9 In case questions come up, for a little bit
10 of context, the Commissioners won't be answering
11 questions that the public has those questions. This is
12 really an opportunity for the Commissioners to hear from
13 the public directly.

14 But if questions come up, I'm happy to help
15 answer those. And my e-mail address is
16 Lisa.gafken@atg.wa.gov. I'll spell that out. Lisa,
17 L-I-S-A dot Gafken, G-A-F as in Frank, K-E-N @ A-T-G dot
18 W-A dot G-O-V.

19 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
20 much.

21 At this point, I would like to turn it over
22 to John Cupp of the UTC staff, who will go over some of
23 the logistics for this evening's meeting.

24 John, are you there?

25 MR. CUPP: Yes, sir. Thank you.

1 My name is John Cupp. I'm a public
2 involvement representative for the Utilities and
3 Transportation Commission. And I'll be the moderator
4 for this evening's public comment hearing.

5 Before we go on the formal record, I want to
6 explain a few things. First a little background on the
7 case that you're here to comment on.

8 On February 19, 2020, PSE filed a request to
9 sell its ownership interest in Colstrip Unit 4 and
10 certain assets in the Colstrip transmission system.

11 PSE is one of five owners of Colstrip Unit 4
12 with a 25 percent ownership interest. PSE requests
13 selling half of its 25 percent to Northwest Energy and
14 half to Talen Montana LLC and a portion of their
15 interests in the Colstrip transmission system to
16 Northwest Energy.

17 PSE believes the sale is necessary to meet
18 the requirements of the Washington Clean Energy
19 Transmission Act. Under the proposed agreement PSE
20 would continue to purchase power generated from Colstrip
21 Unit 4 through the end of 2025 at the latest.

22 UTC staff filed testimony recommending that
23 the Commission deny PSE's request to sell a portion of
24 its Colstrip holdings. UTC staff is not certain that
25 the sale of Unit 4 would result in net benefits to

1 customers as PSE proposes, but it may, in fact, end up
2 costing customers due to uncertainty regarding the price
3 of replacement power.

4 The UTC is expected to issue a decision no
5 later than January 19, 2021.

6 So you'll have the opportunity to comment to
7 the Commissioners this evening pertaining to the sale of
8 PSE's interest in Colstrip Unit 4. The comment period
9 is open through November 22nd. You'll have the ability
10 to submit comments through that date, and you can
11 comment using the following methods.

12 There's a submit a comment link on our home
13 page at utc.wa.gov. You can e-mail us with your
14 comments at comments@utc.wa.gov. You can call us at
15 1-888-333-9882. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 47250,
16 Olympia, Washington 98504-7250.

17 I need to point out since most of us are
18 working remotely and not in the office, there can be a
19 delay in us getting our mail.

20 Commissioners act like judges in formal
21 filings like this one, and they are not here to answer
22 your questions. They are here to hear your comments.

23 If you have questions you can contact Ms.
24 Gafken from public counsel, and she gave you her contact
25 information. Or you can e-mail the same e-mail address

1 that I gave you earlier, comments@utc.wa.gov, or at that
2 same toll free number, 1-888-333-9882. And you can ask
3 to speak to me. Again, my name is John Cupp.

4 If you want additional information about the
5 case or you want to follow it online you can go to our
6 website at www.utc.wa.gov/200115.

7 Now, for some meeting logistics. We ask
8 that everyone mute your computer mic. You can do that
9 if you are using Teams by clicking on the microphone
10 icon. When there is a slash through it you are muted.
11 When you go to call, when you are called on to speak you
12 can unmute it by clicking on it and the slash will go
13 away. And we ask that you please mute your microphone
14 by clicking on it after you are done speaking.

15 If you're calling in by phone, on your
16 keypad you can press *6 to mute your phone and *6 to
17 unmute it when you are called on to speak. And then
18 again, please re-mute again by hitting *6.

19 Please wait to be called on to speak and
20 don't interrupt other speakers. We have a chat feature
21 in Teams, and we should only use that if you are having
22 technical difficulties. So you can use the chat feature
23 for that, or you can call Ryan Smith at 360-915-3646.

24 So before we go on the record, I want to
25 make sure that we have everyone who wants to speak

1 signed in. Many of you have already signed in to speak.

2 If you wish to speak and you haven't signed
3 in, we'll go through the alphabet hear and get you
4 signed in. So if you have not already signed in and
5 your last name starts with the letters A through E,
6 please give us your name and spell your last name,
7 please.

8 Okay. I'm not hearing anybody. So if your
9 last name starts with F through J and you would like to
10 speak and haven't signed in, please speak up now.

11 Okay. K through O.

12 (Audio disruption).

13 MR. CUPP: I'm sorry, I wasn't able to hear
14 you.

15 MR. KATZ: My name is Harry Katz, K-a-t-z.

16 MR. CUPP: K-a-t-z. Okay. And you've not
17 already signed up to speak?

18 MR. KATZ: I called and I spoke to, and it
19 might have been you, Mr. Cupp. I'm not certain if I was
20 put on the roster or not.

21 MR. CUPP: Okay. We'll make sure that you
22 are there. Thank you.

23 And then anyone whose last name starts with
24 P as in Peter through T.

25 MR. MILLER: Hi, sorry. I was in the last

1 section. Trenton Miller here. I would like to speak,
2 and I don't think I signed in. I didn't see that.

3 MR. CUPP: Okay. Trenton Miller.

4 Okay. So anyone whose last name starts with
5 P through T who wishes to speak?

6 How about U through Z?

7 Okay. I take it the sign-in sheets are
8 complete. I do ask that if you're not speaking, again,
9 please mute your microphone. And you can turn off your
10 camera, and you are welcome to turn it back on when you
11 speak.

12 MS. WILLIAMS: I'm Elizabeth Williams. I
13 would like to speak. I didn't realize I was muted. I'm
14 sorry.

15 MR. CUPP: Thank you Elizabeth.

16 Thank you. I'll now turn the meeting over
17 to Chair Danner, Commissioner Rendahl and Commissioner
18 Balasbas.

19 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much, John.

20 You said before we go on the record. But in
21 fact, I put us on the record at the very beginning, so
22 the record will include everything that we've just gone
23 through, And I don't think that will be a problem.

24 MR. CUPP: Sorry about that.

25 CHAIR DANNER: That's all right.

1 At this point we're going to have the
2 formality of swearing in all of those who wish to speak
3 tonight.

4 So I would ask, even though I can't see you,
5 I will trust that you will raise your right hand. And
6 let me make sure that you will swear to tell the truth,
7 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

8 Can I hear some I do's?

9 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: "I do."

10 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much,
11 everyone. So we'll get right into it. And let us hear
12 from Pam and Bill Sandstrom, are you on the line?

13 All right. Jane Lind --

14 MS. LINDSTROM: Can you hear me?

15 CHAIR DANNER: Oh, you are Pam Sandstrom?

16 MS. LINDSTROM: Yeah, I think I unmuted
17 myself.

18 CHAIR DANNER: Yes. Technology is our
19 friend. So go ahead.

20 MS. LINDSTROM: Okay. So I guess comments
21 and concerns. So just some concerns are going to be,
22 you know, what is the energy that's going to be
23 replacing the coal. How reliable is that going to be?
24 Are there going to be any concerns with blackouts, if
25 it's, you know, all renewable. Is this going to include

1 any natural gas. And will the costs go up?

2 CHAIR DANNER: All right.

3 MS. SANDSTROM: Those are my concerns.

4 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you for putting those
5 on the record. As John stated, because in a public
6 comment hearing, we basically -- we listen. We take all
7 the questions as -- as basically rhetorical. We will be
8 taking these under advisement as we -- as we go forward.
9 So thank you for participating tonight.

10 MS. SANDSTROM: Thank you.

11 THE COURT: Jane Lindley, are you there?

12 MS. LINDLEY: I am. I'm Jane Lindley. I
13 live on Bainbridge Island, and I'm representing Act for
14 Climate.

15 PSE's sale of their interest in Colstrip
16 Unit 4 to Northwestern Energy and Talen removed some of
17 their coal-generated electricity from their portfolio
18 before December 31st, 2025 as required by CETA, the
19 Clean Energy Transformation Act.

20 But is this really a good deal for everyone
21 involved, including ratepayers? Not so much. Baked
22 into this deal is the agreement that PSE will buy back
23 coal-generated power from Northwestern at above market
24 rates until the end of 2025. Clearly not a least cost
25 power purchase agreement and not a good deal for

1 ratepayers.

2 Also, ratepayers will continue to be on the
3 hook for cleanup costs, which will be substantial. The
4 longer Colstrip runs, the longer it continues to pollute
5 aquifers and emit greenhouse gases, including both air
6 and water.

7 What would be a good deal for ratepayers and
8 still meet CETA requirements? If, instead of selling
9 their share of Colstrip PSE stopped funding Colstrip,
10 which is now a bad investment with rising maintenance
11 and resource costs.

12 I'm asking the UTC to consider a
13 determination that funding Colstrip is no longer
14 financially prudent. Who is really benefitting from the
15 sale of Colstrip? Not ratepayers. It's Northwestern
16 Energy. If they can keep their share of Colstrip
17 operational until 2042 as they plan, they will collect
18 on their debt schedule that runs until then.

19 Northwestern Energy is the real winner, not ratepayers.

20 Please protect the customers and stop the
21 sale of Colstrip. Thank you so much.

22 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much. I
23 appreciate your participation tonight.

24 John Romankiewicz, are you there?

25 MR. ROMANKIEWICZ: Yes.

1 CHAIR DANNER: Just a minute. Let Kimberly
2 Danka and Ian McKlusky know they are on deck.

3 Okay, Mr. Romenkuitz, go ahead.

4 MR. ROMANKIEWICZ: Hello. My name is Dan
5 Romenkuitz. I'm a Puget Sound Energy customer. I live
6 in Bellingham, Washington.

7 So I have a close friend in Montana who is a
8 water inspector for the state there and permits
9 facilities across the state, monitoring their water
10 pollution and associated permitting, trying to ensure
11 that Montana citizens can protect their precious water
12 resources.

13 As Puget Sound Energy ratepayers importing
14 coal power from Montana, we are responsible for the
15 pollution from our imported power and its ultimate fate.
16 If Puget Sound Energy sells their share of Colstrip Unit
17 4 Northwestern Energy will run it until 2039, which is
18 in direct contrast of the purpose of the Clean Energy
19 Transformation Act, which is to end coal by 2025.

20 We cannot simply export the problem
21 elsewhere for our benefit. We need to find a solution
22 that retires the entire Colstrip plant in 2025 for all
23 owners.

24 Additionally, Puget Sound Energy should not
25 sell its access to the valuable Colstrip transmission

1 lines, as it allows access to great solar and wind
2 resources, which could diversify the utility's renewable
3 energy portfolio.

4 We should be utilizing existing transmission
5 assets as much as possible in their transition to 100
6 percent clean energy. Given that building new
7 transmission is going to, you know, cause all sorts of
8 right-of-way issues and possible headaches, we should
9 use the existing assets we have as much as possible and
10 not sell this.

11 That's my comments.

12 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
13 much. I appreciate your coming out tonight to
14 participate.

15 Kimberly Danka, are you there?

16 MS. DANKA: I am here.

17 CHAIR DANNER: Go ahead.

18 MS. DANKA: You pronounced it correctly.

19 CHAIR DANNER: I didn't mangle it. Okay, go
20 ahead.

21 MS. DANKA: No, not at all. You got it
22 exactly right.

23 So yes, my name is Kimberly Danka. I live
24 in Olympia, and I've been a PSE ratepayer for most of my
25 life. I'm just an ordinary citizen, and I appreciate

1 being able to flip on my light switch and have heat in
2 the winter just as much as the next person, and I don't
3 have a problem with paying for that privilege.

4 That is, I don't have a problem with paying
5 a reasonable amount to a company that understands that
6 they have more responsibilities than just maximizing
7 stakeholder profit. A company that respects and listens
8 to the customers they are making their profit from, and
9 that has the capacity to look beyond the immediate
10 toward long-term sustainability. I don't have a problem
11 paying that company.

12 Unfortunately, through this request to sell
13 their stake in Colstrip, PSE is once again demonstrating
14 that they are not that company.

15 I do object to potentially being on the hook
16 as a ratepayer for even higher prices because my energy
17 company made an irresponsible agreement to buy back
18 power from Colstrip at a higher of price at a time when
19 the cost of renewable energy is falling by the day.

20 I do have a problem with selling
21 transmission lines that will prove essential to carrying
22 Montana wind power into my living room in a few years
23 once PSE finally gets on board with the reality that
24 renewable energy is the only pathway to a livable
25 future.

1 And I do vehemently object to Washington's
2 largest utility's disingenuous attempt to do an end run
3 around the clear goals and intentions of the people of
4 Washington State as was laid out in 2019's 100 percent
5 clean energy bill.

6 I'd really like to be able to stand up in
7 support of my energy company, but they have to show they
8 are standing up for us.

9 Please, as is recommended by your own staff,
10 reject the PSE sale of Colstrip and direct them to stop
11 propping up this aging outdated facility. Thank you
12 very much.

13 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much.

14 Just to be clear, I think Mr. Cupp was
15 asking folks at the beginning to turn their cameras off.
16 Just to be clear, that was turn your cameras off who
17 were not speaking. So those who have spoken who want to
18 turn their cameras on should feel free to do so while
19 they are speaking.

20 Ian McKlusky, you are up.

21 MR. McKLUSKY: Thank you. I may not be as
22 eloquent as the previous speakers, but I do want to go
23 straight to the point, which is that for all of the
24 reasons that they outlined, the only way to avoid legal
25 problems and -- and an ongoing legal battle around this

1 decision is to simply retire the plant in 2025.

2 If -- if the decision is made not to retire
3 the plant and to pursue this sale, I expect that this --
4 this will become an ongoing legal battle for the
5 foreseeable future and for the remainder of many of the
6 careers for the people involved for all the reasons
7 outlined previously as well as the reason -- the fact
8 that PSE had to set aside \$350 million to cleanup the
9 Colstrip coal ash waste ponds, which exposes our
10 ratepayers to more liability.

11 So I will leave it at that.

12 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you, sir.

13 So next up is Frank Turner, followed by
14 Elliott Weinstein and Mary Painter.

15 So Mr. Turner, are you there? Frank Turner?

16 All right. Elliott Weinstein, are you
17 there?

18 MS. WEINSTEIN: I'm low tech. It took me a
19 minute. Okay.

20 This is Elliott Weinstein. I'm a PSE
21 ratepayer from Olympia. I thank the UTC staff for its
22 recommendation not to approve the proposed sale of PSE's
23 interest in Colstrip Unit 4 and the transmission lines
24 at issue in this proceeding.

25 RCW 80.01.040, subsection 3, mandates UTC to

1 regulate utilities like PSE in the public interest. To
2 meet these standards, utilities must prudently manage
3 their financial transactions so that they charge
4 ratepayers only enough to have fair, just, and
5 reasonable and sufficient rates.

6 The proposed sale does not meet these
7 standards because PSE is selling its interest in
8 Colstrip for one dollar. Ratepayers are required to pay
9 the difference between the one dollar sale and the
10 \$85 million value of the 25 percent Colstrip Unit 4
11 share. How can these terms be reasonable for ratepayers
12 or in the public interest.

13 Secondly, the proposed purchase agreement to
14 buy back Colstrip power from Northwestern as folks have
15 said will force PSE customers to pay a higher price for
16 energy because it requires PSE to buy power at the
17 higher cost of Colstrip's energy and the market price.

18 This higher up condition is not just or
19 reasonable for PSE ratepayers. Ratepayers will also be
20 on the hook for the unit's environmental cleanup costs.
21 How can this deal be in the public interest?

22 In addition, PSE is selling valuable
23 transmission lines from Colstrip well below their
24 projected value in the near future.

25 PSE commissioned a study. Their own study

1 found that massive increases in transmission from
2 Montana and Wyoming will be needed. How then is this
3 fair or reasonable for PSE to sell its ratepayer own
4 transmission asset under these circumstances? How can
5 this possibly be in the public interest?

6 Finally, instead of selling Unit 4 and
7 ratepayers on the hook to pay for a money-losing
8 arrangement, PSE should vote with other owners to retire
9 the unit. The unit is no longer profitable. Referring
10 to as stated by UTC staff the Billings Gazette on
11 November 27th, 2019, pointed to increasing repair costs.
12 The article went on to note that the likely rise in the
13 cost of mining to supply the coal makes no sense.

14 Keeping Unit 4 open is not prudent with
15 fiscal management, nor is it in the interest of the
16 public, since ratepayers will most likely be forced to
17 pay for power produced by an outdated facility that
18 pollutes our environment.

19 Thank you for considering my testimony.

20 CHAIR DANNER: And thank you for presenting
21 it. Very much appreciate that.

22 Mary painter. And after you will be Paul
23 Pickett and Phyllis Farrell and then Doug Howell.

24 So Mary Painter, you're up. Mary Painter,
25 are you there?

1 All right. Then Paul Pickett, are you
2 there? Paul Pickett?

3 Okay. Phyllis Farrell, are you there?

4 MS. FARRELL: Yes, I am. Thank you.

5 I'm Phyllis Farrell, a PSE ratepayer from
6 Olympia. And I urge the UTC to reject the sale of the
7 Colstrip power and transmission lines. These violate
8 the stated intention of our mandated climate goals in
9 House Bill 2311 and the Clean Energy Transformation Act.

10 PSE's buy back of Colstrip power from
11 Northwestern makes PSE customers pay a higher price.
12 Also, selling extremely valuable transmission lines
13 below their long-term value is not in PSE customers'
14 best interest.

15 Mostly, my concern is the post-sale implies
16 that we will still have to pay for additional cleanup
17 costs even though we no longer own the plant.

18 Once again, I urge you to reject the PSE
19 sale of the Colstrip plant and transmission lines.
20 Thank you.

21 THE COURT: Thank you very much.

22 All right. Doug Howell, are you there?
23 Doug Howell, are you there?

24 MR. HOWELL: Chair Danner, this is Doug
25 Howell. I'm not supposed to speak because we're a party

1 to the case. I signed up out of habit. I called back
2 the record center and I asked that they withdraw my
3 name, and I now find out that didn't happen.

4 So I'm going to stand down. Thanks for
5 holding the hearing.

6 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much.

7 And Dawn Marsh from Sense, are you there?

8 Dawn Marsh.

9 All right. Chris Bruno has signed in not
10 wishing to comment.

11 Kelly Slater, are you there?

12 Harry Katz, are you there?

13 MR. KATZ: Yes, I am.

14 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Go ahead, sir.

15 MR. KATZ: Thank you for the opportunity to
16 speak. I -- I live in Bellevue. And I have to say that
17 I'm not nearly as well informed or informed in-depth as
18 some of the other speakers.

19 When I read first about this agreement, my
20 main concern was about the buy back of power after the
21 sale, because it seemed to me that that was really not
22 gonna end up in us using any less coal-powered energy.
23 And I may actually be mistaken in that, but it sounds
24 like perhaps I'm actually accurate as well.

25 So my perspective on this is simply that we

1 should be shifting as quickly and as responsibly as
2 possible away from fossil fuel powered electricity
3 generation. It sounds like on the basis of many of the
4 concerns expressed this evening as well as my own about
5 the power purchase agreement, that this arrangement
6 would not occur as quickly as possible under this sale.

7 So that's my -- that's my comment for this
8 evening. Thank you.

9 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
10 much.

11 Okay. Reina Holtz is up next. And then
12 she'll be followed by George Domahide and Tim Vetitooly.

13 Reina Holtz, are you there? Reina Holtz.

14 All right. George Domahide. Are you there,
15 sir?

16 All right. Steve Miller has signed in but
17 not wishing to comment.

18 MR. DOMAHIDE: Hi. This is George Domahide.
19 I had trouble getting in, but that's beside the point
20 now.

21 THE COURT: I'm glad you're here. So go
22 ahead, sir.

23 MR. DOMAHIDE: Okay. Ladies and gentlemen,
24 I'm George Domahide. I'm a registered professional
25 chemical engineer with a master's degree in chemical

1 engineering, and I have nearly a half a century of
2 engineering experience in the utility and petrochemical
3 industries.

4 Unfortunately, all my comments have been
5 covered by a -- by some of the previous presenters. And
6 I agree with them all. And I urge the Commission to
7 reject the sale of Unit 4 basically because it's going
8 to increase electric rates and perhaps even force
9 industry to leave our state.

10 Boeing is already making noise about
11 leaving. If the Governor passes the carbon tax, I
12 guarantee you Boeing and every other major company will
13 leave this state also.

14 In addition, I'm not sure we are approaching
15 this problem of global warming correctly. Everybody
16 blames carbon dioxide. However, the carbon dioxide
17 concentration in the atmosphere is very small.

18 400 parts per million. That's four molecules of carbon
19 for every 10,000 molecules of another gas. Such a low
20 concentration of any component cannot have all these
21 affects that we're blaming on carbon dioxide.

22 So I think the State needs to convene a
23 panel of scientists to study a global warming problem
24 and research the possible solutions. And then when the
25 solutions are verified, tested on a bench scale or a

1 pilot plant to make sure that everything works, with the
2 outcome of reducing global warming.

3 Currently it appears that politicians are
4 dictating the technologies and the approaches to global
5 warming, and I think they have it wrong.

6 Thank you Commissioner Cupp, and I
7 appreciate the time and your attention.

8 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you for your comments
9 tonight.

10 All right. Again, Steve Miller has signed
11 in not wishing to testify.

12 Tim Vetitooly. Did I get your name mangled
13 properly?

14 MR. VETITOOPLY: No, you did fine. Can you
15 hear me?

16 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, I can. Go ahead, sir.

17 MR. VETITOOPLY: Okay. I have to -- I'm a
18 ratepayer, too, and just recently have started paying
19 attention to what some of these things that are going
20 on. And I have to agree with George. It seems to me,
21 and I think the previous lady that spoke, I'm concerned
22 as -- as a ratepayer that the legislature is mandating
23 these changes in our -- in the way that we generate
24 power without any significant thought to the impact of
25 the ratepayers, and doing a cost benefit analysis in

1 terms of what's the impact of CO2 versus how much we're
2 going to have to pay extra for this power.

3 And I'm also worried about what we've seen
4 in California where they mandated the -- where they get
5 their power from, and it's resulted in rolling
6 blackouts. And they have a lot more sunlight, and I
7 don't know about wind but -- than we do. So I'm
8 concerned that we have a plan to replace this power that
9 we're selling after 2025 when we say we're -- we're not
10 going buy any more from Colstrip.

11 And finally, as George says, it's my
12 understanding that the levels of CO2 in the environment
13 have gone down in the US over the last five or six years
14 primarily because we generate more power from natural
15 gas. Now, that's not a coal plant. But again, how are
16 we replacing this power. There's a lot of people that
17 don't want to have natural gas plants either.

18 So I'm very concerned as a ratepayer and
19 just as an American citizen that we're not doing the
20 right things for the right reasons.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIR DANNER: So thank you, sir.

23 So, next up is Sara Aponicolou. I don't
24 know if I pronounced that correctly. She will be
25 followed by Carla Abrams and Frank Damiano.

1 So Sara, are you there?

2 MS. APONICOLOU: I am.

3 CHAIR DANNER: Did I pronounce your name
4 correctly?

5 MS. APONICOLOU: You were quite close.
6 Aponicolou.

7 CHAIR DANNER: That wasn't close at all.

8 MS. APONICOLOU: It was a good effort.

9 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you.

10 MS. APONICOLOU: So, yeah, I very much
11 appreciate the opportunity to submit comments today. I
12 am located, a PSE ratepayer located in Woodinville, and
13 also a graduate student in the energy and climate policy
14 program at Johns Hopkins.

15 I strongly urge the UTC to deny the proposed
16 sale of PSE's Colstrip asset. This sale would neither
17 benefit PSE customers, whose pricing would increase, nor
18 our state's efforts to decarbonize.

19 Allowing Unit 4 to continue to run would
20 result in 85 million tons of CO2 being emitted
21 additionally. And this flies in the face of the Clean
22 Energy Transformation Act, or CETA, and continues us on
23 the wrong track in the climate crisis.

24 Additionally, the sale does include
25 undervalued transmissions assets, as others have brought

1 up, that reduce our region's ability to access future
2 renewable resources from Montana and beyond.

3 The growing intensity of our regional
4 wildfires act as a reminder of the need for rapid
5 reductions in carbon emissions, and it is incumbent upon
6 our utilities, PSE included, to lead the transition of
7 fossil fuels.

8 Our children's future is at stake, and for
9 these reasons I strongly urge you to deny this proposed
10 sale.

11 Thank you for your time and the opportunity
12 to submit comment today.

13 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you for offering your
14 comments this evening.

15 Let me turn to Carla Abrams, are you there?

16 MS. ABRAMS: Yes, hi. Can you hear me?

17 CHAIR DANNER: I can, thank you.

18 MS. ABRAMS: Great. Thank you,
19 commissioner.

20 I would like to introduce myself. My name
21 is Carla Abrams, and I live in Missoula, Montana. I'm a
22 ratepayer with Northwestern Energy.

23 And I'm not a Washington resident, but
24 Montanans have an elephant in this fight. So I feel
25 that Puget Sound Energy should not sell Colstrip to

1 Northwestern Energy.

2 Northwestern Energy is a backwards-looking
3 company. I like to think that PSE is a forward-looking
4 company. Northwestern Energy wants to run an aging,
5 expensive coal-burning plant until 2042. And the public
6 service commission here in Montana wants to allow them.
7 Don't let them. Don't sell.

8 Northwestern Energy is the only utility
9 betting on the future of dirty coal in the nation. We
10 in Missoula County have a 100 percent clean electricity
11 goal by 2030. We would like you to help us meet those
12 goals. Please shut down Colstrip by 2025.

13 We stand in solidarity with the other
14 ratepayers in Washington State. Thank you very much for
15 your time.

16 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you for your comments.

17 All right. Frank Damiano, are you there?

18 MR. DAMIANO: Here I am.

19 CHAIR DANNER: Go ahead, sir.

20 MR. DAMIANO: All right.

21 I'm not nearly as well prepared as most of
22 the speakers. So I just dot down a few thoughts.

23 Well, I'm a Puget Sound Energy ratepayer.
24 I'm not a scientist. Puget Sound Energy routinely
25 boasts that they use more green energy than any other

1 utility. Yet our rates continue to increase. I don't
2 see -- I don't see how paying off -- I mean, I don't see
3 how selling Colstrip is going to be helpful to reducing
4 our rates by eliminating a natural resource that we have
5 available.

6 And as I was saying, although I'm not a
7 scientist, I did try investigating, and I have learned
8 of -- when I get stressed, because I have a brain
9 injury, I have trouble speaking. Please be patient.

10 CHAIR DANNER: Take your time, sir.

11 MR. DAMIANO: I've done some investigating.
12 And there's a theory, a scientific theory called the
13 spinning top theory, which if you get a chance to watch
14 it, it explains how these -- how global warming makes
15 more sense than the concept of greenhouse gases causing
16 global warming.

17 I'd urge you not to sell Colstrip and please
18 take a look at this spinning top theory. It would be an
19 eye opener.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you. Appreciate your
22 comments.

23 So we have Bobby Catoula has signed in but
24 not wishing to speak. Martin Clicks has signed in not
25 wishing to speak.

1 Lori McCole, you signed in wishing to speak,
2 but we already heard from you this afternoon. So I'm --
3 I'm hesitant, especially since you already got a written
4 letter in the docket as well. Is there something you
5 didn't tell us before that you wanted to tell us again?

6 Okay. I'm not seeing that she's on the
7 line.

8 I'm going to go back up to the list that
9 takes us through those currently signed in. And I'm
10 going to call on names that we called before that didn't
11 answer.

12 Frank Turner, are you on the line?

13 All right. Mary Painter, are you on the
14 line?

15 Paul Pickett, are you on the line?

16 MR. PICKETT: Yes, sir. Can you hear me?

17 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, I can.

18 MR. PICKETT: Okay. Very good. Thank you.

19 So, my name is Paul Pickett. I am a
20 Thurston County resident and a PSE customer. I'm also
21 former Thurston Public Utility District Commissioner.

22 And I also wanted to start my comments by
23 saying that I support and concur with the letter from
24 Representative Joe Fitzgibbon dated September 16, 2020.
25 His letter covers important points that I would like to

1 add to the record by reference and give my support for
2 that. And you should seriously consider the comments he
3 makes in that letter. I think they are spot on.

4 I would like to provide a few comments from
5 a little higher level. When you break this all down,
6 PSE's core purpose is to make money for investors, and
7 that's why we have the UTC who's core purpose is to
8 protect the public.

9 And I would like to offer that the UTC
10 should protect the public through the concept of the
11 triple bottom line. And the triple bottom line asks the
12 questions, is it good for the economy? Is it good for
13 the environment? And is it good for our community
14 values?

15 I think if you examine it from those three
16 points, this sale is bad at all three. It's bad
17 financially for customers because it's basically a shell
18 game to shift costs and increase them for customers.

19 The sale is bad for the environment because
20 it continues the plant's emissions as carbon pollution.
21 An immediate shift to renewable energy is needed to
22 protect our future generations, and that includes my
23 grandchildren's future.

24 In addition to the sale of transmission
25 facilities is essentially damaging to our ability to

1 regionally access renewable energy.

2 And the sale goes against our community
3 values, because I believe our values is that a utility
4 should be responsible and be addressing the needs of the
5 community and should care for our pocketbook and our
6 future, as well as their own investors' bottom line.

7 So I'll just finish my comments. To quote
8 the last paragraph from the Fitzgibbon letter, Our goal
9 in passing the Clean Energy Transmission Act was to
10 reduce greenhouse gas emissions wherever Washington's
11 energy use is exacerbating them.

12 We urge and I urge that UTC to use the
13 authority available to you to accelerate the full
14 closure of Colstrip as quickly as possible.

15 And that's all. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you, sir.
17 I appreciate it.

18 And let me ask now if Dawn Marsh is on the
19 line? Dawn Marsh are you on the line?

20 All right, Kelly Slater, are you on the
21 line?

22 Reina Holtz.

23 MS. HOLTZ: Yes.

24 CHAIR DANNER: Okay.

25 MS. HOLTZ: I'm on the line. Can you hear

1 me?

2 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, I can. Go ahead.

3 MS. HOLTZ: Okay. I sent in a comment about
4 a week ago, but I have updates.

5 I do believe in the science of climate
6 change. I do believe that the -- the news stories I'm
7 reading from countries all around the world, especially
8 in Europe, and the progress they have made to move to
9 renewable energy shows that its workable and it's
10 affordable. And it has actually created jobs, and it
11 will create jobs for us as well.

12 I wholly support the Clean Energy
13 Transmission Act, and I want to say that I feel that the
14 agreement that PSE proposes is not consistent with any
15 of those things.

16 There was an article in a Butte Newspaper,
17 the Montana Standard, written two days -- three days
18 ago, written by Tom Leute, which says that most of the
19 owners of Colstrip Units 3 and 4 are from Washington and
20 Oregon and have the backing of their states to try to
21 close down the remaining two Colstrip units.

22 And it's unfortunate. Now PSE wants to sell
23 the plant to the one owner that does not want to shut it
24 down and wants to run it until 2042. And the ratepayers
25 are not going save money.

1 Apparently PSE -- well, three points about
2 this. The way the agreement is written, basically it
3 would be difficult or impossible for PSE to leverage
4 early retirement of Colstrip 4, and that, of course, is
5 what we want in this state. That's the goal of our act.
6 So that's not acceptable. We need to shut it down, not
7 sell it.

8 My second point is we need to keep that
9 transmission line. If we sell it, we will be paying
10 extra for all the clean energy that we might want to get
11 from Montana, which has many potential clean energy
12 sources. Plus, the way PSE and Northwestern Energy are
13 proposing to do this, we would be buying energy from
14 that dirty plant until 2025, and then the transmission
15 would cost us extra. So we would be in a worst position
16 as ratepayers.

17 My third point is that the ratepayers are
18 going to basically pay all of the expenses for this
19 agreement, and this agreement, for its 25 percent share
20 of Unit 4, we are -- PSE is proposing to pay one dollar,
21 or they are proposing to charge one dollar. And
22 according to this article, it then plans to require its
23 customers to make up the difference between the one
24 dollar sale and the \$85 million value of the 25 percent
25 share that it's selling to Northwestern Energy.

1 If this article is accurate, it makes
2 absolutely no sense financially for ratepayers, either.
3 It's -- and every way that you look at it, it is a very
4 bad idea.

5 I've been a PSE ratepayer for 45 years now.
6 I live out on Vashon Island in Washington. I feel that
7 we need to shut this plant down. We do not need to be
8 selling it. And we need to keep our transmission lines
9 to Washington, and it could come in very handy in trying
10 to attain our goals of reducing the emissions.

11 Thank you for the chance to speak.

12 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you.

13 MS. HOLTZ: Hello.

14 CHAIR DANNER: I'm here, yes. Thank you
15 very much for your participation tonight. I appreciate
16 it.

17 We -- that looks like all those who have
18 signed up on the first sheet.

19 I'm moving to the supplemental, and I see
20 Trenton Miller. Are you there, sir?

21 MR. MILLER: Yes, I'm here.

22 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, go ahead.

23 MR. MILLER: Hi. My name is Trenton Miller.
24 I'm actually a resident of Spokane and a current
25 customer of Evista. I'm here to ask the UTC to deny

1 this proposal because it would have an awful impact on
2 the customers not just of Puget Sound Energy but of any
3 other Washington customers who are served by utilities
4 that have ownership in the Colstrip plant and its
5 transmission lines.

6 As an Evista customer, I fear for what it
7 would mean to be the customer of a minority owner
8 utility for the Colstrip plant whose majority owner has
9 no immediate plan to shut down a plant thia is losing
10 money. Evista customers would likely be forced to
11 either take a bad deal with Northwestern or participate
12 in the continued pollution of Montana's air and a water.
13 This is simply a shuffling of problems and costs on to
14 their future, and our children would not thank us if we
15 allowed this sale to occur.

16 Puget Sound Energy does not need to sell its
17 ownership of Colstrip in order to meet the requirements
18 of the Clean Energy Transformation Act. It has other
19 options, options that would be more beneficial both for
20 its customers and for the future generations of this
21 planet.

22 Finally, while the Colstrip plant is both
23 costly in polluting air and the water, the transmission
24 lines are not. These lines could be used to carry
25 energy from cheaper and cleaner energy sources. And

1 including them as part of the Colstrip sale would be a
2 bad financial decision for current Colstrip owners and
3 their customers.

4 Puget Sound Energy shouldn't let go of these
5 valuable assets for the laughable price of one dollar
6 and lump the cost of building new transmission lines on
7 to their customers.

8 Please follow the recommendations of the UTC
9 staff and deny this request.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
12 much for your participation this evening.

13 Elizabeth Williams, are you there?

14 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, yes, I am.

15 CHAIR DANNER: Good evening. Go ahead.

16 MS. WILLIAMS: I also live in Spokane. I'm
17 a member of 350 Spokane and of their interface climate
18 change committee.

19 And so I want to address some of the ethical
20 issues of this proposed sale and what would happen
21 if Puget Sound Energy, which has 25 percent of the value
22 there, and Northwestern has 30 percent now. With the
23 sale, that would give Northwestern 65 percent share,
24 which would be a majority share, and they could decide
25 whatever they want us to do, which we've all been

1 hearing is not a good idea because they are not
2 interested in trying to uphold our 100 percent clean
3 electricity law and trying to keep our climate change in
4 check with all the coal and the dirty fuel that they
5 use.

6 Colstrip has been the number one greenhouse
7 gas emissions in the west. And Colstrip is just trying
8 to circumvent the Washington State laws. So pushing it
9 out from 2025 to 2039 or 2042, just an unethical way
10 to -- for them to try to make money at the expense of
11 the environment and/or the ratepayers in Washington
12 State.

13 So I urge you not to allow this sale to go
14 through. Bye. Thank you.

15 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much.
16 Appreciate your -- your being available to provide
17 comments.

18 Stephanie Barbie, are you on the line?

19 MS. BARBIE: I am. Can you hear me?

20 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, we can. Thank you.

21 MS. BARBIE: Great. Hi. Thanks for letting
22 me speak.

23 I have a letter here that I would like to
24 read. It is from our state legislator. Is that okay if
25 I read it in its -- I would like to read it in its

1 entirety.

2 CHAIR DANNER: So is this a letter that is
3 already in the record? Is this the letter from -- from
4 Representative Joe Fitzgibbon and 20 other members of
5 the House?

6 MS. BARBIE: It is. And it lays out some of
7 the issues and refers to the laws that they have created
8 to --

9 CHAIR DANNER: Yes. That letter is already
10 in the record, and other speakers have -- have read from
11 it. So --

12 MS. BARBIE: Okay.

13 CHAIR DANNER: -- unless there's something
14 in the letter you want to pinpoint and discuss, I would
15 prefer that you not read the letter in the whole,
16 because we have already got the benefit of that letter.

17 MS. BARBIE: Okay. Okay. Well, I might
18 just -- maybe if I can just highlight a couple things,
19 if that's possible.

20 CHAIR DANNER: Sure, sure.

21 MS. BARBIE: Yeah, so first of all, I do
22 feel also honored to be asked to read the letter. And I
23 do want to appreciate that it's important to hear from
24 everybody here and that this is part of the record
25 already.

1 I -- this -- it's a well -- it's a well laid
2 out letter, and it refers to some of the legislation
3 that members of the State -- our State legislators have
4 carefully crafted to help guide exactly these kinds of
5 decisions that are being discussed here today.

6 And they are -- they are very clear in this
7 letter that the Legislature finds that Washington must
8 address the impacts of climate change by leading the
9 transition to clean energy economy. That's now state
10 law. RCW 19.405.030 requires that, quote, on or before
11 December 31st, 2025, each electric utility must
12 eliminate coal-fired resources from its allocation of
13 electricity.

14 So many good points that are raised here.
15 I'm glad other people are going to be able to share
16 them. But they're concerned about passing cost on to
17 PSE customers.

18 In terms of cleanup, additional cleanup that
19 could be required when Northwestern -- if Northwestern
20 is allowed to buy it and continue to operate it. They
21 set aside 350 million for the cleanup of the coal ash
22 waste, but it really wouldn't be fair for Puget Sound
23 Energy customers to have to pay for that solution.

24 But the sale of this plant really
25 circumvents the -- the intent of the laws that we've

1 asked our legislators to create by allowing these other
2 companies to operate the -- the coal-fired plants.

3 One of the points that Representative Joe
4 Fitzgibbon makes is that the molecule of CO2 has same
5 impact on Washington's wildfire risk, whether it is
6 emitted in Washington or in Montana.

7 And the goal of passing the -- the Clean
8 Energy Transformation Act was to reduce greenhouse gas
9 emissions wherever Washington's energy use is
10 exacerbating them.

11 So their final comment on the letter is that
12 they urge the UTC to use the authority available to you,
13 meaning the members of the UTC, to accelerate the full
14 closure of Colstrip as quickly as possible.

15 And I just also want to mention that the
16 letter does thank the Commissioners and UTC staff in
17 their assistance in drafting the rules to implement the
18 RCW 19.405.

19 So I think I'll -- I'll close with that.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
22 much.

23 Yes. The Commissioners have all received
24 the letter and read it. And as I said, other speakers
25 tonight have quoted from it. So we are very aware of

1 it. And thank you very much for again bringing it to
2 our attention.

3 MS. BARBIE: Thank you.

4 CHAIR DANNER: Let me now ask Mr. Cupp or
5 Ms. Feeser, do we have anyone else who has signed up to
6 speak to us tonight?

7 MS. FEESER: Chair, this is Bridget Feeser.
8 We do not have any other names signed up at this time.

9 CHAIR DANNER: Let me ask then if there is
10 anyone on the line who intended to speak tonight but not
11 did not sign up ahead of time.

12 MS. KIM: My name is Jane (audio
13 disruption). I did sign up. I called in (audio
14 disruption).

15 CHAIR DANNER: Can you mute your phone for a
16 second. Your microphone may be in front of a speaker or
17 some other thing. We're getting feedback.

18 MS. KIM: Is that better?

19 CHAIR DANNER: That's much better. Thank
20 you very much.

21 MS. KIM: Sorry. My name is Jane Kim, and I
22 signed up. I called in to be on the roster, but it
23 doesn't look like you have my on your list. I would
24 like to speak.

25 CHAIR DANNER: Absolutely. And I apologize

1 that we didn't get you on the list.

2 So go ahead.

3 MS. KIM: My name is Jane Kim. I am a
4 longtime PSE ratepayer in King County, as well as in
5 Island County.

6 I am not an expert, but I do agree with
7 everyone that has spoken this evening. I believe that
8 PSE's proposed sale of its share of Colstrip Unit 4 is
9 not in the economic interest of PSE consumers.

10 As Colstrip Unit 3 and 4 continue to pollute
11 the air in nearby aquifers, the plant has already
12 poisoned the town's drinking water, PSE ratepayers will
13 be obligated to pay for future cleanup efforts. The
14 magnitude of this liability is already hundreds of
15 millions of dollars included in our electricity rates,
16 continued operation, increases this liability, incurring
17 debts that will be paid by our children and
18 grandchildren.

19 And we have talked about CETA, requiring
20 electric utilities to eliminate coal-fired electricity
21 by 2025. Transition the State's electricity supply to
22 100 percent carbon neutral by 2030 and 100 percent
23 carbon free by 2045.

24 It is my understanding that if this sale
25 were to occur, then the production of coal-fired

1 electricity could and likely would be extended past
2 2025.

3 My question is, why is a for-profit company
4 selling this company as a grossly depreciated value of
5 one dollar. As a residential real estate broker selling
6 property in the Seattle and eastside areas for the last
7 20 years, I have never seen a listing price as low as
8 this on real estate.

9 From the Montana Department of Environmental
10 Quality website, it states that the six utility
11 companies that jointly own this plant paid over
12 \$13 million in property taxes to the City of Colstrip
13 and the County of Rosebud.

14 The one dollar sales price does not make any
15 sense unless PSE is trying to rid themselves of a
16 long-term liability. (Audio disruption) PSE and its
17 ratepayers, the Commission should find that the current
18 and future operation of Colstrip Units 3 and 4 is not in
19 the best interest of the public.

20 The prudent course of action would be to
21 dismantle Units 3 and 4, cease energy production in one
22 of the dirtiest energy facilities in the western United
23 States, and sell the parts to help fund the cleanup of
24 the environmental devastation it has caused.

25 My family and I thank you for protecting the

1 interests of our community and cities in helping to
2 achieve clean and cost-effective energy supply.

3 Thank you so much.

4 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you. And again, I
5 apologize that we didn't get you on the list already.
6 And I'm glad you were able to provide your comments to
7 us.

8 Is there anyone else on the line tonight who
9 did not sign in who wishes to comment before the
10 Commission?

11 Okay. I am hearing nothing.

12 I want to remind folks that we will be
13 taking written public comment through -- John Cupp, the
14 date was the 22nd of November?

15 MR. CUPP: Yes, sir.

16 CHAIR DANNER: Do you want to again give the
17 -- give the e-mail address or other ways that they can
18 contact us.

19 MR. CUPP: Yes. You can -- you can submit a
20 comment. There's a submit a comment link on our home
21 page at www.utc.wa.gov. Our e-mail address for comments
22 is comments@utc.wa.gov.

23 Our toll-free number, is 1-888-333-9882.
24 And our mailing address is P.O. Box 47250, Olympia
25 Washington, 98504-72550. And as I pointed out earlier,

1 most staff are working remotely and it could take awhile
2 for us to get our mail.

3 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you for
4 that.

5 And the office of the public counsel and the
6 office of the attorney general is representing the
7 residential and small business customers in this
8 proceeding. And if you have questions, you can contact
9 public counsel's office.

10 With that, let me turn to my colleagues and
11 see if either of them have any -- any remarks they would
12 like to make before we adjourn for the evening.

13 Commissioner Rendahl.

14 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Good evening,
15 everyone. Thank you so much for your comments, and I
16 appreciate your willingness to stick with it and make
17 sure you get your comments heard.

18 So thank you very much. And I appreciate
19 you being involved.

20 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much.

21 And Commissioner Balasbas, anything to add?

22 COMMISSIONER BALASBAS: No. Thank you,
23 Chair Danner.

24 And I just want to thank everyone who made
25 their comments both in this evening's session and as

1 well as the one earlier this afternoon.

2 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
3 much.

4 Mr. Cupp, anything else before us this
5 evening?

6 MR. CUPP: No, sir. Thank you very much.

7 Thank you for muting your mics and following
8 all those rules. Made it go well. Thank you.

9 THE COURT: Without further ado then, we are
10 adjourned.

11 Thank you all.

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14 (Public Hearing Session 2 concluded
15 at 7:06 p.m.)

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