

**Docket Nos. UE-220053, UG-220054, and UE-210854
(Consolidated) - Vol. IV**

WUTC v. Avista Corporation

September 7, 2022



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BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND) Dockets UE-220053,
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,) UG-220054, and
) UE-210854
Complainant,) (Consolidated)
)
vs.)
)
AVISTA CORPORATION, d/b/a)
AVISTA UTILITIES,)
)
Respondent.)

VIRTUAL PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING - VOLUME IV

Pages 81-90

September 7, 2022

6:00 p.m.

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
621 Woodland Square Loop Southeast
Lacey, Washington 98503

(All participants appeared via videoconference.)

DATE TAKEN: SEPTEMBER 7, 2022

REPORTED BY: ROSE DETLOFF, RMR, CRR, CCR #21036100

1 A P P E A R A N C E S

2 COMMISSIONERS:

3 DAVE DANNER, Chair
4 ANN RENDAHL, Commissioner
5 MILT DOUMIT, Commissioner

6 COMMISSION STAFF:

7 NASH CALLAGHAN
8 ANDREW ROBERTS
9 RYAN SMITH

10 AVISTA CORPORATION:

11 LIZ ANDREWS
12 JOE MILLER
13 CASEY FIELDER
14 PATRICK EHRBAR

15 PUBLIC COUNSEL:

16 COREY DAHL
17 NINA SUETAKE

18 ALSO PRESENT:

19 CAROL WELTZ (SNAP)

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1 LACEY, WASHINGTON; SEPTEMBER 7, 2022

2 6:00 p.m.

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4 P R O C E E D I N G S

5

6 CHAIR DANNER: Good evening, everyone.

7 Today is September 7th, 2022, and this is a public

8 comment hearing of the Washington Utilities and

9 Transportation Commission in Dockets UE-220053 and

10 UG-220054. This is Avista's 2022 general rate case.

11 I'm Dave Danner. I'm chair of the Commission.

12 I'm joined by my colleagues, Commissioner Ann Rendahl

13 and Commissioner Milt Doumit.

14 On January 21st of this year, Avista filed with

15 the Commission seeking an increase in electric and gas

16 rates over the next two years. This is the Company's

17 first filing since the passage of Senate Bill 5295 in

18 2021, which requires companies to seek rate increases

19 within the context of a multiyear rate plan.

20 Under the Company's original proposed plan, it

21 would seek an increase in electric revenues of 52.9

22 million in the first year and an additional increase of

23 17.1 million in the second year. It saw an increase in

24 natural gas rates of 10.9 million in year one and 2.2

25 million in year two.

1 On June 28th, 2022, the Company reached a
2 settlement with all other parties to the case except
3 one, the Public Counsel Unit of the Office of the
4 Attorney General.

5 The settling parties are the Company, the
6 Commission Staff, which acts as a party in rate cases
7 independently from the Commissioners, the Northwest
8 Energy Efficiency Alliance, the Alliance of Western
9 Energy Consumers, The Energy Project, the Sierra Club,
10 Walmart, and the Small Business Utility Advocates.

11 Under the proposed settlement, the Company will
12 reduce its rate increase request for electric from 52.9
13 million down to 38 million in year one, and from 17.1
14 million to 12.5 million in year two. It would reduce
15 its rate increase request for natural gas from 10.9
16 million to 7.5 million in year one, and from 2.2 million
17 to 1.5 million in year two.

18 The proposed settlement also contains a number
19 of terms including changes to low-income programs,
20 performance metrics, removal of costs related to the
21 Colstrip coal plant in Montana, and incorporating equity
22 into business planning among other terms.

23 As I mentioned, the Office of Public Counsel
24 does not support the overall settlement. While it
25 supports many of the settlement terms, it argues for an

1 electric revenue increase of 383,000 in year one and 2.8
2 million in year two, and a natural gas revenue increase
3 of 1.7 million in year one and \$237,000 in year two.

4 The parties I identified that are formally
5 participating in this proceeding are either acting as
6 intervenors or have statutory authority to participate,
7 but we also invite comments by members of the public on
8 their views on the rate case before the Commission. The
9 comments we receive from you this evening will be made
10 part of the formal record in the case.

11 Be aware that the Commissioners serve as judges
12 in this case. For that reason, we cannot answer
13 questions from those commenting tonight.

14 By statute, the Office of Public Counsel
15 represents the interests of residential small customers
16 of Avista, and I see that Public Counsel Nina Suetake
17 and Corey Dahl are both attending the meeting this
18 evening. If you have questions about this case, you can
19 contact the Office of Public Counsel, and you can e-mail
20 them at utility@atg.wa.gov. That is utility@atg.wa.gov
21 or by writing to them at the Attorney General's Office
22 Public Counsel Unit, 800 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000,
23 Seattle, Washington 98104.

24 For those who do not wish to speak tonight, the
25 UTC will accept written comments in this case. And you

1 may submit those via a web form on our website at
2 utc.wa.gov/consumers/, and you will see a place where
3 you can click on a submit a comment link.

4 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Dave, I think you
5 might have frozen.

6 Everyone, Chair Danner may have frozen. So
7 we'll just wait for a moment. Thanks, everyone, for
8 your patience. Technology is always a problem.

9 And you're back.

10 CHAIR DANNER: I apologize. I have no idea
11 where I cut out. So, Commissioner, maybe you can tell
12 me where we lost it.

13 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: I think you were just
14 advising everyone about -- as Commissioners, we sit as
15 judges, and the opportunity to provide written comments
16 if you don't provide oral comments. But maybe start in
17 about how to do the process for speaking tonight.

18 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you. In
19 fact, I will turn that over to Andrew Roberts from our
20 Staff, and I hope his connection is better than my own.

21 So, Andrew, maybe you want to give the
22 logistics for this meeting. And also, we will accept
23 written comments if there are people who don't wish to
24 speak tonight. So maybe you can give us the contact
25 information for that. So, Andrew.

1 MR. ROBERTS: Good evening. My name is
2 Andrew Roberts with Commission Staff. I'd like to cover
3 some logistics for the hearing tonight.

4 We ask that everyone please mute your
5 connections unless you are called on to speak. If
6 you're participating via Zoom, you can mute your
7 connection by clicking the microphone icon. A slash
8 will appear across the microphone indicating you have
9 muted your connection. To unmute, you can click the
10 microphone again. The slash will disappear. And when
11 you're done speaking, please remember to mute your
12 connection again.

13 The same process follows if you called in on
14 your telephone. Press star six to mute yourself. When
15 you're called on to speak, press star six to unmute.
16 And when you're done speaking, please press star six
17 again to mute yourself.

18 Please wait to be called on for comment and do
19 not interrupt other speakers. There are two options to
20 report technical difficulties. You can use the chat
21 feature in Zoom or you can call Ryan Smith at
22 360-664-1165. And the chat feature should only be used
23 to report technical difficulties.

24 If you would like to submit additional written
25 comment, you can submit comment via our e-mail address

1 at comments@utc.wa.gov or you can call 1-888-333-9882 to
2 submit comments over the phone. Those two methods are
3 in addition to the web form that Chair Danner previously
4 mentioned at www.utc.wa.gov.

5 It looks like we do have some people who are
6 interested in providing comment tonight. I would
7 appreciate it if we could get your names so we can sign
8 you up on our sign-in sheet. There aren't that many
9 people, so I think I can just open this up. Please do
10 try to speak one at a time. Thank you.

11 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
12 much, Andrew. Let me ask -- I guess we can go
13 alphabetically. If your name -- actually, I think we
14 have a small enough group. So anybody who wishes to go
15 first, why don't you just raise your hand or just begin.

16 All right. Is there anyone on the call tonight
17 who wishes to provide a public comment?

18 All right. Andrew, I am not hearing anything.
19 Are you -- do you have any information suggesting that
20 we have people joining us tonight?

21 MR. ROBERTS: I have no one that signed in
22 on the sign-in sheet. There are a few names on the
23 meeting list here that I don't recognize. But without
24 anybody speaking up, I don't think we have anybody.

25 CHAIR DANNER: All right, then. I will put

1 out a last call.

2 Is there anybody who wishes to comment on
3 Avista's proposed settlement or the proposed rate
4 increase?

5 All right. I am hearing nothing. And unless
6 the Commissioners disagree, I am prepared to adjourn the
7 meeting.

8 Before I do that, let me ask Public Counsel --
9 we are going to take written comments. We have a
10 hearing on the 21st. Do you have a date to propose for
11 when they should get those comments in?

12 MS. SUETAKE: We can do it a week after the
13 hearing. That's usually pretty common for us.

14 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. So that would be the
15 28th?

16 MS. SUETAKE: Sorry. I don't have my
17 calendar in front of me, but yes. I would assume so.

18 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. That's seven days
19 after the 21st. All right. Very good. Well, that's
20 what we'll do, then.

21 Again, last call?

22 I'm hearing nothing. So thank you, everyone,
23 for your time tonight. That concludes the public
24 hearing in this case.

25 (Proceedings concluded at 6:11 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF WASHINGTON
COUNTY OF KING

I, Rose Detloff, a Certified Court Reporter in
and for the State of Washington, do hereby certify that
the foregoing transcript is true and accurate to the
best of my knowledge, skill and ability.

ROSE DETLOFF, RMR, CRR, CCR

My commission expires:
DECEMBER 6, 2022