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

WUTC v. Avista Corporation

September 7, 2022
BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION, ) Dockets UE-220053,
Complainant, ) UG-220054, and
) UE-210854

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
ADOPTION OF ORDER

1. ORDER

2. COMMISSIONERS:

   DAVE DANNER, Chair
   ANN RENDAHL, Commissioner
   MILT DOUMIT, Commissioner

3. COMMISSION STAFF:

   NASH CALLAGHAN
   ANDREW ROBERTS
   RYAN SMITH

4. AVISTA CORPORATION:

   LIZ ANDREWS
   JOE MILLER
   CASEY FIELDER
   PATRICK EHRBAR

5. PUBLIC COUNSEL:

   COREY DAHL
   NINA SUETAKE

6. ALSO PRESENT:

   CAROL WELTZ (SNAP)

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LACEY, WASHINGTON; SEPTEMBER 7, 2022

6:00 p.m.

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PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR DANNER: Good evening, everyone.

Today is September 7th, 2022, and this is a public comment hearing of the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission in Dockets UE-220053 and UG-220054. This is Avista's 2022 general rate case.

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

I'm joined by my colleagues, Commissioner Ann Rendahl and Commissioner Milt Doumit.

On January 21st of this year, Avista filed with the Commission seeking an increase in electric and gas rates over the next two years. This is the Company's first filing since the passage of Senate Bill 5295 in 2021, which requires companies to seek rate increases within the context of a multiyear rate plan.

Under the Company's original proposed plan, it would seek an increase in electric revenues of 52.9 million in the first year and an additional increase of 17.1 million in the second year. It saw an increase in natural gas rates of 10.9 million in year one and 2.2 million in year two.
On June 28th, 2022, the Company reached a settlement with all other parties to the case except one, the Public Counsel Unit of the Office of the Attorney General.

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

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

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

As I mentioned, the Office of Public Counsel does not support the overall settlement. While it supports many of the settlement terms, it argues for an
electric revenue increase of 383,000 in year one and 2.8 million in year two, and a natural gas revenue increase of 1.7 million in year one and $237,000 in year two.

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

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

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

For those who do not wish to speak tonight, the UTC will accept written comments in this case. And you
may submit those via a web form on our website at utc.wa.gov/consumers/, and you will see a place where you can click on a submit a comment link.

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

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

And you're back.

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

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

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

So, Andrew, maybe you want to give the logistics for this meeting. And also, we will accept written comments if there are people who don't wish to speak tonight. So maybe you can give us the contact information for that. So, Andrew.
MR. ROBERTS: Good evening. My name is Andrew Roberts with Commission Staff. I'd like to cover some logistics for the hearing tonight.

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

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

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

If you would like to submit additional written comment, you can submit comment via our e-mail address
at comments@utc.wa.gov or you can call 1-888-333-9882 to submit comments over the phone. Those two methods are in addition to the web form that Chair Danner previously mentioned at www.utc.wa.gov.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIR DANNER: All right, then. I will put
out a last call.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Again, last call?

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

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

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