Docket Nos. UE-170485 and UG-170486 (Consolidated) - Vol. III

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission v. Avista Corporation

November 28, 2017



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BEFORE THE WASHINGTON	1	PULLMAN, WASHINGTON; THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2017
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION	2	6:00 p.m.
WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND)	3	·
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,)	4	
Complainant,)	5	CHAIRMAN DANNER: Okay. We are going to get started.
)	6	Thank you everyone for being here tonight.
vs.) Docket Nos. UE-170485	7	This is the public hearing public comment hearing
) and UG-170486) (Consolidated)	8	in the Avista general rate case. We are today in Pullman,
AVISTA CORPORÁTION, d/b/a) ^ AVISTA UTILITIES,)	9	Washington, and this is Docket No. UE-170485 and UG-170486.
AVISTA OTILITIES,	10	We I am Dave Danner and I'm the chairman of the
Respondent.)	11	Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and I'm
	12	joined by my colleague, Jay Balasbas.
VOLUME III	13	Our other colleague, Ms. Ann Rendahl, could not attend
	14	today but will listen to or read the transcripts of the
PUBLIC COMMENTS HEARING	15	public hearing comments tonight.
NOVEMBER 28, 2017	16	We are also joined by representatives of the company
6:00 p.m 6:34 p.m.	17	and also the public counsel.
240 Southeast Dexter Street	18	Lisa Gafken, raise your hand, please?
	19	Thank you.
Pullman, Washington	20	It looks like we are going to have a short public
	21	comment hearing tonight as we have one person signed in and
	22	that's Karen Kiessling, K-i-e-s-s-l-i-n-g.
	23	And so the attorney general has prepared a fact sheet,
	24	but I don't know if you've got a copy of that describing
REPORTED BY: LEIGH DELMOND, CCR NO. 3332	25	the details.
APPEARANCES	1	THE WITNESS: Oh, yes. There are some out there, yes,
WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION	2	sir.
CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS:	3	CHAIRMAN DANNER: If not, Mr. Roberts could bring some
DAVID DANNER, Chairman	4	in here.
JAY BALASBAS, Commissioner	5	Okay. We would be happy if you wanted to come up here
ANDREW ROBERTS, Regulatory Analyst		,
Washington Hillities and Transportation Commission	6	and take a seat.
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission 1300 South Evergreen Park Drive Southwest	6 7	
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission 1300 South Evergreen Park Drive Southwest P.O. Box 47250		and take a seat.
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Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission 1300 South Evergreen Park Drive Southwest P.O. Box 47250 Olympia, Washington 98504 360.664.1186	7 8	and take a seat. MS. KIESSLING: All right. CHAIRMAN DANNER: We don't have a sound system
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	Page 94		Page 96
1	CHAIRMAN DANNER: Yes, please.	1	to be contributing to a 4.5 million dollar salary.
2	MS. KIESSLING: Chairman Danner and Commissioner	2	Please deny this rate increase. Please help this man
3	Balasbas, I understand that your mission, in part, is to	3	stay in his home feeling warm and secure with power bills
4	see that investor-owned utilities are safe, available,	4	he can pay. Thank you.
5	reliable, and fairly priced. That last one, "fairly	5	And I would also comment that you received a letter
6	priced," is the area of my comment.	6	from Marty Johnston, who is the chair of the Planning and
7	Thank you for this opportunity to speak on the matter	7	Management Council for Aging & Long Term Care, and she goes
8	of the proposed rate increase requested by Avista for 2018.	8	into the specifics about the numbers of people in the
9	That rate increase, which is a 9.2 percent increase per	9	five-county region that we represent and the numbers that
10	month, is least able to be born by those residents of	10	are under that poverty level and for whom this is an
11	Whitman County who live on fixed incomes and hover near or	11	extreme need for your compassion and concern about their
12	reside squarely in poverty.	12	ability to pay bills.
13	I am here tonight because I represent the residents of	13	So again, I thank you for the opportunity to be here
14	Whitman County on the Planning and Management Council of	14	to meet you in person and to have this chance to give this
15	Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington.	15	testimony.
16	My name is Karen Kiessling, and I have lived in	16	I feel strongly about Whitman County. I have loved
17	Whitman County for 50 years and I serve as the government	17	living here, and I am pleased to be a part of the five
18	representative for the county on the council.	18	counties representing people of age and with disabilities
19	The goal of Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern	19	who need extra help and support.
20	Washington is to help citizens remain in their homes as	20	Thank you. And if there are questions, I'm happy to
21	they age. Rate increases for necessary services such as	21	answer them.
22	heat and light, medicine, food, transportation, and	22	COMMISSIONER DANNER: Thank you very much. May I ask
23	housing, force them out of their homes.	23	you, how many people do you serve with your organization?
24	This rate increase for approximately 50 percent of	24	MS. KIESSLING: Trepresent Whitman County and I can
25	seniors living alone is too high. Their incomes fall below	25	I can't give you hard numbers, but I would be able to
	Page 95		Page 97
1	the Washington State Elder Economic Insecurity Index, and	1	Page 97 furnish that.
1 2	the Washington State Elder Economic Insecurity Index, and they will lack the incomes needed to age in their own homes	2	furnish that. I would simply ask Aging & Long Term Care, but they
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2 3 4 5	the Washington State Elder Economic Insecurity Index, and they will lack the incomes needed to age in their own homes and pay their bills. Low income seniors forced to deal with rate increases must choose between heat and light and other basic needs	2 3 4 5	furnish that. I would simply ask Aging & Long Term Care, but they tend to count how many services they provide rather than the people to whom they provide them. So it would be 4,000 receiving this kind of help and, of course, there are a
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Page 98 Page 100 1 1 to extrapolate that amount was that our poverty rate in The needs, of course, are huge, but the fact that this 2 2 Whitman is 16 percent, which is, of course, a great drop group will sit down together and say what -- it was 3 3 after removing all of the college students, but we're still interesting to me because I'm an outsider in all of this. 4 4 above the state average because the state average is 14 I mean, I live in this area and I know a lot of people, but 5 percent. Poverty is alive and well in Whitman County. 5 I don't know that particular side of life. What we find is that we also have -- at least this is 6 The police and fire and Community Action cooperate 6 7 7 our belief, that we have seniors who are independent and very strongly and have something called the Community 8 they try to do what they can do without asking for help. 8 Relief Fund, which people contribute money to and we can 9 9 They feel a sense of shame about asking for support even use that money to buy a bus ticket for somebody to get to 10 though they've worked hard and have earned it, and we 10 where their family is or it's used for purchasing food or 11 haven't necessarily -- DSHS hasn't necessarily found ways 11 providing a night in a motel. 12 12 to get past that. And, of course, some of those things crash when you 13 13 We work on certain programs to make sure that our food have a football weekend and there's no housing for any of 14 banks and food pantries are secure and so on and yet, we've 14 the communities around here. There's nothing in Moscow, 15 15 learned an awful lot in that poverty study. there's nothing in Pullman, there's nothing in Lewiston, 16 For one thing -- speaking of food pantries -- it was a 16 and there's nothing in Clarkston. 17 surprise -- because we're not using them ourselves, it was 17 All of those motel rooms have been reserved for a year 18 18 a surprise to us to learn that most food pantries -- and ahead of time so you have -- but the idea that people come 19 it's true of Whitman County and it's true everywhere -- are 19 together and work to try to solve those problems is really 20 20 open for one or two hours a month. You can't live on the heartening. 21 21 food that you can get going to a food bank. So, yes, Community Action is alive and well and 22 22 So there are all kinds of helps, but, again, this is they're very energetic here and we do have all of those 23 the population we serve. This person wants desperately to 23 social services programs, too. 24 stay in his home and these bills that he has to meet can 24 And the Aging & Long Term Care has the dual thing of 25 force him out of it. 25 helping seniors and helping support caregivers for seniors Page 99 Page 101 1 So we feel strongly that if there's a way to support 1 and for people with disabilities, those are the two 2 populations that we serve with a variety of programs. 2 that person and help him remain where he wants to be and 3 CHAIRMAN DANNER: Thank you. Now, the letter from 3 he's worked hard to achieve that, we want to do that and we 4 Marty Johnston? 4 ask your help and support in doing that. 5 MS. KIESSLING: Yes. 5 We know you have to listen to a lot of different 6 voices and we appreciate that you came to hear ours. Thank 6 CHAIRMAN DANNER: You've indicated that he has 7 7 submitted that? 8 MS. KIESSLING: She. 8 CHAIRMAN DANNER: Thank you. We had a public 9 CHAIRMAN DANNER: She has submitted that to the UTC as 9 commentary hearing in Spokane where we heard from the 10 director of the Community Action Program. 10 a part of a document? 11 MS. KIESSLING: Yes, she has. In fact, it was dated 11 Do you have -- and you have similar services down 12 12 October 20th and it's to you, "Dear Commission Members," here. How much is your organization tied into that? 13 and she -- I have a copy of that letter here. 13 MS. KIESSLING: There's Community Action, which is a 14 14 very active agency, here. Aging & Long Term Care of In it, she makes the points about -- she says, "The 15 Planning and Management Council believes that if the given 15 Eastern Washington may, in fact, interact or support 16 general rate case settlement increase is granted to Avista 16 various programs of theirs, but they have funding in a 17 for electric and natural gas as nearly annually since 2006 17 variety of ways. 18 and with looming budget cuts to social services, no 18 The Community Action Agency services -- excuse me --19 19 based in Pullman are used throughout the county. They have electric or natural gas rate increases should be granted. 20 housing, they have emergency housing, they have --20 "As the commission considers the Avista general rate 21 I sit on a group -- a committee that's called the 21 case for 2018, the council requests that you take into 2.2 Poverty Awareness Task Force and that group meets once a 22 account the following:" 23 month. There is police and fire and Community Action and 23 And then she makes bullet points about the thing I 24 social service agencies and faith-based people, the 24 alluded to, the 2016 Elder Economic Insecurity Rate, the 25 25 churches are there.

Page 102 Page 104 1 "The percentage of retired seniors living in their own 1 MS. KIESSLING: I'm glad I got to come and read that. 2 2 homes whose incomes fall below the local Elder Economic CHAIRMAN DANNER: I do appreciate very much that you 3 came out tonight to share your views with us. 3 Security Standard Index suggests" -- and I lumped it up to 4 MS. KIESSLING: I appreciate the opportunity. 4 50, but she says, "that specifically, 47.6 percent of 5 5 seniors living alone lack the incomes they will need to CHAIRMAN DANNER: As you were the only person to do 6 so, this is going to bring us to a close. 6 make ends meet and age in their own homes." 7 Unless you have questions? 7 The next bullet point speaks to senior couples: "The 8 8 MR. BALASBAS: Nope. State Economic Insecurity Rate for senior couples is 22.9 9 9 MS. KIESSLING: I'm always glad to see an early end to percent. This rate stands in contrast to the state's 10 10 modest 4.2 percent poverty rate for senior couples. a meeting. Thank you again for coming to Pullman. 11 "This difference reveals senior couples who are often 11 CHAIRMAN DANNER: Well, thank you again for coming 12 12 out. overlooked, but whose incomes don't allow them to escape MS. KIESSLING: Safe travels home. 13 poverty's shadow. These seniors are more likely to go 13 14 CHAIRMAN DANNER: Thank you very much. 14 without one or more basic needs and are less likely to 15 All right. Is there anyone else in the room who 15 weather unforeseen expenses." 16 And then she speaks to senior incomes in our region 16 wishes to speak? 17 17 I think we are adjourned. that do not keep pace with rate increases: "Many in our 18 (Proceedings concluded at 6:34 p.m.) 18 area rely on Social Security, which was only increased by 19 19 .3 percent in 2017." 20 2.0 And her final bullet point is: "Many older adults in 21 21 our area qualify for Medicaid and we provided case 22 management services" -- excuse me -- "to over 4,000 low 22 23 23 income individuals receiving long-term care in 2016. 24 "The members of the Planning and Management Council 24 25 serve many clients who are low income and who must manage 25 Page 103 Page 105 1 either chronic health problems or disabilities and 1 CERTIFICATE 2 STATE OF WASHINGTON) 2 sometimes both.") ss. And that point is important because very often those 3 3 COUNTY OF WHITMAN) two things go together, chronic health problems and 4 4 5 disabilities. 5 This is to certify that I, Leigh Delmond, Certified 6 "An increase in residential rates for heat and light 6 Court Reporter in and for the State of Washington, residing in 7 impacts a segment of the population much more drastically 7 Pullman, reported the within and foregoing proceeding; said 8 than others. As these individuals struggle to make ends 8 proceeding being taken before me on the date herein set forth; 9 meet for food, medicine, transportation, and housing, the 9 and that said proceedings were taken by me in shorthand and 1.0 proposed rate increases for residential customers are 10 thereafter under my supervision transcribed, and that same is a 11 simply too high." 11 full, true and correct record of the testimony of said witnesses, 12 And then she has signed it as the chair and the 12 including all questions, answers and objections, if any, of 13 13 members -- the letter you got has the members and all the 14 I further certify that I am not a relative or employee 14 people in the Planning and Management Council. 15 or attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I 15 In that five-county region all of them have 16 financially interested in the outcome of the cause. 16 representatives, but Spokane and Spokane County have a very 17 IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have set my hand this 7th 17 large number of representatives because it's tied to 18 day of December, 2017. 18 population. 19 19 Whitman has three, Stevens and Ferry -- I can't think 20 2.0 of the other counties that make up -- it's Spokane County, LEIGH DELMOND, CCR 21 Spokane, Whitman County, Ferry, and Stevens, and all have 21 CCR NO. 3332 22 representatives on that. 22 23 And you have -- do you have that later dated 23 24 October 20th in the file? 24 25 25 CHAIRMAN DANNER: Yes, I'm sure it's in our files.

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