

BEFORE THE

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND)	DOCKETS UE-240004, UG-240005, and
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,)	UE-230810 (<i>Consolidated</i>)
)	
Complainant,)	
)	
v.)	
)	
PUGET SOUND ENERGY,)	
)	
Respondent.)	
_____)	
)	
In the Matter of the Petition of)	
)	
PUGET SOUND ENERGY)	
)	
Petitioner,)	PETITION TO INCREASE
)	CUSTOMER REPRESENTATION
)	SUB-FUND OF THE ALLIANCE OF
)	WESTERN ENERGY CONSUMERS
For an Accounting Order Authorizing)	
deferred accounting treatment of)	
purchased power agreement expenses)	
pursuant to RCW 80.28.410)	
_____)	

1 Pursuant to WAC § 480-07-370(3) and Article 4.2.4 of the Washington Extended Interim Participatory Funding Agreement (“Extended Interim Agreement”), the Alliance of Western Energy Consumers (“AWEC”) files this Petition to Increase the Puget Sound Energy (“PSE”) Customer Representation Sub-Fund by \$5,000 to compensate for the cost of the required Aurora license from Energy Exemplar to review PSE’s power costs in this proceeding (“Petition”).

2 On February 15, 2024, Puget Sound Energy (“PSE” or the “Company”) filed its request for a general rate revision for its electric and natural gas service.¹ The Commission docketed these filings as UE-240004 and UG-240005. On March 5, 2024, the Commission issued Order 01 in this proceeding, consolidating Dockets UE-240004 and UG-240005. On March 29, 2024, the Commission issued Order 03/01 consolidating Docket UE-230810 with the general rate case.

3 On May 2, 2024, AWEC filed a Proposed Budget with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (“Commission”), requesting a Fund Grant of \$68,897 from the PSE Customer Representation Sub-Fund to partially offset the costs of AWEC’s participation in this proceeding. AWEC’s Proposed Budget was approved by the Commission by Order 06 on May 15, 2024, in the full amount of \$68,897. As shown in AWEC’s budget, and as noted by the Commission in Order 06, AWEC’s expected cost to participate in this case far exceeds its approved funding request.²

4 In Order 06, the Commission recognized AWEC’s stated intention to request additional funds in the amount of \$5,000 to offset the Aurora license from Energy Exemplar,³ which is necessary to review PSE’s power costs in this proceeding. The need for AWEC to obtain its own intervenor license for Aurora access was raised in Avista’s General Rate Case proceeding,⁴ which prompted AWEC to engage in similar informal discussions with PSE on

¹ PSE submitted Revised Testimony and Exhibits on March 1, 2024, March 4, 2024, and April 11, 2024.

² Order 06 ¶¶ 14-15.

³ Commission Order 06, footnote 14

⁴ Dockets UE-240006/UG-240007 (*Consolidated*) – AWEC’s Proposed Budget for Fund Grant at ¶ 13.f. (Mar. 21, 2024).

procurement and payment for an Aurora license in this proceeding. PSE has indicated its support for AWEC to obtain the license at its own expense and use the participatory funding process to recover the costs associated with the license in this case and in the future, and PSE supports increasing the participant funding to pay for these costs; however, PSE does not support AWEC's statements in Paragraph 9 of this Petition that as a general policy it is not appropriate for customers to pay for licenses and that utilities should procure such licenses for intervenors at their own cost in future cases. On a non-precedential basis, and after discussions with The Energy Project, NW Energy Coalition, and Commission Staff,⁵ AWEC agreed to this approach given the support of these parties as well as PSE. AWEC has obtained an intervenor license from Energy Exemplar⁶ and is now requesting that the PSE Customer Representation Sub-Fund be increased by \$5,000 to compensate AWEC for the cost of the required license. In the filing of this request, AWEC conferred with PSE, The Energy Project and NW Energy Coalition. Each party has indicated its support for AWEC's Petition, with the condition stated above with respect to PSE.

5 Article 4.2.4 of the Extended Interim Agreement allows a Participating Organization to file a petition to increase the current year's Sub-Fund in the event that the Sub-Fund has been fully exhausted and allows the Commission to grant such a request upon good cause shown to utilize additional funds in a specific proceeding. Any interested stakeholder, as well as Commission Staff, may file a response to such a petition.

⁵ AWEC also reached out to Public Counsel regarding this issue and did not receive a response as of the time of this filing.

⁶ License proof of cost Attachment A

6 Based on the approved budget requests for AWEC, The Energy Project and NW Energy Coalition, the PSE Customer Representation Sub-fund has been fully allocated, thus meeting Article 4.2.4's first requirement.

7 Moreover, good cause exists to increase the Customer Representation Sub-Fund to accommodate AWEC's request in this Petition. First, PSE's net power supply expense cannot be fully reviewed for prudence and reasonableness without an Aurora license. Second, placing the financial burden on intervenors to procure an Aurora license is unduly prejudicial because it significantly restricts a party's ability to determine whether PSE's requested rate increase is just and reasonable by making it effectively impossible to audit the Company's power costs. This is particularly true in light of the fact that an Aurora license was available to AWEC in prior proceedings.

8 Finally, it is unduly burdensome to place the expense of procuring an intervenor license on individual intervenors who are already facing costs to participate in this proceeding. Thus, by requiring AWEC to use a portion of its allocation of the existing Sub-Fund to procure an Aurora license, the amount available to AWEC to offset its normal participation in the case (issuing discovery, drafting testimony, participating in settlement conferences, and other activities) is reduced by the cost of the license. Meanwhile, all consumers will benefit from any net power supply expense reductions ordered by the Commission based on AWEC's use of Aurora. As noted above, AWEC anticipates incurring substantially greater costs than what it may receive through participatory funding.

9

Given the need to procure an Aurora license in a timely manner to ensure sufficient time to review PSE's power costs, AWEC believes it is reasonable for this case (and Avista's rate case) to recover this cost through participatory funding. As a matter of general policy, AWEC does not believe it is reasonable to require customers to pay for the cost of licenses necessary to audit a utility's power costs. This has a chilling effect on reviewing a substantial cost driver in each utility's rate case due to the additional administrative work necessary to secure the license and the uncertainty of cost recovery for the intervenor. Accordingly, for future cases, AWEC recommends that the Commission require utilities to procure these licenses for intervenors at their own cost, whether this occurs through the utility procuring an intervenor license directly or reimbursing the intervenor for license costs.

10 Therefore, AWEC respectfully requests that the Commission issue an order granting a Customer Sub-Fund Grant Increase in the amount specified above.

Dated this 14th day of June 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

DAVISON VAN CLEVE, P.C.

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