BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Petition of)	
PUGET SOUND ENERGY, INC.,)	DOCKET NO. UE-000966
)	
For a Declaratory Order on the Service Area)	
Agreement between Puget Sound Energy, Inc.)	ORDER APPROVING STAY OF
and the City of Tacoma)	PROCEEDING
)	
)	

- On June 22, 2000, Puget Sound Energy, Inc. ("PSE") filed with the Commission a Petition for Declaratory Ruling under RCW 34.05.240, requesting that the Commission enter a declaratory order interpreting RCW 54.48.030, and interpreting a service area agreement entered into between PSE and the City of Tacoma ("Tacoma"). On July 3, 2000, pursuant to RCW 34.05.240(3), the Commission issued a notice that the Commission had received the petition. The notice was sent to PSE, Tacoma, the City of Lakewood ("Lakewood"), Public Counsel, the PUD Association, and other organizations. Notice was also sent to Tacoma and Lakewood requesting their consent to determine the matter in a declaratory order proceeding.
- On July 19, 2000, the Commission issued a notice of prehearing conference pursuant to RCW 34.05.240(5)(b) to schedule the matter for hearing and discuss certain preliminary issues. On August 2, 2000, the Commission held a prehearing conference in this proceeding. At the prehearing conference, the Commission set a date of August 23, 2000 for submission of briefs addressing certain jurisdictional issues.
- On August 15, 2000, the parties to the proceeding submitted a stipulation requesting a stay in the proceeding for a period of 120 days. The parties request the stay to facilitate ongoing efforts to resolve the underlying dispute. Under the stipulation, if the parties are not successful in resolving the dispute, one or more of the parties may request the Commission lift the stay and establish a revised briefing schedule. Public Counsel did not sign the stipulation, but advised the Commission by separate letter that it would not oppose the stipulation.
- This proceeding is governed by the provisions of RCW 34.05.240, concerning declaratory orders. Through its notice of prehearing conference and pursuant to RCW 34.05.240(5)(b), the Commission set the matter for specified proceedings to be held no more than ninety days after receipt of the petition. Under RCW 34.05.240(6), the Commission may extend the time limits under RCW 34.05.240(5)(b) for good cause.

The parties have demonstrated good cause under RCW 34.05.240(6) to allow the Commission to stay the proceedings for a 120-day period. The Commission favors voluntary settlement of disputes, and encourages parties to resolve disputes without the need for litigation. *See RCW 480-09-465*, -466.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS, that this proceeding be stayed for a period of 120 days from and after the date of this Order. This stay shall remain in full force and effect unless and until, at any time during the 120-day period, any one or more of the parties to the stipulation move to lift the stay.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective this 22nd day of August, 2000.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ANN E. RENDAHL Administrative Law Judge