Docket Nos. UE-200900 and UG-2900901 (Consolidated) - Vol. I

WUTC v. Avista Corporation d/b/a Avista Utilities

December 14, 2020



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Page 1	Page 3
BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION	1 APPEARANCES (Cont.)
WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND)DOCKETS UE-200900 and TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,)UG-200901 (Consolidated) Complainant,) vs.) AVISTA CORPORATION, d/b/a) AVISTA UTILITIES,) Respondent.) TELEPHONIC PREHEARING CONFERENCE, VOLUME I Pages 1-24 ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE ANDREW J. O'CONNELL December 14, 2020 1:35 p.m. Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission 621 Woodland Square Loop Southeast Lacey, Washington 98503 REPORTED BY: TAYLER GARLINGHOUSE, CCR 3358 Buell Realtime Reporting, LLC 1325 - 4th Avenue, Suite 1840 Seattle, Washington 98101 (206) 287-9066 Seattle (360) 534-9066 Olympia (800) 846-6989 National	CORINNE MILINOVICH Davison Van Cleve, PC 1750 SW Harbor Way, Suite 450 Portland, Oregon 97201 (503) 241-7242 com@dvclaw.com FOR INLAND EMPIRE PAPER COMPANY: TYLER PEPPLE Davison Van Cleve, PC 1750 SW Harbor Way, Suite 450 Portland, Oregon 97201 (503) 241-7242 tcp@dvclaw.com FOR THE SIERRA CLUB: JESSICA YARNALL-LOARIE 2101 Webster Street, Suite 1300 Oakland, California 94612 jessica.yarnall@sierraclub.org * * * * * * * 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
www.buellrealtime.com	25
Page 2	Page 4
1 APPEARANCES	1 LACEY, WASHINGTON; DECEMBER 14, 2020
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: 3	2 1:35 P.M. 3000
ANDREW J. O'CONNELL 4	4 PROCEEDINGS
FOR COMMISSION STAFF:	5 6 JUDGE O'CONNELL: Let's go on the record.
JENNIFER CAMERON-RULKOWSKI JEFF ROBERSON	Good afternoon. The time is approximately 1:35 p.m. My name is Andrew O'Connell. I am an administrative law judge with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, and I will be presiding in these consolidated matters along with the Commissioners. We're here today for a virtual prehearing conference in consolidated Dockets UE-200900 and UG-200901, which is Avista's 2020 general rate case filing. Staff has also filed a motion to consolidate Docket UE-200894 concerning the deferred accounting petition filed by Avista. We will address the timeline for any responses to that motion later in this prehearing conference. We are conducting this prehearing conference
23 321 High School Road NE, Suite D3, #383 Bainbridge Island, Washington 98110 24 (206) 669-8197 simon @ffitchlaw.com	 virtually with audio and video through computer software and via telephone. The benefits of this, that allows me and the parties and intervenors the ability to see and

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Page 5 1 hear each other even though we are not physically in the 2 Commission's hearing room. 3 Okay. Let's move forward with short 4 appearances. Let's begin with Avista. 5 MR. MEYER: Thank you, Your Honor. This is 6 David Meyer on behalf of Avista. 7 JUDGE O'CONNELL: Thank you, Mr. Meyer. 8 And for Staff? 9 MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: Good afternoon. 10 This is Jennifer Cameron-Rulkowski, Assistant Attorney General, appearing on behalf of Commission Staff. And 11 12 with me also appearing in this proceeding are other AAGs from our office and they are all -- they have all filed 13 14 a notice of appearance. JUDGE O'CONNELL: Yes, thank you. 15 16 And for Public Counsel? 17 MS. SUETAKE: Thank you. This is Nina 18 Suetake on behalf of Public Counsel. 19 JUDGE O'CONNELL: Thank you. 20 For The Energy Project? 21 MR. FFITCH: Good afternoon, Your Honor. 22 This is Simon ffitch on behalf of The Energy Project. JUDGE O'CONNELL: Thank you. 23

Are there any objections to any of these petitions to intervene?

Page 7

MR. MEYER: Your Honor, this is David Meyer with Avista. And while we don't object to any of the interventions, I just wanted to -- to stress that with respect to the Sierra Club intervention, that it's our understanding that their intervention will relate primarily to the expenditures surrounding Colstrip. And if that is the extent of their participation, we have no -- no objection.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Let me turn to Ms. Yarnall-Loarie. Would you please like to clarify if that is an accurate understanding?

MS. YARNALL-LOARIE: Yes, that's an accurate understanding. I'm not sure if there's another issue with which Avista was concerned about our participation. I mean, certainly a case can take different turns, but primarily speaking, as we've done in the past, Sierra Club's interest primarily pertains to Colstrip.

MR. MEYER: All right. With that, I have no objection.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Okay. So then hearing no objections, the petitions to intervene are granted, and that decision will be memorialized in the prehearing conference order.

Page 6

MS. MILINOVICH: Good afternoon. This is Corinne Milinovich on behalf of the Alliance of Western

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Thank you.

And for the Alliance of Western Energy

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Consumers?

Energy Consumers.

And for the Inland Empire Paper Company?

MR. PEPPLE: Good afternoon. This is Tyler Pepple representing the Inland Empire Paper Company.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: And for the Sierra Club, please?

MS. YARNALL-LOARIE: Good afternoon, Your Honor. My name is Jessica Yarnall-Loarie and I'm representing the Sierra Club.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Thank you. Good afternoon to you all. That brings us to the petitions to -- for intervention. Are there any petitions for intervention other than the ones that have been filed in writing with the Commission? So if you are on the line right now on telephone or on Teams and you wish to petition to intervene, now would be your time to speak up unless you have already filed a petition to intervene.

Okay. Hearing none, let's proceed. I have read the petitions to intervene on behalf of The Energy Project, the Alliance of Western Energy Consumers, the Inland Empire Paper Company, and Sierra Club. I am unaware of any written objections to these petitions.

Page 8

So I want to move forward to briefly discussing some other items. The Company requested a protective order when it filed its general rate case, and a protective order has already been issued in these dockets.

Additionally, the Commission requires all filing of service to be done electronically now according to the Commission rule and the Commission will serve the parties electronically as well. However, in this case, the Commission will also require a filing of an original and three paper copies for internal distributions at the Commission. If the parties are filing anything that includes information designated as confidential, please file the original and three copies of the fully unredacted version. No paper copy is necessary for any partly redacted or fully redacted version. Please file those versions only in the electronic format.

Also, if any party has not yet designated a lead representative for service, please do so via an email to me as soon as possible. In addition, if anyone would like to add names or email addresses of other representatives or support staff who should be included on any electronic courtesy copies of all documents filed in this proceeding, please email that to me as well. My

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email address is Andrew.j.oconnell, O-c-o-n-n-e-l-l, @utc.wa.gov.

So with that, I want to move on to the procedural schedule. I've been provided a proposed procedural schedule by the parties, and my understanding is that there is consensus on that proposal. And before we -- we get into that discussion, I want to repeat my communication with the parties shortly before the hearing, this prehearing conference, began that in review of the parties' proposed schedule, there is too short of a time between the final date for filing written testimony, that's cross-answering testimony and rebuttal testimony, and the evidentiary hearing. The proposed schedule has the evidentiary hearing beginning on June 29th and currently the proposed cross-answering and rebuttal deadline is, I believe it's June 9th.

The Commission needs more time to prepare for the hearing. And so the Commission is not -- with that proposed evidentiary hearing date, the Commission will not set a cross-answering or rebuttal deadline later than the week of May 17th through 21st.

I know it was pretty short notice, only about an hour before the prehearing conference, but I would like to hear if the parties have had a chance to discuss the proposed schedule in light of that feedback would be -- that would be helpful so that we're not speculating.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: I understand.

Page 11

MR. MEYER: And, Your Honor, this is -that's helpful, thank you. This is David Meyer, and
just one other request for information from you, is -is the period July 7th through the 9th available on
Commission calendars for a hearing date in the event
that that becomes an option the parties want to
consider? We haven't discussed that recently or as of
today, but are those dates available?

JUDGE O'CONNELL: And I'm pausing a moment to take a quick look at the Commission calendars.

MR. MEYER: Would be Wednesday through Friday, July 7th through the 9th.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: So the week of July 6th through 9, there is some availability, particularly more on the 6th. There are several tentative items on the Commission and the Commissioner's schedules that I'm unsure as to how likely they are to conflict with setting a hearing on July 7th through 9. The following week, July 12th through 16, is more open for an evidentiary hearing.

So the feedback I'd like to give is that it's not a no for July 7, 8, or 9, but it is -- in my

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from the Commission.

Since, Ms. Cameron-Rulkowski, you were the one who sent me the proposed schedule, I would like to ask if you could give me an update on whether the parties have had a chance to speak and whether the parties would like a chance to speak now and I could step off of the Teams meeting for a brief time. Go ahead.

MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: Your Honor, we have not had a chance to speak, and I know that I received your email over the lunch hour and I'm sure we've all been staring at the schedule trying to figure out where to -- where to push which dates. So I think it would be helpful certainly to be able to have some opportunity to discuss it.

But before we do that, it would be very helpful to hear from you if you have any conflicts around that hearing date. So if we're talking about pushing the hearing date, that would be very helpful to hear.

Another thing that could be helpful is I think we -- I think there is currently seven weeks between the briefing deadline and the order. If -- if six weeks would work, that would be helpful to know too. So any -- any dates that affect you and the bench, that

Page 12

head it's a question mark. I would have to follow up more specifically on those dates. And if that is -- if that's going to be the dates that are going to work for the parties, then I will follow up on that, and if after the fact I have to change the date, I would reach out to the parties before doing so.

MR. MEYER: Well, thank you, Your Honor. That's -- that's good guidance. I just wanted to test this -- the flexibility on that end of the schedule as well. It's the thirty -- roughly a 38-, 39-day interval that you're after between the rebuttal, slash, cross-answering testimony and the hearing, and so that's what any schedule we would want to come up with would try and accomplish, correct?

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Yes, some amount of time around six weeks. I realize that if we have a hearing at the beginning of a week and the testimony deadline is at the end of the -- you know, week previous, it might be a little bit less than six weeks, but about that time, yes.

MR. MEYER: Okay. Good. Now, I know that Staff just prior to the start of this session today circulated an email to all parties on an alternative schedule, and we appreciate that. Just moments ago, we circulated a -- a different version to all parties, but

Page 13

might I suggest that -- that if -- I moved out that the parties can agree on that -- on a schedule that accomplishes these objectives. So one option would be for us to simply report back to you with a new proposed schedule perhaps tomorrow, no later than tomorrow, that accomplishes what you're after, and rather than try and do this, it's kind of cumbersome, break free on this and restart this prehearing. Would that be a possibility that we circulate that revised schedule and then you just hold the prehearing open until you receive that

MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: Your Honor, may I -- JUDGE O'CONNELL: Go ahead,

Ms. Cameron-Rulkowski, please.

tomorrow by email?

MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: I -- I have a tendency not to want to agree -- to agree to that unless we want to hold the prehearing conference over and reconvene it with you. If it comes to the point that we can't agree on something, then we -- we would -- we would need to submit opposing schedules to you in writing. We could do that, but I -- I think I would favor doing the usual thing, which is talking among the parties today, and if we can't agree, then we tell you what we can't agree on and you come up with a decision. That's -- that's my feedback.

Page 15

perhaps there's some way that you can meet in the middle and take some time from the Commission, but also take some time from the parties for their briefing.

MR. PEPPLE: That sounds reasonable.

MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: That's helpful. And just to let you know, Your Honor, the extra week there was to accommodate the 4th of July week.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: I understand. If we're pushing the schedule back so that the hearing is after the 4th of July weekend, then maybe that concern can be resolved.

Let me step off. I will -- I see the time now is almost 1:55. I will plan to come back onto the Teams meeting at 2:25, that's a half hour from now. However, if the parties don't need that long to determine whether there can be an agreement or whether there can't be an agreement, Ms. Cameron-Rulkowski or Mr. Roberson, if you could please send me a message, I'll get back on sooner.

So with that, let's be off the record for now, and I will be back on at 2:25 unless the parties let me know that I should come back sooner.

(A break was taken from 1:54 p.m. to 2:26 p.m.)

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Let's go back on the

Page 14

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Well, I happen to agree with both of you. It -- it's certainly more complicated having a virtual prehearing conference for the parties to collaborate and speak about resolving issues of a procedural schedule, but I do think if there are going to be differences of opinion on what the dates should be, I'd like to know sooner rather than later.

So what I'd like to do is first hear from any other party that wants to give their opinion on whether they would be opposed to taking a brief amount of time that I would step -- we would go off the record, I would step off this Teams meeting, and the parties could converse here. Okay.

MR. PEPPLE: Your Honor, Tyler Pepple for Inland Empire. We don't oppose that. I just wanted to say I think it would be helpful to hear an answer to Ms. Cameron-Rulkowski's question about whether or not we could push the briefing due date out another week or so, which, you know, pushes up more time against your final order deadline, but I think that would help to resolve some of these questions.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Yes, I -- I have two thoughts on that. First, yes, that date does not need to be firm, but also I was a bit surprised to see six weeks between the hearing and the briefing deadline. So

Page 16

record. After a short break, we are back at the
prehearing conference in Dockets UE-200900 and
UG-200901. The time is just shortly after 2:25 p.m.
Before coming on the record, I was informed that the
parties have a new proposal for a procedural schedule.
We will put that into the record now, and I will turn it
over to Ms. Cameron-Rulkowski.

MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: Thank you, Your Honor. I'll go ahead and read through the dates in the procedural schedule, and then we'll be following up with sending you a copy of it in writing.

So the first date that will change is the response testimony and we propose Wednesday, April 21. And then the next date is circulating the joint issues matrix, that would move a week ahead to April 30th. And we propose a settlement conference on May 6th; rebuttal testimony would be Friday, May 28th; our discovery deadline would be Friday, June 18; filing the joint issues matrix would be June 30th. Also on June 30th would be filing the exhibit list and cross-examination exhibits and time estimates. The evidentiary hearing would be July 7th through 9, and we've retained the briefing date of August 13th.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Okay. Thank you. MR. MEYER: And would Staff also like to add

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the discovery intervals that were agreed on? MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: Certainly, Mr. Meyer. I have actually already changed that in the document. We had initially had the -- the discovery that would be after -- that would be occurring after the

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cutoff, the response time will be five days. My apologies, five -- I think we have five business days.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Okay. Thank you. Preliminarily, I think this proposed schedule will work for the Commission, but I'm going to confirm that it does, and when I confirm it does, I will incorporate it into the prehearing conference order.

I notice that there were two other additions in the proposed schedule that I had been sent previously. The parties had included an agreement to include every party on each data request and response to the data request as well as certain organizational or presentation elements for the data requests and data responses. Are those two elements still agreed by the parties and is there any objection to me including that in the prehearing conference order?

MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: Your Honor, that was the intention would that -- is that -- that they would be included in the prehearing conference order. And if you'd like me to go through that second element, the

1 of these and the Company can speak to that, but we're

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also tracking of course all of the parties' discovery.

3 And so it makes it a lot easier to be able to click open

one email and see ah, that is what the subject matter of

5 the discovery is, this is who -- okay, we know who needs 6 to get it. And that should -- or it has been helping

7 facilitate the whole discovery -- processing discovery 8

and archiving discovery.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Okay. That makes sense to me and since the parties are all agreed, I will include that in the prehearing conference order. I assume that that as well as the -- the first agreement about sharing all data requests and responses will also be included with the procedural schedule you'll send me electronically later; is that correct?

MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: Those portions are unchanged, so yes, they will be included.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Okay. Thank you.

19 One more thing before we --20

MR. MEYER: Your Honor?

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Mr. Meyer, go ahead.

22 MR. MEYER: Oh, yeah. Excuse me for 23 interrupting. In the past, we have also agreed to

24 furnish to the bench a list of names of -- of those

other -- in addition to just the attorney and one other

Page 18

discovery tracking, I would be happy to answer any questions.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Yes, please, go ahead and explain that second one because that is relatively new to me and I'd like to understand.

MS. CAMERON-RULKOWSKI: Certainly, Your Honor. So this was piloted in the Cascade general rate case, which is currently pending, and Staff has had a very good experience with it. And the -- the purpose of it is so that the parties can easily identify the subject matter of data requests.

And so the first thing that we've been working on is to come up with a list of the usual suspects of discovery topics. Those are not absolutely set in stone, but we're trying to come up with a uniform list so we have a common understanding of what the subject matter is. And then for when the discovery -when a data request gets issued, the idea is to identify each data request with that particular subject, what the subject matter is, and then also in the -- the -- in the email that serves the data request and in the cover letter that accompanies the data request that the topics of those -- of the data requests would be listed and all the data requests would be grouped by that topic so that when we receive -- we -- we process literally hundreds

1 representative, in addition to those two, names of 2 people that should be provided copies of discovery. And 3 that -- it seemed to work well in the past. And -- and 4 in cases past, we've provided that to the -- to the 5 bench within a few days after the -- the prehearing was 6 held, and then it's compiled and distributed to the

7 parties. It seems otherwise we're in a quandary about 8 who should get copies. It's easier if we just send it 9 out directly.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Yes. My -- my question is, are you referring to the parties collectively sending that out or do you mean from each of the parties sending to me? Because I would like to have that information also for me to include in the prehearing conference order.

MR. MEYER: No, the thought being that we would -- each of the parties would send to you that information then you, if -- if you're willing to do that, would compile it into a list to be attached to the prehearing order.

JUDGE O'CONNELL: Yes. Please send me a list via email for everyone from Avista, and every other party, please send me the same sort of list with everyone who should be receiving courtesy copies. I will include the names and email address of each person

Page 21 Page 23 1 that the parties identify. I will include that in the 1 I would ex- -- I want to say that the parties can expect 2 prehearing conference order, the list in Appendix --2 that order by the end of this week or the very beginning it's usually I think Appendix A and Appendix B to the 3 3 of next. 4 procedural order would be the prehearing conference --4 And with that, if there is nothing else, 5 or the procedural schedule, sorry. So yes, please send 5 okay. We will be adjourned. Thank you. And we're off 6 that information to me, Mr. Meyer. 6 the record. 7 MR. MEYER: And the thought being, and this 7 (Adjourned at 2:40 p.m.) 8 is -- there's no strict limitation of the number, but 8 9 9 just all parties should use good judgments so we don't 10 turn in dozens of names when, you know, three, four, 10 five additional names will do it. 11 11 12 JUDGE O'CONNELL: Yes, that's my expectation 12 13 and my experience with the parties in the past, but it's 13 always good to remind us all that we should all be 14 14 15 reasonable. 15 16 Is there any other discussion from the 16 17 parties on that topic or on the procedural schedule? 17 18 Because I do plan to switch topics. So let me hear from 18 19 any other parties. 19 20 20 Okay. Hearing none, I want to move forward 21 and address Staff's motion to consolidate. I want to 2.1 22 address a timeframe for responses to that motion to 22 23 consolidate. Staff's motion would consolidate the GRC 23 24 with Avista's deferred accounting petition in Docket 24 UE-200894. The parties are entitled to file responses 25 25 Page 22 Page 24 1 CERTIFICATE 1 opposing such a motion, and I intend to set a deadline 2 of this Friday, December 18, 2020, for responses 2 3 opposing Staff's motion to consolidate. 3 STATE OF WASHINGTON 4 I'd like to now give the parties the 4 **COUNTY OF THURSTON** 5 opportunity to offer any other perspective on a timeline 5 6 for responses to Staff's motion. 6 I, Tayler Garlinghouse, a Certified Shorthand 7 7 MR. MEYER: This is Avista, and I won't give Reporter in and for the State of Washington, do hereby 8 the reasons why, but we will be opposing that motion and 8 certify that the foregoing transcript is true and 9 Friday works just fine. We were anticipating that 9 accurate to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability. 10 10 timeframe. 11 JUDGE O'CONNELL: Okay. Thank you. 11 12 12 Is there any other party that wants to be Tayler Garlinghouse, CCR 3358 13 heard on that timeline? 13 14 Okay. Hearing nothing, responses opposing 14 15 Staff's motion to consolidate will be due by 5:00 p.m. 15 16 this Friday, December 18, 2020. 16 17 Is there anything else that we need to 17 18 address today at this prehearing conference? 18 19 MR. MEYER: Not from Avista. 19 2.0 JUDGE O'CONNELL: Okay. Hearing nothing, 20 21 thank you all and thank you for your fruitful 21 22 discussions and the proposed schedule that you've agreed 22 23 23 to. I will issue the prehearing conference order 24 shortly. It will contain the procedural schedule and 24 25 the other guidelines for the disposition of this case. 25

A	14:10	bench 10:25 19:24	clarify 7:12	confirm 17:10,11
AAGs 5:12	Andrew 1:13 2:3	20:5	Cleve 3:4,10	conflict 11:20
ability 4:25 24:9	4:8	benefits 4:24	click 19:3	conflicts 10:17
able 10:14 19:3	Andrew.j.oconnell	best 24:9	Club 3:13 6:8,12	consensus 9:6
absolutely 18:14	9:1	bit 12:19 14:24	6:24 7:6	consider 11:10
accommodate 15:7	answer 14:16 18:1	Box 2:8,18	Club's 7:19	consolidate 4:17
accompanies 18:22	anticipating 22:9	break 13:7 15:23	collaborate 14:4	21:21,23,23 22:3
accomplish 12:14	apologies 17:7	16:1	collectively 20:11	22:15
accomplishes 13:3	appearance 5:14	brief 10:7 14:10	Colstrip 7:8,19	consolidated 1:4
13:6	appearances 5:4	briefing 10:23	com@dvclaw.com	4:11,14
accounting 4:18	appearing 5:11,12	14:18,25 15:3	3:6	Consumers 5:25
21:24	Appendix 21:2,3,3	16:23	come 12:13 13:24	6:3,23
accurate 7:13,14	appreciate 12:24	briefly 8:1	15:13,22 18:13,15	Cont 3:1
24:9	approximately 4:7	brings 6:14	comes 13:18	contain 22:24
add 8:22 16:25	April 16:13,15	Buell 1:21	coming 16:4	converse 14:13
addition 8:21 19:25	archiving 19:8	business 17:7	Commission 1:2,4	copies 8:11,14,24
20:1	Assistant 2:7 5:10	<u>C</u>	1:18 2:5 4:10	20:2,8,24
additional 21:11	assume 19:11		5:11 6:17 8:6,8,8	copy 8:15 16:11
Additionally 8:6	attached 20:19	C 2:1 3:1 4:4 24:1,1	8:10,12 9:17,18	Corinne 3:3 6:2
additions 17:13	attorney 2:13,22	calendars 11:8,13 California 3:15	9:20 10:1 11:8,13	Corporation 1:7
address 4:19 9:1	5:10 19:25		11:19 15:2 17:10	2:17
20:25 21:21,22	Attorneys 2:7	Cameron-Rulko 2:6 5:9,10 10:2,9	Commission's 5:2	correct 12:14 19:15
22:18	audio 4:23	13:12,14,15 15:5	Commissioner's	Counsel 2:11 5:16
addresses 8:22	August 16:23	15:17 16:7,8 17:2	11:19	5:18
adjourned 23:5,7	availability 11:17	17:22 18:6 19:16	Commissioners	COUNTY 24:4
administrative	available 11:7,11	Cameron-Rulko	4:12	course 19:2
1:13 2:2 4:9	Avenue 1:22 2:13	14:17	common 18:16	courtesy 8:24 20:24
affect 10:25	Avista 1:7,8 2:16	Cascade 18:7	communication 9:8	
afternoon 4:7 5:9	2:17 4:19 5:4,6	case 4:15 7:17 8:3	Company 3:8 6:5,7 6:24 8:2 19:1	cover 18:21
5:21 6:1,6,10,13	7:4,16 20:22 22:7 22:19	8:10 18:8 22:25		cross-answering 9:12,15,20 12:12
ago 12:24	Avista's 4:15 21:24	cases 20:4	compile 20:19 compiled 20:6	cross-examination
agree 13:2,16,16,19	AVISTA \$ 4.13 21.24 AWEC 3:2	CCR 1:20 24:14	Complete 20.0 Complainant 1:5	16:20
13:23,24 14:1	AWEC 3.2	certain 17:17	complicated 14:2	cumbersome 13:7
agreed 17:1,19	В	certainly 7:17	computer 4:23	currently 9:15
19:10,23 22:22	B 21:3	10:14 14:2 17:2	concern 15:10	10:22 18:8
agreement 15:16	back 13:4 15:9,13	18:6	concerned 7:16	cutoff 17:6
15:17 17:15 19:12	15:19,21,22,25	Certified 24:6	concerning 4:18	
ah 19:4	16:1	certify 24:8	conducting 4:10	D
ahead 10:8 13:13	Bainbridge 2:23	chance 9:24 10:5,6	conference 1:11	D 4:4
16:9,15 18:3	began 9:9	10:10	4:14,21,22 7:25	d/b/a 1:7
19:21 Alliance 5:24 6:2	beginning 9:14	change 12:5 16:12	9:9,23 13:17 14:3	D3 2:23
6:23	12:17 23:2	changed 17:3	16:2,16 17:12,21	data 17:16,17,18
allows 4:24	behalf 5:6,11,18,22	circulate 13:9	17:24 19:11 20:15	17:18 18:11,18,19
alternative 12:23	6:2,22	circulated 12:23,25	21:2,4 22:18,23	18:21,22,23,24
amount 12:15	believe 9:16	circulating 16:14	confidential 8:14	19:13
amvunt 12.13				

	1	1	1	
date 9:11,19 10:18	due 14:18 22:15	ffitch 2:22 5:21,22	18:9 21:9,14	19:10 20:14,25
10:19 11:8 12:5		figure 10:12	granted 7:23	21:1
14:18,23 16:12,14	E	file 8:14,17 21:25	GRC 21:23	included 8:23
16:23	E 2:1,1 3:1,1 4:4,4	filed 4:17,19 5:13	grouped 18:24	17:15,24 19:13,17
dates 10:13,25	24:1,1	6:16,20 8:3,24	guidance 12:8	includes 8:13
11:11 12:2,3 14:6	easier 19:3 20:8	filing 4:16 8:7,10	guidelines 22:25	including 17:20
16:9	easily 18:10	8:13 9:11 16:18		incorporate 17:11
David 2:17 5:6 7:3	electronic 8:18,24	16:20	H	information 8:13
11:5	electronically 8:7,9	final 9:11 14:19	half 15:14	11:6 20:14,18
david.meyer@av	19:15	fine 22:9	happen 14:1	21:6
2:19	element 17:25	firm 14:24	happy 18:1	informed 16:4
Davison 3:4,10	elements 17:18,19	first 14:8,23 16:12	Harbor 3:4,10	initially 17:4
days 17:6,7 20:5	email 8:21,22,25	18:12 19:12	head 12:1	Inland 3:8 6:5,7,24
deadline 9:16,21	9:1 10:11 12:23	five 17:6,7,7 21:11	hear 5:1 9:24 10:17	14:15
10:23 12:17 14:20	13:11 18:21 19:4	flexibility 12:9	10:20 14:8,16	intend 22:1
14:25 16:18 22:1	20:22,25	follow 12:1,4	21:18	intention 17:23
December 1:15 4:1	Empire 3:8 6:5,7	following 11:21	heard 22:13	interest 7:19
22:2,16	6:24 14:15	16:10	hearing 5:2 6:21	internal 8:11
decision 7:24 13:24	Energy 2:21 5:20	foregoing 24:8	7:22 9:9,13,14,18	interrupting 19:23
deferred 4:18	5:22,24 6:3,22,23	format 8:18	9:19 10:18,19	interval 12:10
21:24	entitled 21:25	forward 5:3 8:1	11:8,21,23 12:12	intervals 17:1
designated 8:13,19	ESQ 2:17	21:20	12:16 14:25 15:9	intervene 6:19,20
determine 15:16	estimates 16:21	four 21:10	16:21 21:20 22:14	6:22 7:2,23
differences 14:6	event 11:8	free 13:7	22:20	intervenors 4:25
different 7:17	evidentiary 9:13,14	Friday 11:15 16:17	held 20:6	intervention 6:15
12:25	9:19 11:23 16:21	16:18 22:2,9,16	help 14:20	6:15 7:6,7
directly 20:9	ex- 23:1	fruitful 22:21	helpful 10:14,17,19	interventions 7:5
discovery 16:17	Excuse 19:22	fully 8:15,16	10:21,24 11:1,5	Island 2:23
17:1,4 18:1,14,17	exhibit 16:20	furnish 19:24	14:16 15:5	issue 7:15 22:23
19:2,5,7,7,8 20:2	exhibits 16:21	G	helping 19:6	issued 8:4 18:18
discuss 9:25 10:15	expect 23:1	$\frac{\mathbf{G}}{\mathbf{G}4:4}$	High 2:23	issues 14:4 16:14
discussed 11:10	expectation 21:12		hold 13:10,17	16:19
discussing 8:2	expenditures 7:8	Garlinghouse 1:20	Honor 5:5,21 6:11 7:3 10:9 11:4	items 8:2 11:18
discussion 9:7	experience 18:9 21:13	24:6,14 general 2:7 4:15	12:7 13:12 14:14	J
21:16	explain 18:4	5:11 8:3 18:7	15:6 16:9 17:22	$\frac{3}{11:132:3}$
discussions 22:22	explain 18.4 extent 7:9	General's 2:13	18:7 19:20	JEFF 2:7
disposition 22:25	extra 15:6	give 10:4 11:24	hour 9:23 10:11	jeff.roberson@u
distributed 20:6 distributions 8:12	CAUTA 13.0	14:9 22:4,7	15:14	2:10
Docket 4:18 21:24	\mathbf{F}	go 4:6 10:7 13:13	hundreds 18:25	Jennifer 2:6 5:10
dockets 1:4 4:14	F 24:1	14:11 15:25 16:9		jennifer.camero
8:5 16:2	facilitate 19:7	17:25 18:3 19:21	I	2:9
document 17:4	fact 12:5	going 12:3,3 14:5	idea 18:18	Jessica 3:14 6:11
documents 8:24	favor 13:22	17:10	identify 18:10,18	jessica.yarnall@
doing 12:6 13:22	feedback 9:25	good 4:7 5:9,21 6:1	21:1	3:16
doing 12.0 13.22 dozens 21:10	11:24 13:25	6:6,10,13 12:8,21	include 17:16	joint 16:14,18
				, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
	•	•	•	•

judge 1:13 2:2 4:6
4:9 5:7,15,19,23
6:4,8,13 7:11,22
11:3,12,16 12:15
13:13 14:1,22
15:8,25 16:24
17:8 18:3 19:9,18
19:21 20:10,21
21:12 22:11,20
judgments 21:9
July 11:7,15,16,21
11:22,25 15:7,10
16:22
June 9:15,16 16:18
16:19,19
K
kind 13:7

know 9:22 10:10,24 12:18,21 14:7,19 15:6,22 19:5 21:10 knowledge 24:9

\mathbf{L} Lacey 1:19 4:1 law 1:13 2:2,22 4:9 **lead** 8:20 let's 4:6 5:3,4 6:21 15:20,25 **letter** 18:22 **light** 9:25 limitation 21:8 **line** 6:17 list 16:20 18:13,16 19:24 20:19,22,23 21:2 **listed** 18:23 literally 18:25 little 12:19 **LLC** 1:21 long 15:15 look 11:13 **Loop** 1:18 **lot** 19:3

lunch 10:11

\mathbf{M} mark 12:1 matrix 16:15,19 matter 18:11,17,20 19:4 matters 4:11 mean 7:17 20:12 meet 15:1 meeting 10:7 14:12 15:14 memorialized 7:24 message 15:18 **Meyer** 2:17 5:5,6,7 7:3,3,20 11:4,5,14 12:7,21 16:25 17:3 19:20,21,22 20:16 21:6,7 22:7 22:19 **middle** 15:1 Milinovich 3:3 6:1 6:2 **moment** 11:12 moments 12:24 motion 4:17,20 21:21,22,23 22:1 22:3,6,8,15 move 5:3 8:1 9:3 16:15 21:20 **moved** 13:1

N N 2:1 3:1 4:4 name 4:8 6:11 names 8:22 19:24 20:1.25 21:10.11 National 1:24 **NE** 2:23 necessary 8:16 need 13:20 14:23 15:15 22:17 needs 9:17 19:5 new 13:4 16:5 18:4 Nina 2:12 5:17 nina.suetake@at... 2:15 notice 5:14 9:22

17:13 number 21:8 0

O 4:4 **O'Connell** 1:13 2:3 4:6,8 5:7,15,19,23 6:4,8,13 7:11,22 11:3,12,16 12:15 13:13 14:1,22 15:8,25 16:24 17:8 18:3 19:9,18 19:21 20:10,21 21:12 22:11,20 **O-c-o-n-n-e-l-l** 9:1 **o0o--** 4:3 Oakland 3:15 object 7:4 **objection** 7:10,21 17:20 **objections** 6:25 7:1 7:23 objectives 13:3 occurring 17:5 offer 22:5 office 2:13 5:13 Oh 19:22 okav 5:3 6:21 7:22 12:21 14:13 16:24 17:8 19:5,9,18 21:20 22:11,14,20 23:5 **Olympia** 1:23 2:8 ones 6:16 open 11:22 13:10 19:3 **opinion** 14:6,9 opportunity 10:14 22:5 **oppose** 14:15 **opposed** 14:10 **opposing** 13:20 22:1,3,8,14 **option** 11:9 13:3

17:21,24 19:11 20:15,20 21:2,4 22:23 23:2 **Oregon** 3:5,11 organizational 17:17 original 8:11,14 P

P 2:1,1 3:1,1 4:4 **p.m** 1:16 4:2,7 15:24,24 16:3 22:15 23:7 **Pages** 1:12 paper 3:8 6:5,7,24 8:11,15 participation 7:9 7:16 particular 18:19 particularly 11:17 parties 4:25 8:9,12 9:5,8,24 10:5,6 11:9 12:4,6,23,25 13:2,23 14:3,12 15:3,15,21 16:5 17:15,20 18:10 19:10 20:7,11,12 20:17 21:1,9,13 21:17,19,25 22:4 23:1 parties' 9:10 19:2 **partly** 8:16 party 8:19 14:9 17:16 20:23 22:12 pausing 11:12 **PC** 3:4,10 pending 18:8 people 20:2 **Pepple** 3:9 6:6,7

14:14,14 15:4

perspective 22:5

petition 4:19 6:18

period 11:7

person 20:25

pertains 7:19

6:20 21:24

petitions 6:14,15 6:22,25 7:1,23 physically 5:1 piloted 18:7 **plan** 15:13 21:18 **please** 6:9 7:12 8:14,17,20,25 13:14 15:18 18:3 20:21,23 21:5 **PO** 2:8,18 **point** 13:18 portions 19:16 **Portland** 3:5,11 possibility 13:8 possible 8:21 prehearing 1:11 4:13,21,22 7:24 9:9,23 13:8,10,17 14:3 16:2 17:12 17:21,24 19:11 20:5,14,20 21:2,4 22:18,23 **Preliminarily** 17:9 prepare 9:17 presentation 17:18 presiding 4:10 pretty 9:22 previous 12:18 previously 17:15 primarily 7:8,18,19 **prior** 12:22 procedural 9:4,5 14:5 16:5,10 19:14 21:4,5,17 22:24 proceed 6:21 proceeding 5:12 8:25 **process** 18:25 processing 19:7 **Project** 2:21 5:20 5:22 6:23 proposal 9:6 16:5 **propose** 16:13,16 **proposed** 9:4,10,14

9:15,19,25 10:3

order 7:25 8:3,4

10:23 14:20 17:12

	Ī	Ì	Ī	1
13:4 17:9,14	Reporter 24:7	22:22,24	sounds 15:4	tcp@dvclaw.com
22:22	Reporting 1:21	schedules 11:19	Southeast 1:18	3:12
protective 8:3,4	representative 8:20	13:20	speak 6:19 10:5,6	Teams 6:18 10:7
provided 9:4 20:2,4	20:1	School 2:23	10:10 14:4 19:1	14:12 15:14
Public 2:11 5:16,18	representatives	Seattle 1:22,23	speaking 7:18	telephone 4:24
purpose 18:9	8:23	2:14	specifically 12:2	6:18
push 10:13 14:18	representing 6:7	second 17:25 18:4	speculating 11:2	TELEPHONIC
pushes 14:19	6:12	see 4:25 14:24	Spokane 2:18	1:11
pushing 10:19 15:9	request 11:6 17:16	15:12 19:4	Square 1:18	tell 13:23
put 16:6	17:17 18:18,19,21	send 15:18 19:14	staff 2:5 4:17 5:8	tendency 13:16
	18:22	20:8,17,21,23	5:11 8:23 12:22	tentative 11:18
Q	requested 8:2	21:5	16:25 18:8	test 12:8
quandary 20:7	requests 17:18	sending 16:11	Staff's 21:21,23	testimony 9:12,12
question 12:1	18:11,23,24 19:13	20:12,13	22:3,6,15	9:13 12:12,17
14:17 20:10	require 8:10	sense 19:9	staring 10:12	16:13,17
questions 14:21	requires 8:6	sent 10:3 17:14	start 12:22	thank 5:5,7,15,17
18:2	resolve 14:20	serve 8:9	State 24:3,7	5:19,23 6:4,13
quick 11:13	resolved 15:11	serves 18:21	step 10:7 14:11,12	11:5 12:7 16:8,24
	resolving 14:4	service 8:7,20	15:12	17:8 19:18 22:11
R	respect 7:6	session 12:22	stone 18:15	22:21,21 23:5
R 2:1 3:1 4:4 24:1	Respondent 1:9	set 9:20 18:15 22:1	Street 3:15	thing 10:21 13:22
rate 4:15 8:3 18:7	response 16:13	setting 11:21	stress 7:5	18:12 19:19
reach 12:5	17:6,16	settlement 16:16	strict 21:8	think 10:13,22,22
read 6:22 16:9	responses 4:20	seven 10:22	subject 18:11,17,19	13:21 14:5,16,20
realize 12:16	17:19 19:13 21:22	sharing 19:12	18:20 19:4	17:7,9 21:3
Realtime 1:21	21:25 22:2,6,14	short 5:3 9:11,22	submit 13:20	thirty 12:10
reasonable 15:4	restart 13:8	16:1	Suetake 2:12 5:17	thought 20:16 21:7
21:15	retained 16:22	Shorthand 24:6	5:18	thoughts 14:23
reasons 22:8	review 9:10	shortly 9:8 16:3	suggest 13:1	three 8:11,14 21:10
rebuttal 9:13,16,20	revised 13:9	22:24	Suite 1:22 2:13,23	THURSTON 24:4
12:11 16:16	right 6:17 7:20	Sierra 3:13 6:8,12	3:4,10,15	time 4:7 6:19 9:11
receive 13:10 18:25	Road 2:23	6:24 7:6,18	support 8:23	9:17 10:7 12:15
received 10:10	Roberson 2:7	Simon 2:22 5:22	sure 7:15 10:11	12:20 14:11,19
receiving 20:24	15:18	simon@ffitchlaw	surprised 14:24	15:2,3,12 16:3,21
reconvene 13:18	room 5:2	2:24	surrounding 7:8	17:6
record 4:6 14:11	roughly 12:10	simply 13:4	suspects 18:14	timeframe 21:22
15:20 16:1,4,6	rule 8:8	six 10:24 12:16,19	SW 3:4,10	22:10
23:6		14:24	switch 21:18	timeline 4:19 22:5
redacted 8:16,16	S	skill 24:9		22:13
referring 20:11	S 2:1 3:1 4:4	slash 12:11	T	today 4:13 11:11
relate 7:7	schedule 9:4,5,10	software 4:23	T 24:1,1	12:22 13:23 22:18
relatively 18:4	9:14,25 10:3,12	soon 8:21	take 7:17 11:13	tomorrow 13:5,5
remind 21:14	12:9,13,24 13:2,5	sooner 14:7 15:19	15:2,2	13:11
repeat 9:7	13:9 14:5 15:9	15:22	taken 15:23	topic 18:24 21:17
report 13:4	16:5,10 17:9,14	sorry 21:5	talking 10:18 13:22	topics 18:14,22
REPORTED 1:20	19:14 21:5,17	sort 20:23	Tayler 1:20 24:6,14	21:18
L				

				Tage 25
tracking 18:1 19:2	VOLUME 1:11	T 7	3727 2:18	
transcript 24:8	vs 1:6	<u>Y</u>	38- 12:10	
_	VS 1.0	Yarnall-Loarie	383 2:23	
Transportation 1:2	W	3:14 6:10,11 7:12		
1:4,18 4:10	want 8:1 9:3,7 11:9	7:14	389-2055 2:14	
true 24:8	12:13 13:16,17	yeah 19:22	39-day 12:10	
try 12:14 13:6	21:20,21 23:1	$\overline{\mathbf{z}}$	4	
trying 10:12 18:15	wanted 7:5 12:8	L	450 3:4,10	
turn 7:11 16:6	14:15	0	47250 2:8	
21:10	wants 14:9 22:12		495-4316 2:19	
turns 7:17	Washington 1:1,4	1	4th 1:22 15:7,10	
two 14:22 17:13,19	1:18,19,22 2:8,14	1-24 1:12	4th 1.22 13.7,10	
20:1			5	
Tyler 3:9 6:6 14:14	2:18,23 4:1,9 24:3 24:7	1:54 15:24	5:00 22:15	
U		1:55 15:13	503 3:5,11	
UE-200894 4:18	way 3:4,10 15:1	1.33 13.13 12th 11:22	509 2:19	
	we'll 16:10	1300 3:15	534-9066 1:23	
21:25	we're 4:13 10:18	1300 5.13 1325 1:22	5th 2:13	
UE-200900 1:4	11:1 15:8 18:15	1325 1.22 13th 16:23	3th 2.13	
4:14 16:2	19:1 20:7 23:5	13th 10.23 14 1:15 4:1	6	
UG-200901 1:4	we've 7:18 10:11	16 11:22	621 1:18	
4:15 16:3	16:22 18:12 20:4		664-1186 2:9	
unaware 6:25	Webster 3:15	1750 3:4,10	669-8197 2:24	
unchanged 19:17	Wednesday 11:14	17th 9:21	6th 11:16,18 16:16	
understand 11:3	16:13	18 16:18 22:2,16		
15:8 18:5	week 9:21 11:16,22	1840 1:22	7	
understanding 7:7	12:17,18 14:18	2	7 11:25	
7:13,15 9:5 18:16	15:6,7 16:15 23:2	2:25 15:14,21 16:3	7th 11:7,15,21	
uniform 18:15	weekend 15:10	2:26 15:24	16:22	
unredacted 8:15	weeks 10:22,24	2:40 23:7		
unsure 11:20	12:16,19 14:25	2.40 23.7 2000 2:13	8	
update 10:4	Western 5:24 6:2	2020 1:15 4:1,15	8 11:25	
use 21:9	6:23	22:2,16	800 1:24 2:13	
usual 13:22 18:13	willing 20:18	206 1:23 2:14,24	846-6989 1:24	
usually 21:3	wish 6:18	21 16:13		
utc.wa.gov 9:2	Woodland 1:18	21 10.13 2101 3:15	9	
Utilities 1:2,4,8,18	work 10:24 12:3	21st 9:21	9 11:17,21,25 16:22	
4:9	17:9 20:3	241-7242 3:5,11	94612 3:15	
$\overline{\mathbf{v}}$	working 18:13	287-9066 1:23	97201 3:5,11	
Van 3:4,10	works 22:9	28th 16:17	98101 1:22	
,	writing 6:16 13:21	29th 9:15	98104 2:14	
version 8:15,17 12:25	16:11	2)(II).13	98110 2:23	
	written 6:25 9:12	3	98503 1:19	
versions 8:17 video 4:23	www.buellrealti	30th 16:15,19,19	98504 2:8	
video 4:23 virtual 4:13 14:3	1:25	321 2:23	99220 2:18	
	X	3358 1:20 24:14	9th 9:16 11:7,15	
virtually 4:23		360 1:23 2:9		
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>	