Docket No. TV-200475 - Vol. I

Rocket Movers

May 19, 2021



206.287.9066 I 800.846.6989

1325 Fourth Avenue, Suite 1840, Seattle, Washington 98101 <u>www.buellrealtime.com</u>

email: info@buellrealtime.com



Page 1	Page 3
BEFORE THE WASHINGTON	1 LACEY, WASHINGTON; MAY 19, 2021
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION	2 11:00 A.M.
In the Matter of Determining)DOCKET TV-200475	3000
the Proper Carrier Classification)	4 PROCEEDINGS
of, and Complaint for Penalties) Against,)	5
Against,)	6 JUDGE PEARSON: Let's be on the record.
DOCKET WANTINES IT S	7 Good morning. Today is Wednesday, May 19th, 2021. The
ROCKET VAN LINES, LLC)	8 time is a little after 11:00 a.m.
VIRTUAL SPECIAL PROCEEDING, VOLUME I	9 My name is Rayne Pearson. I'm an
PAGES 1-21 ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE RAYNE PEARSON	10 administrative law judge with the Washington Utilities
	and Transportation Commission.
May 19, 2021	12 This is Docket TV-200475, which is a special
11:00 a.m.	proceeding to determine whether Rocket Van Lines, LLC is
Markington Digitary and Transportation Operations	operating as a household goods company without the
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission 621 Woodland Square Loop Southeast	15 required permit from the Commission.
Lacey, Washington 98503	16 So let's begin by taking appearances
	17 starting with Commission Staff.
	MR. HARTFORD: Good morning, Your Honor.
DEDODTED BY: TAVI ED CADI INICHOLIGE COD 2250	Robert Hartford appearing on behalf of the Commission.
REPORTED BY: TAYLER GARLINGHOUSE, CCR 3358	20 JUDGE PEARSON: Great, thank you.
Buell Realtime Reporting, LLC	21 And now if the representative for the
1325 - 4th Avenue, Suite 1840 Seattle, Washington 98101	22 company, if you could please state your name, spelling
(206) 287-9066 Seattle	your last name for the court reporter, and then provide
(360) 534-9066 Olympia (800) 846-6989 National	your address, phone number, and email address.
www.buellrealtime.com	MR. RYCRAFT: So my name is Matthew Rycraft.
Page 2	Page 4
	1 4 3 5 1
1 APPEARANCES	That's Romeo, Yankee, Charlie, Romeo, alpha, foxtrot,
2 ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:	1 That's Romeo, Yankee, Charlie, Romeo, alpha, foxtrot, 2 tango, and address is 2243 West Dakota Avenue, Hayden,
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Page 5

household goods permit from the Commission. So you will need to show Staff what you've done to shut down your business either completely or partially, which would include proof that you're no longer operating or advertising, such as taking down or changing your website or other online advertisements for your business.

If you have obtained or applied for a permit, a permit in advance of this hearing, please let me know when I call on you. And if you have obtained your permit, you can continue to operate your business so long as you are permitted.

The second option is to ask for a classification hearing, and you would choose this option if you believe that you are not operating illegally and that your business is not subject to regulation by the Commission as a household goods carrier. So in other words, you would be denying that you offer or advertise unpermitted household goods carrier services. And if you choose this option, we will schedule a formal evidentiary hearing where you will be required to present proof that your business is not within the Commission's jurisdiction. The hearing would be set about a month from now with a deadline a week before the hearing for both you and Commission Staff to file a list

you were served with asked that the Commission penalize

Page 7

Page 8

you for engaging in business as a household goods

3 carrier without a permit, and the law sets the maximum

4 penalty for each violation at \$5,000. So Staff will

recommend a penalty and you will have a chance to reach an agreement with Staff about the penalty amount. If

you're unable to agree, Staff will explain its

recommendation, you can explain your response, and then

the Commission will make the final decision about the

penalty amount.

If you ch

If you choose option B, that is if you deny you're operating as a household goods mover, like I said earlier, we'll schedule another hearing. So in that case, it would help if you know your schedule for the next month or two so we can set a hearing date.

So let's begin with Staff. Robert Hartford,

17 I will swear you in now.

(Robert Hartford sworn.)

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay, great.

And, Matthew Rycraft, what's your position

21 with the company?

MR. RYCRAFT: I'm the sole owner.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. And do you understand

the options that I explained?

MR. RYCRAFT: I do, yes.

Page 6

of any witnesses that you wish to bring forward as well as any exhibits.

So Robert Hartford will be speaking for Commission Staff this morning. If you've not already met Robert Hartford, he did appear on the line. He is a Commission compliance investigator.

So now that we've gone over the choices, I will explain what else will happen today.

In a few minutes, I'm going to ask you to let me know what your choice is. So at that time, I will swear you in so that anything you tell me will be considered sworn testimony made under penalty of perjury. Once you're sworn in, I will ask if you understand your choices and then ask you to state your choice. And then if there is anything else you want to explain to me, you will have a chance to do that.

If you choose option A, you will need to testify about how you plan to comply with the law either by filing an application for a household goods permit or shutting down your unpermitted business. Depending on what proof you can provide, you may be given an opportunity to meet with Staff during the break to negotiate an agreed order to resolve this matter.

The agreed order, if you're able to reach one, will also deal with the penalty. So the complaint

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay, great. Let me go ahead and swear you in. If you could raise your right hand.

(Matthew Rycraft sworn.)

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. So do you admit that you were operating as a household goods carrier without a permit or do you wish to request a hearing to contest the allegations against you?

MR. RYCRAFT: So I was not operating in Washington as a household goods carrier --

JUDGE PEARSON: You say you were not?

MR. RYCRAFT: I was not.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay.

MR. RYCRAFT: I do want to -- I do have my Washington State UBI number, and I'm in the process of getting everything that I need to now that I have it. If I do -- if any advertisement happens in the Spokane vicinity, then I need to have my information over there with everything legally that I need to have in order --

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. I need to just go off camera for one quick second. I'm having an issue, a family child issue. So hold on just one moment. I will be right back.

MR. RYCRAFT: Okay. Of course.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. I am so sorry about

Page 9 1 that and I am back. 1 (unintelligible) --2 Okay. So you are denying the allegations, 2 THE COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry, this is the 3 3 does that mean that you want to set a hearing for a court reporter. I didn't hear what he was beginning to later date to contest the allegations or would you at 4 4 5 5 least like an opportunity to talk with Staff? JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. 6 MR. RYCRAFT: I'd like to talk with Staff 6 MR. RYCRAFT: The Coeur d'Alene Spokane 7 7 and then hopefully we can get this resolved today. I Craigslist, it says Spokane and Coeur d'Alene combined 8 mean -- I mean, if that's okay with Staff, Robert 8 on there, so any advertisements on that Craigslist page 9 9 would be, you know, people -- it might be easy to Hartford. 10 10 JUDGE PEARSON: Yes, we can certainly make misconstrue whether or not they could, you know, whether 11 that accommodation. I guess I was just trying to 11 they do business in Spokane or Coeur d'Alene --12 establish whether you were willing to have that 12 JUDGE PEARSON: Sure. 13 13 conversation. MR. RYCRAFT: And the specific ad that was 14 Robert, did you have any opinions about 14 posted to Craigslist was an ad from 2019. I believe that? 15 that was reposted by an assistant of mine. I told her 15 16 MR. HARTFORD: No, Your Honor, I don't. But 16 to repost an ad that says low cost, affordable movers on 17 I would like to make you aware that Staff did receive a 17 it, so she must have chosen one that had Spokane still 18 couple of documents from Mr. Rycraft on the 10th of May. 18 in the ad. So I don't think I should be required to pay 19 One of the documents appeared to be their dashboard for 19 any fee because I'm not operating in Washington, and I'm 20 20 Craigslist showing their advertisements in the Spokane going to work as quickly as I possibly can to get a 21 area have been deleted. And then the other document was 21 household goods, you know, temporary permit and then a 22 22 a receipt from the Secretary of State's office showing permanent permit because --23 23 that they had applied for a business license in JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. 24 Washington State. 24 MR. RYCRAFT: -- to be in compliance with 2.5 I'd like to just further state that I did 25 you guys. Page 10 take a look this morning, and as of this morning, Rocket 1 JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. So I think those are 1 all good mitigating factors that you can discuss with 2 had not applied for a permit; however, their 2 3 3 advertisements -- there were no advertisements on the Staff on the break, and Staff will have suggestions for 4 4 Spokane area Craigslist for -- for moving -- moving in you about how you can ensure that you stay in compliance 5 5 Washington State. going forward while you're waiting for your Washington 6 JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. Great. Thank you. 6 permit, such as I understand you don't have control over 7 So it sounds like it would probably serve 7 the Coeur d'Alene Spokane advertisement on Craigslist, 8 8 but you could place a statement in your ad that says all the parties best if we take a break so that you all Coeur d'Alene moves only, Idaho moves only at this time. 9 can talk and see if you're able to reach an agreement. 9 10 And if you are able to reach an agreement, I can issue 10 There's kind of -- there's things you can do to make 11 11 an order stating that you agree that you were operating sure that it's clear to consumers where you operate, so 12 in the past without a permit and advertised without a 12 you and Staff can talk about more -- about some of those 13 permit. It sounds like you have corrected that going 13 strategies on the break. forward and that you agree to stop operating until you 14 MR. RYCRAFT: Okay. Sounds good. 14 15 15 JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. All right. So let's get a permit if you decide to apply for one. 16 go ahead and be in recess. It's now 11:14, and I will 16 And it would most likely include an agreed 17 17 penalty amount, and usually the penalty -- part of the admit the call along with the court reporter, and I will

3 (Pages 9 to 12)

come back on when Staff messages me, and then I will

send a message to the court reporter, and we will both

are now in recess, and I am hanging up.

until 11:51 a.m.)

(Recess taken from 11:14 a.m.

come back on and rejoin the hearing at that time. So we

And, Robert Hartford, would you like to summarize for me

JUDGE PEARSON: Let's be back on the record.

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Page 12

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penalty would be suspended, so that means you would not

So are there any questions before we take a

have to pay it unless you broke the law again. So you

would pay a small portion of the penalty today and only

have to pay the rest of the penalty if you violated the

MR. RYCRAFT: Just that I don't --

order going forward.

break?

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what happened during the break and whether or not the parties were able to come to an agreement?

MR. HARTFORD: Yes, Your Honor. So the parties were able to come to an agreement that Rocket was operating in Washington State without a permit. Our suggestion is a \$5,000 penalty with \$4500 of that penalty suspended for two years with the \$500 remaining portion of that penalty due today. And Mr. Rycraft has agreed to make that penalty today via the Commission online payment portal, which I am now drafting an email with instructions for him and I will send within the next moment or two.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay, great.

So just for the record, Matthew Rycraft, you had a chance to review the terms, and I just want to make sure that you understand the implication.

MR. RYCRAFT: Yes, I didn't review them personally, but he read them over the phone for me. They were saying is it two years, \$4500 suspended, I have to pay you guys 500 bucks. Yeah.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. So just for the record, you're agreeing to shut down your company in Washington unless and until you get a permit?

MR. RYCRAFT: For the record, I never was operating in Washington, but I do agree not to operate

earlier that we just -- we felt moving (unintelligible) a lot of other companies. So I gave a lot of information to -- to a lot of people that just call in from all over the place for random things like hot tubs or for any -- pretty much anything, yeah.

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So and we're going through a pandemic right now. We're barely making it right now, and I mean, I am hopeful -- I'm applying for the EILD loan, and hopefully we -- I'll just use some of that money to pay you guys that I get from the loan or I'll pay -- I don't know how we're going to do it. But basically now that I know that this company -- or that you guys are actually a company, because as I told Robert, I was getting bombarded as soon as I got my -- my DOT number with literally hundreds of phone calls, emails, texts, a bunch of big companies saying headlines like you're not in compliance with this or that, use our company services. So I really did think that you guys were -- I know I got a letter from you guys a long time ago, but I thought you guys were just another scam company trying to get money.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay.

MY RYCRAFT: So yeah, I mean, this is a -we're a small, family owned business, but it was just me. But this is like -- it was -- I mean, it would put

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in Washington again.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. So the \$4500 will be suspended for two years from today's date, so until 19th 2023. So that means that if Staff finds an advertisement or you offer a move during that time, the \$4500 penalty will be imposed; you understand that part, right?

MR. RYCRAFT: Yes, so I do have a question. JUDGE PEARSON: Sure.

MY RYCRAFT: Sorry, I'm driving. So is there any way that like -- I know you're the judge, so could you just like waive that \$500 or something and then I won't do this again. And if I do, I'll pay the whole \$500?

JUDGE PEARSON: So you're asking to suspend the entire \$5.000?

MY RYCRAFT: Yes.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. Can you give me a little bit more of an explanation as to why you believe that that would be the correct outcome?

MR. RYCRAFT: Yeah, well, yes, because I did give Robert information about a move over the phone, so I told him how much the approximately price would cost for a move at that time that he called and asked me for. So I did tell him the pricing, and I talked -- we spoke

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us behind, even a small amount. You know, it's not as busy as it was before.

JUDGE PEARSON: Sure. And I understand that. That the economy is definitely in a downturn right now.

Robert, did you have any response to that? I do think that we have -- in other circumstances, we've been a little more lenient during this last year or so due to economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Would you be amenable to suspending the entire amount of the penalty in light of these circumstances?

MR. HARTFORD: I would be, Your Honor, but I do -- I would like to make it known that, you know, during -- during our negotiation, Mr. Rycraft and I did have some difficulty coming to an agreement about what a quote is and what an estimate is. He -- he seemed to have a difference of opinion about sort of the terminology, and eventually I was able to get him to agree that -- the he -- he wanted to make it clear that he did not agree that he was doing anything wrong. So that's -- that's all I have to say.

JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. And I understand that as a factor, but I do think that a \$5,000 penalty provides pretty significant deterrent from engaging in

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1	additional illegal operations going forward.	1	that. Is that okay or is it
2	And so I guess my question to you, Matthew,	2	JUDGE PEARSON: Yes, so I'll just tell you
3	would be whether it is clear to you now that what is	3	right now that both licensing services staff and
4	and not allowed under Washington law.	4	consumer protection staff are always available to
5	MR. RYCRAFT: This is crystal clear now.	5	provide technical assistance. And you may want to
6	JUDGE PEARSON: Okay.	6	contact licensing services if you're having questions
7	MR. RYCRAFT: I didn't know before and	7	about how to fill out the application, but you're also
8	that's why yeah, and we I didn't agree that his	8	always welcome to reach out to consumer protection staff
9	quote (unintelligible) but now I know and he made that	9	if you have questions. Because the way we approach
10	very clear to me. I agree that I understand that you	10	enforcement at the Commission, our ultimate goal is to
11	cannot operate in Washington at all. I do have a	11	put companies into compliance, not to punish them.
12	question.	12	MR. RYCRAFT: I totally understand.
13	JUDGE PEARSON: Sure.	13	JUDGE PEARSON: Okay.
14	MR. RYCRAFT: So I remember Robert told me	14	MR. RYCRAFT: I agree to be in compliance.
15	that we can have a move, but as long as its starting	15	JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. Then it sounds like
16	point is in Idaho; is that correct?	16	we have reached an agreed resolution. So is there
17	JUDGE PEARSON: Well, that's not a move that	17	anything else that we need to address today?
18	the Commission regulates because it's interstate. We	18	MR. HARTFORD: Nothing from Staff, Your
19	only regulate intrastate moves, that both the origin and	19	Honor.
20	the destination are within the boundaries of Washington	20	JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. All right. So I will
21	State.	21	issue an order reflecting the parties' agreement, and
22	MR. RYCRAFT: Got it. Okay. Just wanted to	22	you should see that within the next couple of days, and
23	make that clear. Okay.	23	that will be served to you electronically via email.
24	MR. HARTFORD: Your Honor, if I may, I do	24	MR. RYCRAFT: Okay. Thank you.
25	have one more thing to add. I do want to add that Staff	25	JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. All right. Thank you
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1	is sympathetic to the to the fact that we are in a	1	all so much, and we are adjourned.
2	pandemic and that and that there is an economic	2	(Adjourned at 12:01 p.m.)
3	downturn. In, you know, light of those factors,	3	. ,
4	regardless of the other circumstances, I do agree that	4	
5	the that there should be no penalty with the full	5	
6	\$5,000 suspended.	6	
7	JUDGE PEARSON: Okay, great.	7	
8	All right. So I will issue an order	8	
9	reflecting, just to be clear, that the company is	9	
10	admitting to past conduct violating Washington State	10	
11	law, that no penalty is due at this time, but there will	11	
12	be a \$5,000 penalty suspended for a period of two years	12	
13	subject to the condition that the company remains in	13	
14	compliance with Washington State laws.	14	
15	MR. RYCRAFT: Yes, yeah, I understand.	15	
16	JUDGE PEARSON: Okay. So everyone's	16	
17	comfortable with that it sounds like?	17	
18	MR. RYCRAFT: Yeah. And if I could speak to	18	
19	Robert just I have I believe you gave me all the	19	
20	papers I needed (unintelligible)	20	
21	THE COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry, I'm not able	21	
22	to understand. Can you repeat what you said, please?	22	
23	MR. RYCRAFT: Oh, I was just letting Robert	23	
24	know that once we're in compliance with everything, then	24	
	I am going to call him to make sure that we can go over	25	
25	Tain going to call him to make care that we can go over	43	

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1	CERTIFICATE	
2		
3	STATE OF WASHINGTON	
4	COUNTY OF THURSTON	
5 6	I, Tayler Garlinghouse, a Certified Shorthand	
7	Reporter in and for the State of Washington, do hereby	
8	certify that the foregoing transcript is true and	
9	accurate to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability.	
10		
11	G. C.	
12 13	Tayler Garlinghouse, CCR 3358	
14	rayiei Gariirigilouse, GCIN 3336	
15		
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