

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

**Docket No. UE-240006 - Vol. II**

**September 19, 2024**



1325 Fourth Avenue, Suite 1840, Seattle, Washington 98101  
Bellingham | Everett | Tacoma | Olympia | Yakima | Spokane  
Seattle 206.287.9066 Tacoma 253.235.0111 Eastern Washington 509.624.3261

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email: [audio@buellrealtime.com](mailto:audio@buellrealtime.com)

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND	)	
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,	)	
	)	
Complainant,	)	
	)	
vs.	)	DOCKETS UE-240006
	)	& UG-240007
	)	
AVISTA CORPORATION, d/b/a	)	
AVISTA UTILITIES,	)	
	)	
Respondent.	)	
	)	PAGES 21-33

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VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING - VOL. II  
September 19, 2024

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Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
621 Woodland Square Loop SE  
Lacey, Washington 98504

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TRANSCRIBED BY: ELIZABETH PATTERSON HARVEY, WA CCR 2731

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A P P E A R A N C E S

FOR THE COMMISSION:

Commissioner Milt Doumit  
Commissioner Ann Rendahl

FOR PUBLIC COUNSEL:

Tad Robinson O'Neill  
Tad.Oneill@atg.wa.gov  
Attorney General of Washington  
Public Counsel Unit  
800 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000  
Seattle, Washington 98104  
206.464.6595

ALSO PRESENT:

Jean Marie Dreyer  
Melissa Castaneda-Kerson

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1 September 19, 2024

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4 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Good evening,  
5 everyone. Today is September 19, 2024, and this is the  
6 public comment hearing of the Washington Utilities and  
7 Transportation Commission in Dockets UE-240006 and  
8 UG-240007, which is Avista Utilities' 2024 general rate  
9 case.

10 I'm Ann Rendahl, a commissioner here at the  
11 commission. I'm joined by my colleague, Commissioner  
12 Milt Doumit. Our chair, Dave Danner, is not available to  
13 be here tonight, but will be reviewing the transcript of  
14 the hearing when he returns.

15 On January 18 of this year, Avista filed with  
16 the commission seeking an increase in electric and gas  
17 rates over the next two years. The company is seeking  
18 rate increases within the context of a multiyear rate  
19 plan as allowed by state law.

20 Under the company's original proposed plan,  
21 it would seek an increase in electric revenues of 77.1  
22 million dollars in the first year, and an additional  
23 increase of 53.7 million in the second year of the rate  
24 plan.

25 The company's initial filing sought an

1 increase in natural gas rates of 17.3 million in Year 1  
2 and 4.6 million in Year 2 of the rate plan.

3 In response to the testimony and evidence  
4 submitted by other parties, the company has modified its  
5 request for electric service. The company requests an  
6 increase in rates in the first year of 42.9 million and  
7 69 point [sic] million for the second year.

8 For natural gas service, the company requests  
9 in rebuttal an increase of 16.8 million for the first  
10 year and four million for the second year of the rate  
11 plan.

12 A number of parties are participating in this  
13 proceeding, including the company: The UTC, the  
14 commission staff, participates like any other party in  
15 the proceeding; the Public Counsel Unit of the attorney  
16 general's office, the Alliance of Western Energy  
17 Consumers, Walmart, the Northwest Energy Coalition, the  
18 Sierra Club, and The Energy Project.

19 The parties that are formally participating  
20 in this proceeding are either acting as intervenors or  
21 have statutory authority to participate.

22 But in this hearing tonight, we also invite  
23 comments by members of the public on their views on the  
24 rate case before the commission.

25 The comments we receive from you this evening

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1 will be made part of the formal record in the case. For  
2 that reason, there's a court reporter making a record of  
3 tonight's hearing, and we're recording this proceeding.

4 Please be aware that the commissioners serve  
5 as judges in this case, and for that reason, we cannot  
6 answer questions from those commenting tonight. We're  
7 here to listen to your comments.

8 By statute, the office of public counsel  
9 represents the interests of residential and small  
10 commercial customers of Avista, and I see in attendance  
11 tonight we have Tad Robinson O'Neill for public counsel,  
12 and also Jean Marie Dreyer.

13 If you have questions about the case, you can  
14 also contact the Office of Public Counsel by emailing  
15 them at Utility@ATG.Wa.Gov or writing to them at the  
16 Attorney General's Office Public Counsel Unit, 800 Fifth  
17 Avenue, Suite 2000, Seattle, Washington, 98004. And we  
18 will put that information up on the screen so you can  
19 copy that down.

20 The commission's public involvement staff is  
21 also available if you have questions. Mel  
22 Castaneda-Kerson of the commission's public involvement  
23 staff is assigned to this case. And she can be reached  
24 by emailing Comments@UTC.Wa.Gov or by calling  
25 888-333-9882. And again, that information will be

1 provided on the screen later.

2 For those of you who do not wish to speak  
3 tonight, the UTC will continue to accept written comments  
4 in this case. You may submit those via the form on our  
5 website at UTC.Wa.Gov/consumers, or you can submit  
6 comments to the public counsel's office. And we usually  
7 continue to accept comments about about a week after the  
8 hearing, and we'll determine that date at the end of  
9 tonight's hearing.

10 So I'm now going to turn to Melissa  
11 Castaneda-Kerson from our public information staff to go  
12 over the logistics for this meeting.

13 Go ahead, Melissa.

14 MS. CASTANEDA-KERSON: Thank you,  
15 Commissioner Rendahl.

16 Good evening, and welcome to the public  
17 comment hearing on Avista's general rate case in Dockets  
18 UE-240006 and UG-240007.

19 My name is Melissa Castaneda-Kerson. I am a  
20 public involvement representative with the Utilities and  
21 Transportation Commission. I'll be the moderator for the  
22 comment hearing this evening.

23 Before we get started, I would like to cover  
24 some background information and virtual meeting ground  
25 rules.

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1           You will have the opportunity to provide your  
2    comments related to this case directly to the  
3    commissioners. The commissioners act as judges in formal  
4    filings like this, and they cannot answer questions.  
5    However, if you do have questions, please reach out to  
6    me or to the representative of public counsel after the  
7    comment session.

8           All of the comments given today will be  
9    included in the formal record of this case. If you have  
10   not signed up to comment and you wish to do so, please  
11   put your first and last name into the chat. If you are  
12   calling in, please press Star 9 to raise your hand, and  
13   we will call on you for your name in a few minutes.

14           If you have already provided your name to us,  
15   there is no need to provide it again.

16           Now for some meeting logistics: Please mute  
17   your connection unless you are you are called upon to  
18   speak. If you are participating via the Zoom  
19   application, you can mute by clicking the microphone  
20   icon. A slash will appear across the microphone,  
21   indicating you have successfully muted your connection.  
22   To unmute, click the microphone again. The slash will  
23   disappear. Please remember to mute your connection again  
24   after you are done speaking.

25           If you called in on the phone, press Star 6



1 on your phone to mute yourself. When you are called on  
2 to speak, press Star 6 to unmute yourself. After you are  
3 done speaking, please press Star 6 to mute yourself.

4 Please wait to be called on for comment, and  
5 do not interrupt other speakers.

6 There are two options to report technical  
7 difficulties. You can use the chat feature in Zoom, or  
8 you can call Ryan Smith at 360-915-3646.

9 The chat feature should be used to report  
10 technical difficulties and to ask to be added to the  
11 sign-in sheet. We will not be accepting comments via the  
12 Zoom chat feature. Please do not use the chat to provide  
13 your comments.

14 Closed captioning is available via the  
15 toolbar at the bottom of the Zoom application.

16 You will have two minutes to provide your  
17 comment, and depending on the number of commenters, you  
18 may get more time if needed.

19 If you have questions about the case, please  
20 e-mail Comments@UTC.Wa.Gov or call 888-333-9882, and ask  
21 to speak with Melissa Castaneda-Kerson.

22 You can also reach out to public counsel by  
23 e-mailing Utility@ATG.Wa.Gov or calling 206-464-7744.

24 If you haven't provided your name yet and you  
25 wish to speak, please put your first and last name into

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1 the chat if you are using the Zoom application.

2 If you are calling in, please press Star 9 to  
3 raise your hand, and we will call on you to provide your  
4 name.

5 When we call your phone number, please  
6 provide your first and last name with spelling after you  
7 provide your name. Press Star 9 again to lower your  
8 hand.

9 Thank you. I will now turn the time over to  
10 Commissioner Rendahl and Commissioner Doumit.

11 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Thank you, Melissa.  
12 Do we have any folks signed in to speak to us this  
13 evening, to provide comments?

14 I'm not seeing anyone in the chat. But I  
15 know you indicated that there were two people previously  
16 before we started, that there were two people who had  
17 signed up in advance to speak.

18 MS. CASTANEDA-KERSON: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: And I don't know if  
20 they're also there in -- on the call.

21 MS. CASTANEDA-KERSON: I do not see them on  
22 the call.

23 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Okay. Is there anyone  
24 on the call who wishes to provide comments to the  
25 commission in this matter tonight?

1                   While we wait, this might be a good time to  
2 have the conversation with public counsel.

3                   Jean Marie Dreyer, are you present?

4                   MS. DREYER: Yes, I am.

5                   COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Okay. Usually we set  
6 a date for comments to be -- the filed comments to be  
7 submitted to the commission as an exhibit in the case  
8 about a week after the hearing. And our hearing is  
9 currently scheduled for September 30 and October 1. So  
10 by my calculation, that would be submitting those to the  
11 commission on Tuesday, October 8. Is that your  
12 understanding?

13                   MS. DREYER: That is.

14                   COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: So that would be an  
15 acceptable date for public counsel. And I see Tad  
16 Robinson O'Neill nodding his head.

17                   Is there anything further that public counsel  
18 wishes to add tonight?

19                   ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Only that we might want to  
20 indicate that we'll accept comments until September 26,  
21 written comments to be put into that exhibit.

22                   COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Okay. That's fine.

23                   And so Melissa, I have not received the  
24 sign-in sheet, but then I logged on -- I was stuck in  
25 traffic and I just got on the call. So do you mind

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1 calling those names for me?

2 MS. CASTANEDA-KERSON: Just a moment. Chris,  
3 can you call the names that are on the list, please?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sure.

5 MS. CASTANEDA-KERSON: Thank you.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Penny L. Gunther?

7 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Penny L. Gunther. I  
8 am not seeing anyone signed in the Zoom with that name,  
9 but there is a phone number of 509-309-6463. And I think  
10 in order to unmute, you need to press Star 6; is that  
11 correct, Melissa?

12 MS. CASTANEDA-KERSON: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Okay. And who was the  
14 next person who had signed up to speak?

15 MS. CASTANEDA-KERSON: They had signed up,  
16 but they did not sign up to attend. They did not want to  
17 speak.

18 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Okay. Thank you very  
19 much.

20 Well, it appears there is no one signed in to  
21 speak, and no one who's called in to speak to this  
22 matter.

23 But we have received a number of public  
24 comments, and we may continue to receive public comments.  
25 And we do accept those comments as a public exhibit

1 that's received in the case. And so we will consider  
2 those comments as evidence in the case.

3 So I guess I will make one last call. Is  
4 there anyone interested in making comments on Avista's  
5 general rate case this evening?

6 All right. I am not hearing anyone.

7 I appreciate everyone who has called in for  
8 this public hearing this evening. And I appreciate  
9 everyone's time.

10 And I will say this would conclude the public  
11 hearing in this case and that we are adjourned.

12 So thank you, everyone, for your attendance.  
13 Good evening.

14 (Proceeding concluded at 6:15 p.m.)

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1 CERTIFICATE

2

3 STATE OF WASHINGTON )

4 ) ss

5 COUNTY OF KING )

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7 I, Elizabeth Patterson Harvey, a Certified  
8 Court Reporter and Registered Professional Reporter  
9 within and for the State of Washington, do hereby  
10 certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing legal  
11 recordings were transcribed under my direction; that I  
12 received the electronic recording in the proprietary  
13 format; that I am not a relative or employee of any  
14 attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor  
15 financially interested in its outcome.

16 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my  
17 hand this 2nd day of October, 2024.

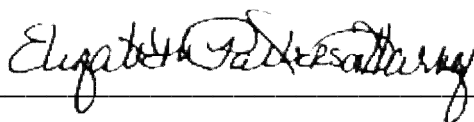
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23 Elizabeth Patterson Harvey, CCR 2731

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