

WUTC v. Puget Sound Energy

**Docket No. UG-230968 - Vol. II (Public Comment
Hearing)**

October 8, 2024



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BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Petition of)
WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND)
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,)

Complainant,)

vs.) DOCKET NO. UG-230968

PUGET SOUND ENERGY,)

Respondent.)

) PAGES 21-43

PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING - VOL. II
CHAIR DAVID DANNER PRESIDING
October 8, 2024

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

TRANSCRIBED BY: ELIZABETH PATTERSON HARVEY, WA CCR 2731

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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3 FOR THE COMMISSION:

4 Commission Chair David W. Danner

5 Commissioner Milt Doumit

6 Commissioner Ann Rendahl

7

8 FOR PUBLIC COUNSEL:

9 Tad Robinson O'Neill

10 Tad.ONeill@atg.wa.gov

11 Attorney General of Washington

12 800 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000

13 Seattle, Washington 98104

14 206.464.7740

15

16 ALSO PRESENT:

17 Kris Irelan - Commission Staff

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1 October 8, 2024

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4 CHAIR DANNER: This is a public comment

5 hearing of the Washington Utilities and Transportation

6 Commission. It is Tuesday, October 8, 2024, and we are

7 here to discuss Docket UG-230968.

8 I'm Dave Danner. I'm chair of the

9 commission, and I'm joined by my colleagues, Commissioner

10 Ann Rendahl and Commissioner Milt Doumit.

11 On November 22nd of 2023, Puget Sound Energy

12 filed a proposed revision to its rates under Natural Gas

13 Tariff Schedule 111. Specifically, the company sought to

14 incorporate allowance costs and auction proceeds from the

15 Climate Commitment Act into Schedule 111 by incorporating

16 new language to the tariff that would enable the company

17 to fund decarbonization projects by setting aside 23

18 million of the company's no-cost allowance revenue, and

19 also updating rates pertaining to the amount deferred

20 from January 2023 through September 2023.

21 On December 19th of 2023, Puget filed revised

22 tariff sheets. And in filing, the company stated, among

23 other things, that the purpose of this substitute filing

24 is for Puget Sound Energy to amend its proposal to

25 instead spread the withholding of proceeds for targeted

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1 electrification projects over three years, from 2024 to
2 2026, setting aside 7.7 million in estimated proceeds for
3 the no-cost allowances during the 2024 rate period.
4 On December 22, 2023, the commission issued
5 an order, Order 01 in this docket, allowing Puget's
6 revised schedule to go into effect on an interim basis
7 subject to refund, pending the commission's final
8 determination.
9 Additionally, the commission -- as a
10 reminder, in that order, the tariff sheets were allowed,
11 and we required the company to work with parties to
12 develop a proposal for a risk-sharing mechanism. And the
13 purpose was to propose a risk-sharing mechanism for
14 commission review.
15 So the -- for natural gas customers, Puget's
16 proposed net effect is a 45.3 million increase in
17 revenue. The typical residential customer would see an
18 increase of \$1.91, or 2.34 percent a month. And
19 low-income customers would receive a credit to offset the
20 entire increase, resulting in a zero dollar increase.
21 Puget Sound's electric companies are not
22 impacted by the filing.
23 There are several intervening parties in the
24 adjudication. This is basically a trial that will come
25 before the commission. We will be having that

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1 evidentiary hearing tomorrow. And those parties are
2 Puget Sound Energy; the UTC staff, which operates as an
3 independent party in these proceedings; the Public
4 Counsel Unit of the Washington Attorney General's Office;
5 the Alliance of Western Energy Consumers; the Washington
6 Conservation Action Climate Solutions; and Northwest
7 Energy Coalition, who are jointly referred to in this
8 docket as the joint environmental advocates.
9 So tonight is a public comment hearing.
10 Parties that are formally participating in this
11 proceeding are either acting as intervenors or have
12 statutory authority to participate. But we also invite
13 comments by members of the public for their views on the
14 rate cases and other proceedings that are before the
15 commission. The comments we receive from you this
16 evening will be made part of the formal record in this
17 case.
18 Please be aware that the commissioners serve
19 as judges in these kinds of cases, and for that reason we
20 cannot answer questions from those commenting tonight.
21 We are here to listen to your comments.
22 Again, the public counsel unit of the
23 attorney general represents the interests of residential
24 and small business customers of Puget Sound Energy, and
25 so we will have information tonight about how members of

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1 the public who are not testifying tonight or not
2 commenting tonight can nonetheless have written comments
3 put into the docket so that we can consider those.
4 And in addition our own staff, our own
5 consumer staff is attending the hearing tonight. And
6 Kris Irelan from our staff will speak later about how we
7 can get your comments into the record.
8 So I'm now going to turn to Kris Irelan,
9 unless my colleagues on the commission have any
10 statements to make at this time. I'm going to turn it
11 over to Kris Irelan.
12 Please go ahead and give us some ground rules
13 for tonight, and we'll get started.
14 MS. IRELAN: Awesome. Great. Thank you.
15 So as Commissioner Danner said, my name is
16 Kris Irelan. I am filling in for my counterpart, Andrew
17 Roberts. So this is really actually his case. So if you
18 have to make comments on this, you're going to end up not
19 dealing with me; you're going to end up having Andrew.
20 But we all work for the public involvement portion of the
21 Utilities and Transportation Commission, and I'm going to
22 be your moderator for tonight.
23 And before we get started, I'd like -- like
24 the commissioner said, we're going to have some
25 background rules.

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1 And so let's see. Let's get started with
2 talking about how -- what we need to do. And so that is
3 that if you have previously signed up to comment, and
4 wish to do so, please put your first and last name into
5 the chat.
6 If you're calling in on your phone, and
7 you're not using your computer, press Star 9, and that
8 will raise your hand. And we'll call on you for your
9 name in a few minutes.
10 And if you have already provided your name,
11 there's no need to provide it again.
12 Let's see. Moving on, please mute your
13 connection. That's for phones and for folks that are on
14 the computer. It gets real tough to hear. You know,
15 it's just hard to hear everybody.
16 If you're participating via Zoom application,
17 you can mute by clicking the microphone icon. There will
18 be a little slash on there, and it will appear across the
19 microphone indicating that you're muted. To unmute, you
20 click on the microphone again, and that way, then the
21 slash will disappear and then you'll be able to speak.
22 Then when you're done speaking, please mute yourself
23 again.
24 And that's the same thing with being on the
25 phone. If you're called upon, press Star 6 on the phone

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1 to mute yourself. When you're called on to speak, press
 2 Star 6 to unmute yourself. After you're done speaking,
 3 please press Star 6 to mute yourself again.
 4 If you have technical difficulties --
 5 hopefully you don't, but if you do, there's the chat
 6 feature, which is where we had you put your name in. So
 7 you can chat with us. We have someone that can try to
 8 help you figure out those technical difficulties.
 9 Also, we have that same fellow, and he is
 10 able to help you by phone. So you could call him at
 11 360-915-3646.
 12 But we've all got to remember, too, that the
 13 chat feature should be used for technical difficulties
 14 and to be added to just the sign-in sheet. We won't be
 15 taking any comments via the Zoom chat feature. So please
 16 don't put any comments in there. We've got to have you
 17 speak them out loud. We appreciate that.
 18 And let's see. Okay. So closed captioning,
 19 there's a toolbar at the bottom of your screen that
 20 allows you to have the closed captioning application.
 21 And you can see it's got the little "More" button, the
 22 three ellipses on there. You click on that, and that
 23 will allow you to get into the closed captioning.
 24 Now, everybody will have two minutes to
 25 comment. I believe if we need more time, that's up to

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1 the commissioners to do that.
 2 Let's see what's next. If you have questions
 3 about the case, please email Comments@UTC.Wa.Gov. And I
 4 can slow down and say that again. I'm sorry. I'm
 5 speeding through. Comments@UTC.Wa.Gov.
 6 Or for folks who are like me that don't like
 7 using the computer all the time, 888-333-9882. And you
 8 can speak to a live person like me or one of my
 9 counterparts. Or you can speak to the guy that's
 10 actually in charge of this case, Andrew Roberts, and, you
 11 know, get him on the horn.
 12 Or you can actually go to Utility@ATG.Wa.Gov.
 13 Or we've got a fourth option for you, by
 14 calling 206-464-7744.
 15 So there again, if you haven't put your name
 16 yet into the chat and you wish to speak, please put your
 17 first and last name into it, and then we will get your
 18 name on the list.
 19 If you're calling, please press Star 9 to
 20 raise your hand, and we will call on you. When you call
 21 -- or when you call on your phone, please provide your
 22 first and last name with the spelling. After you provide
 23 your name, press Star 9 to lower your hand.
 24 I will now turn this over to Chair Danner,
 25 Commissioner Rendahl, and Commissioner Doumit.

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1 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
 2 much, Kris Irelan, and thank you for stepping in for
 3 Andrew, who I understand is under the weather. We wish
 4 him the best.
 5 We are going to proceed right now. We have a
 6 few people signed in. Let me first ask, Frank Damiano,
 7 did you wish to speak tonight?
 8 FRANK DAMIANO: Yes, sir.
 9 CHAIR DANNER: Yes. Please go right ahead.
 10
 11 COMMENTS BY FRANK DAMIANO
 12 FRANK DAMIANO: Well, I guess I'm reasonably
 13 confused. I thought this was where I would be allowed to
 14 ask questions when I called in. It was indicated that
 15 this is where I was allowed to ask questions. So really,
 16 all I have is some questions.
 17 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. So yes, this is our
 18 opportunity to take questions, and because this is an
 19 adjudicative proceeding, we will not -- the commissioners
 20 will not be answering the questions.
 21 But I will refer you to the public counsel
 22 for the State of Washington, who is on the call tonight.
 23 Or actually, I see a few people from their offices on the
 24 call. And I will ask them to work with you directly, and
 25 maybe they can answer your questions.

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1 Tad Robinson O'Neill, are you there? I see
 2 your face.
 3 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Yes, I am here. Can you
 4 hear me?
 5 CHAIR DANNER: Yes.
 6 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Mr. Damiano, if you want
 7 to e-mail the Utility@ATG.Wa.Gov, we can try to respond
 8 to your questions. Or you can call the 206-464-7744
 9 number.
 10 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. That was pretty fast.
 11 Frank Damiano, did you get the information?
 12 FRANK DAMIANO: No.
 13 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: I'll say it again. So the
 14 e-mail is Utility@ATG.Wa.Gov.
 15 FRANK DAMIANO: Okay.
 16 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: The phone number is
 17 206-464-7744.
 18 FRANK DAMIANO: Okay.
 19 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: And if you want, you can
 20 put that attention to me, to Tad, T-A-D, and I'll try to
 21 respond to you.
 22 FRANK DAMIANO: Send these questions there,
 23 public counsel?
 24 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: I will try to answer your
 25 questions if I can, yes.

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1 FRANK DAMIANO: Okay. Well, I guess I'm out.
 2 I'll start listening now.
 3 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. And if you have comments
 4 to make later, if you raise your hand, I will call on
 5 you. Thank you very much.
 6 And John O'Dea, I did see you sign in. Thank
 7 you.
 8 We're going to start with James Adcock.
 9 Jambs Adcock?
 10
 11 COMMENTS BY JAMES ADCOCK
 12 JAMES ADCOCK: Yes, James Adcock, electrical
 13 engineer, MIT, long-time critic of Puget.
 14 The public in practice is not informed and
 15 cannot meaningfully participate if too much and too many
 16 of the Puget documents are 100 percent redacted as they
 17 are once again in this docket.
 18 Further, ratepayers are being actively
 19 blocked from seeing the full range of energy efficiency
 20 measures being offered to the public by Puget, and we
 21 need to be able to see those measures in order to
 22 meaningfully participate.
 23 Additionally, Puget has continued to block
 24 our active participation in IRP meetings. We need active
 25 participation to be meaningfully informed of these kind

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1 of meetings. Puget has replaced these meetings with
 2 organization-only RPAG meetings. Then if those
 3 organizations speak up and disagree with Puget, then
 4 Puget simply also removes those organizations from
 5 participating.
 6 The electrical and gas clean energy
 7 revolution, which we are talking about here, is going to
 8 require the participation of the middle class ratepayers.
 9 \$10,000 if I'm going to buy a new heat pump; \$30,000 for
 10 a new solar panel array. But we are not informed.
 11 And we are not meaningfully allowed to
 12 participate in any of these Puget activities. Thank you
 13 very much.
 14 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Chair Danner, we
 15 cannot hear you. You're muted.
 16 CHAIR DANNER: Oh, thank you very much. I
 17 apologize for that.
 18 I wanted to thank James Adcock for his
 19 comments.
 20 I also wanted to call on Monica Taylor if she
 21 is available.
 22 MONICA TAYLOR: I do not have any comments at
 23 this time.
 24 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much.
 25 MONICA TAYLOR: Thank you.

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1 CHAIR DANNER: John O'Dea, are you there?
 2 JOHN O'DEA: Yes, I'm here.
 3 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Yes, go ahead, sir.
 4
 5 COMMENTS BY JOHN O'DEA
 6 JOHN O'DEA: I read the sheet that I got from
 7 Puget Sound Energy about the natural gas service
 8 increase. And it says an overall increase of 18.96
 9 increase for 2025.
 10 And my house has electrical service and
 11 natural gas service. But most of my appliances to eat
 12 with and cook with are natural gas. My water heater is,
 13 my clothes dryer is, my range is. And I depend on my
 14 natural gas to live here.
 15 And I think it's an outrage to have an 18.96
 16 increase; or even further down, it says, well, it might
 17 be a 17.29 percent increase. That's a lot, especially
 18 when I'm a retired person on a fixed income.
 19 So I'm opposing this, this rate increase.
 20 That's all I have.
 21 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very
 22 much. Appreciate your comments.
 23 I am not seeing any other names on the
 24 sign-in sheet. Let me ask if there is anyone else who is
 25 on the call tonight who wishes to make a comment.

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1 Ann Croeker, are you there?
 2 ANN CROEKER: Yes, just a minute.
 3 CHAIR DANNER: Sure.
 4 ANN CROEKER: That was faster than I thought.
 5 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. And I hope I pronounced
 6 your name correctly.
 7 ANN CROEKER: It is Croeker, but that's fine.
 8 CHAIR DANNER: Croeker, all right.
 9
 10 COMMENTS BY ANN CROEKER
 11 ANN CROEKER: Thank you very much. Thank you
 12 for letting me comment.
 13 Several things: But one is I'm a (inaudible)
 14 action volunteer group out of the Saltwater Universalist
 15 Unitarian Church in Des Moines. And we have been
 16 long-time watchers of PSE, and protested for and
 17 advocated for not putting the LNG plant into Tacoma
 18 Tideflats or, actually, anywhere. That was an especially
 19 bad choice.
 20 But I did notice, and as we knew, that those
 21 costs would be passed on to the captive (inaudible) at
 22 PSE, which did happen. And it just is -- it all happens
 23 later. It's not something that people know (inaudible)
 24 and yet their charges go up and up.
 25 And so PSE has, ever since they became

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1 investor owned, has consistently passed to the consumer
2 so that the -- so that their revenue can go on to the
3 investors and perhaps their own staff.
4 And that is what we object to, is that in
5 asking to be -- to be part of the Climate Commitment Act,
6 they again pass on the costs. And there is no mechanism
7 that I can see from them to help the lower income or the
8 people who cannot afford to switch out their gas.
9 And that's -- so this is again a protest on
10 making the consumer pay more than they would have to if
11 they were part of a public utility, truly (inaudible)
12 mechanism organization.
13 So thank you for letting me speak today.
14 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you. Thank you for your
15 comments.
16 Again, let me ask if there is anyone else on
17 the call who wishes to comment on the proceeding tonight.
18 All right.
19 And Monica Taylor, you said you didn't have
20 anything to say at this time. We're probably going to
21 close the hearing, since everyone else has spoken, unless
22 you have something you want to say at this time.
23 MONICA TAYLOR: No, I don't. Thanks.
24 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Thank you very much.
25 And again, last call for anyone else?

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1 All right. The comments that we have heard
2 tonight will be made part of the record in this
3 proceeding. And I want to thank everybody for their
4 participation and taking time out of your evening to be
5 with us.
6 And with that, we are adjourned. And good
7 evening, everyone. Thank you.
8 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Chair Danner, before you
9 go?
10 CHAIR DANNER: Oh, yes, Tad O'Neill.
11 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: There's two things.
12 One is we need to set a date to close the
13 record. The hearing is tomorrow, but there was confusion
14 over the date in the public notice that was sent out by
15 PSE. They had the right date, October 8, but they put
16 down Thursday instead of Tuesday on the form. They
17 corrected it via a bill notice to Tuesday so that the
18 correct information did go out. But there might be
19 confusion between the dates.
20 And so my proposal would be to leave the
21 record open until Friday this week, even though that's
22 two days after the hearing, in case that confusion causes
23 people to be late.
24 And then we'll submit the public comment
25 exhibit a week after Friday.

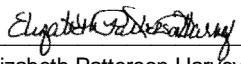
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1 CHAIR DANNER: That proposal works for me. I
2 was actually thinking we weren't going to close the
3 record until a week from today, which would be next
4 Tuesday.
5 But if you think Friday is sufficient, that
6 would be fine. Would you prefer next Tuesday?
7 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Next Tuesday is fine. I
8 want to leave staff enough time to be able to assemble
9 any comments that came in.
10 CHAIR DANNER: All right.
11 Let me ask my colleagues if what Tad Robinson
12 O'Neill is proposing is okay?
13 COMMISSIONER DOUMIT: Yes, that's fine,
14 Mr. Chair.
15 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: That's fine. So we
16 would set the date as Friday, and then submit the
17 document in the record on Tuesday? Is that what you're
18 proposing?
19 CHAIR DANNER: No. He wants to -- I was
20 proposing we keep the record open until Tuesday. And
21 then he would submit the document the following Friday,
22 or that Friday.
23 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Yes, the 18th.
24 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: That's fine.
25 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: So the record open until

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1 the 15th, and we'll file the public comment on the 18th
2 -- I mean the exhibit.
3 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: That's fine. Thank
4 you.
5 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. I think we've got
6 agreement on that.
7 And your second issue?
8 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: That actually was both of
9 them all at once. It was --
10 CHAIR DANNER: Oh, okay.
11 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: -- the record set and to
12 explain the confusion over the dates.
13 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. So basically, anyone
14 who wishes to file a comment with the commission about
15 this docket is free to do so until next Tuesday. Next
16 Tuesday is October 15.
17 And then the public counsel will file -- they
18 compile all of the comments they receive, and they submit
19 a document into the record. And they will do that on the
20 18th, the following Friday. So very good.
21 And now if there's nothing else to come
22 before the commission?
23 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: I have one other request,
24 and this is mostly for staff. I know that we have
25 another public comment hearing scheduled for Thursday,

1 the date that the confusion was.
 2 And I would just ask if staff at that
 3 hearing, which was about a different case, could just ask
 4 if anyone wanted to comment about this one, you know,
 5 like, at that hearing? It's the same Zoom link.
 6 So this is really just a request for staff,
 7 if they can just check to see if there's anyone who got
 8 the wrong time.
 9 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you. I think that that
 10 -- we'll make a point of doing that on Thursday.
 11 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Thank you.
 12 CHAIR DANNER: So thank you. Okay.
 13 Again, if there -- yes? I am seeing some
 14 talk in the chat. Yes, tomorrow we are having a public
 15 comment hearing on Puget Sound Energy's pending general
 16 rate case.
 17 On Thursday, we have a public hearing with
 18 regard to Pacificorp's clean energy implementation plan.
 19 And so -- yeah. That's our schedule for the
 20 week. So --
 21 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Chair Danner?
 22 CHAIR DANNER: Yes?
 23 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: I guess I would say if
 24 folks are confused by the dates and have comments at any
 25 of those, tomorrow or Thursday, we entertain those

1 CERTIFICATE
 2
 3 STATE OF WASHINGTON)
 4) ss
 5 COUNTY OF KING)
 6
 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 23rd day of October, 2024.
 18
 19 
 20 _____
 21 Elizabeth Patterson Harvey, CCR 2731
 22
 23
 24
 25

1 comments and get them into the right record.
 2 CHAIR DANNER: I think we can manage that.
 3 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Okay. Thank you.
 4 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you.
 5 All right. Without further ado then, if
 6 there's nothing else to come before the commission
 7 tonight, I want to thank everybody for their
 8 participation, and we will close it for tonight. And
 9 everyone have a good evening. We are adjourned.
 10 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Thank you all.
 11 (Proceedings concluded at 6:26 p.m.)
 12
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 14
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