

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WASHINGTON UTILITIES &
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION,

Complainant,

v.

PUGET SOUND ENERGY, INC.

Respondent.

DOCKET UE-072300

DOCKET UG-072301

PUBLIC COUNSEL MOTION TO
ADOPT PUBLIC HEARING
SCHEDULE

I. MOTION

The Public Counsel Section of the Washington State Attorney General's Office (Public Counsel) respectfully requests that the Commission hold four joint public hearings in the above-docketed matters and the sale approval Docket No. U-072375. Public Counsel, Consumer Affairs Section of the Commission, and Puget Sound Energy (PSE) have conferred regarding the public hearings. Consumer Affairs has advised us that they support the proposal. Commission Staff (Staff) has authorized us to state that they do not object to our motion.

Specifically, we recommend:

RANGE OF DATES	TIME	LOCATION
April 8 through 10, 2008	6:30 PM	Woodinville
April 22 through 24, 2008	6:30 PM	Bremerton/Silverdale
May 13 through 15, 2008	6:30 PM	Bellingham
June 3 through 5, 2008	6:30 PM	Puyallup/South Sound

II. MEMORANDUM

A. **Applicable Law.**

The Commission has authority and discretion to hold as many public comment hearings as necessary in ratemaking and merger/sale proceedings.¹

B. **The Importance of the Pending Sale and Rate Cases Warrants a Broad Opportunity for Public Comment.**

The unique circumstances of these cases necessitate a broad opportunity for public input. PSE is the largest utility in Washington State, serving over one million electric customers and over 700,000 gas customers. PSE is requesting substantial increases to both residential volumetric and fixed rates, at the same time as it is proposing a transfer in ownership and new corporate structure. Consequently, public attention to these dockets is heightened. Public comment hearings are a critical opportunity for PSE's customers to present their views to the Commissioners in person.

C. **Location Recommendations.**

Public Counsel recommends the following four locations:

- **Woodinville:** King County is the most populous county in the state. East King County is experiencing ongoing development. Woodinville is close to customers on the East Side and Sammamish Plateau. PSE provides both gas and electric service in this area. All of these customers were seriously affected by the December 2006 storm.
- **Bremerton/Silverdale:** These areas have relatively dense residential populations. Customers on the Kitsap Peninsula have experienced recent power outage and service quality problems. The Commission has not held a hearing in this area recently.

¹ WAC 480-07-498 states in part: “[t]he commission may convene one or more public comment hearing sessions to receive oral and written comments from members of the public who are not parties in the proceeding.”

- **Bellingham:** This location was suggested by Staff and PSE. It is accessible to customers in both Skagit and Whatcom counties.
- **Puyallup/South Sound:** The South Sound is experiencing significant growth, especially in single family homes. PSE provides both gas and electric services in this area.

The Commission may wish to schedule an evening public comment hearing during the evidentiary hearings in Olympia. Public Counsel would have no objection to such an addition to the schedule, but an Olympia hearing should not replace any of the locations proposed above.

D. The Hearings Should Cover Both The Sale And Rate Cases.

Public Counsel recommends that the public hearings cover the sale and rate cases together, whether or not the dockets are formally consolidated for other purposes. Many customers will find it difficult to parse out the separate aspects of the rate case and sale application; joint public hearings would minimize customer misunderstandings about the relationship of the two cases. Joint hearings would also eliminate the need for additional, separate hearings in the sale docket and simplify Commission scheduling.

E. Hearing Times.

Many customers work full-time or take care of families and cannot attend hearings scheduled at earlier times. Consequently, attendance is often better when hearings are scheduled after 6 p.m.

III. CONCLUSION

Public Counsel recommends holding the four public hearings, throughout the PSE service territory, to provide a reasonable opportunity for public comment. Accordingly, Public Counsel

respectfully moves the Commission for an order establishing the public hearing schedule proposed.

DATED this 11th day of January, 2008.

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Public Counsel Section