

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Request of	DOCKET PG-210075
AVISTA CORPORATION d/b/a AVISTA UTILITIES	ORDER 01
Pursuant to WAC 480-93-020 for Approval to Operate a Proposed New 12- Inch Pipeline at a Maximum Allowable Operating Pressure of 500 Pounds per Square Inch Gauge within 100 Feet of Existing Structures Not Owned by Avista Corporation	APPROVING REQUEST

BACKGROUND

- 1 On February 3, 2021, Avista Corporation, d/b/a Avista Utilities, (Avista or Company) filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) a request for approval to construct and operate a new 12-inch natural gas pipeline at a maximum allowable operating pressure (MAOP) of 500 pounds per square inch gauge (psig) within 100 feet of nine existing structures not owned by Avista.
- 2 The Commission has adopted the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 49, Part 192 and promulgated Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 480-93 as the minimum standards for gas pipeline construction. WAC 480-93-020 requires a gas pipeline company to obtain approval from the Commission to operate a gas pipeline at greater than 250 psig within 100 hundred feet of any existing buildings not owned by the gas pipeline company.
- 3 Avista is proposing to construct and operate a new 12-inch pipeline within 100 feet of nine buildings in Airway Heights, Washington. The MAOP of the proposed pipeline will be 500 psig. The proposed pipeline will operate in parallel with an existing 8-inch pipeline that has an MAOP of 500 psig and is also within 100 feet of the same nine buildings. The proposed pipeline project will increase capacity in the system to serve the commercial and residential growth in Airway Heights, the Spokane Airport, and the SW area of Spokane. This project will proactively address risk in Avista's system related to reliability and capacity constraints.

4 Commission staff (Staff) reviewed the Company's proposed proximity request and calculations. Because the facility will be new construction, there are no existing records. Staff notes the following facts:

- (a) The proposed MAOP of the new pipeline will be the same as the MAOP of the existing 8-inch pipeline, 500 psig.
- (b) The proposed piping and all fittings are commensurate with the proposed MAOP.
- (c) The approximate distance between the nine buildings and the pipeline ranges from 35 feet to 105 feet. All other buildings are greater than 100 feet from the pipeline.
- (d) At the proposed MAOP of 500 psig, the maximum stress level of the pipe would be 19.7 percent of the specified minimum yield strength (SMYS). Pipelines that operate under 20 percent of SMYS are considered low-stress lines and pose a lower risk than pipelines operating above 20 percent of SMYS.
- (e) The proposed pipeline and fittings will be pressure tested to a minimum of 750 psig for 24 hours in accordance with the Company's procedures prior to operation. This test pressure is at least 1.5 times the MAOP of the pipeline as required for a Class 3 location.

5 Staff finds that Avista's proposed construction meets all the pertinent requirements of Title 49 C.F.R. Part 192 and WAC Chapter 480-93.

6 Staff recommends that the Commission approve the request subject to the following conditions, which are designed to minimize the risks to public safety from the proposed pipeline:

- (a) For underground installations, Avista must electrically inspect (jeep) the pipe coating and repair any coating defects in accordance with Avista's operating standard prior to backfilling.
- (b) For underground installations, Avista must apply backfill material around the pipe to protect the pipe and coating. The material around the pipe must

be free of any sharp rocks or other objects with a maximum particle size of one-half inch and must contain a large percentage of fines, such as, sand, native soil, or soil-based select materials.

- (c) Avista must non-destructively test 100 percent of all welds. Avista must remedy defects in the welds in accordance with Avista's operating standards and procedures. Avista must non-destructively test all repaired welds to ensure pipeline integrity and compliance with existing standards.
- (d) Avista must install cathodic protection within 90 days after the pipeline is installed.
- (e) Avista must provide notification to the Commission via email to pipelineprogram@utc.wa.gov at least two business days prior to the beginning of project construction.
- (f) Avista must contact building owners within 100 feet of the new pipeline prior to the Commission's open meeting and inform them of the project construction and any additional information consistent with the public awareness requirements in Title 49 CFR Part 192.616.
- (g) Avista must bury the pipeline with a minimum of 42 inches of cover where terrain permits. Where 42 inches of cover cannot be achieved, a minimum of 36 inches of cover will be maintained.

DISCUSSION

7 The Commission agrees with Staff's analysis and adopts its recommendations. The Commission's primary objective in regulating natural gas pipelines is to protect public safety. The rules the Commission has promulgated to govern pipelines incorporate and exceed federal requirements and provide flexibility to establish safety standards tailored to individual projects. The Commission's proximity rule, WAC 480-93-020, allows pipeline Staff the opportunity to review construction plans of high-pressure pipelines in close proximity to inhabited structures to address safety considerations. Staff's recommended conditions described in paragraph 6 appropriately minimize the public safety risk associated with the proposed pipeline. Accordingly, we approve the Company's request.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8 (1) The Commission is an agency of the State of Washington vested by statute with the authority to adopt and enforce rules for gas pipeline safety.
- 9 (2) Avista is a gas pipeline company and subject to Commission jurisdiction.
- 10 (3) In WAC Chapter 480-93, the Commission has adopted minimum standards for gas pipeline construction. Pursuant to these standards, gas pipelines are designed to withstand higher pressure than the MAOP prescribed by these rules. The most restrictive gas pipeline safety rules specify that pipelines in a highly populated area must be operated at pressures producing a hoop stress of no greater than 40 percent of the SMYS of the pipe.
- 11 (4) Avista's construction plan indicates that the proposed pipeline will meet or exceed all the pertinent requirements of Title 49 C.F.R. Part 192 and WAC Chapter 480-93. The conditions recommended by Staff add requirements to this installation that minimize the risk of proximity of the pipeline to habitable structures.
- 12 (5) This matter came before the Commission at its regularly scheduled open meeting on March 11, 2021.
- 13 (6) The Commission should approve Avista's request to operate a new 12-inch natural gas pipeline at a MAOP of 500 psig within 100 feet of existing structures not owned by Avista because the Company's proposal, with the conditions Staff recommends, is consistent with the public interest.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 14 (1) The Commission approves Avista Corporation's, d/b/a Avista Utilities, request to construct and operate a new 12-inch steel, natural gas pipeline in Airway Heights at a maximum allowable operating pressure of 500 pounds per square inch gauge within 100 feet of existing structures, subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 6 of this Order.
- 15 (2) The Commission retains jurisdiction over the subject matter and Avista Corporation, d/b/a Avista Utilities, to effectuate the provisions of this Order.

16 The Commissioners, having determined this Order to be consistent with the public interest, directed the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective March 11, 2021.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MARK L. JOHNSON
Executive Director and Secretary