

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of

AVISTA CORPORATION d/b/a AVISTA
UTILITIES,

Petitioner,

For an Order Authorizing Accounting for
Costs Associated with Participatory
Funding Agreements Pursuant to RCW
80.28.430, and the Commission's Policy
Statement and Order 01 in U-210595

DOCKETS UE-220151 and UG-220596

ORDER 01

GRANTING ACCOUNTING
PETITION

BACKGROUND

- 1 On March 4, 2022, Avista Corporation d/b/a Avista Utilities (Avista or Company) filed with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) a petition seeking an Accounting Order (Petition) under WAC 480-07-370(3), authorizing the accounting treatment detailed in the Petition for financial assistance distributed under the Washington Interim Participatory Funding Agreement. On August 8, 2022, Avista filed a revised Petition.
- 2 In 2021, the Washington State Legislature enacted Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5295 (SB5295), codified as RCW 80.28.430, which provides statutory authority for energy utilities to provide financial assistance to certain organizations participating in regulatory processes before the Commission. The statute requires energy companies to enter into one or more written funding agreements with organizations that represent broad customer interests in regulatory proceedings before the Commission. On November 19, 2021, the Commission issued a policy statement (Policy Statement) in Docket U-210595 to clarify the Commission's interpretation of the statute. The companies subject to the Commission's jurisdiction and several organizations representing customer interests developed the Washington Interim Participatory Funding Agreement (Agreement) and presented that to the Commission on February 24, 2022. The Commission approved the Agreement with modifications in Order 01 in that docket.

3 The Agreement and Order 01 set the funding level for this first year of participatory
funding for Avista at \$300,000, consistent with the Policy Statement. RCW 80.28.430(3)
provides that the Commission shall allow a utility to defer this funding.

4 Order 01 provides that amounts in any deferred account will include a carrying cost equal
to a utility's authorized rate of return, until the deferral is amortized, at which time it will
receive a return at the current Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) rate. To
mitigate the impact of carrying costs on ratepayers, the Commission in Order 01 requires
that utilities make an annual tariff filing to recover these deferred amounts.

5 In its Petition, the Company proposes to defer all financial assistance distributed under
the Agreement and record the deferral as a regulatory asset in FERC Account 182.3,
consistent with the Policy Statement. The offsetting credit will be to FERC Account
407.4, Regulatory Credits. Consistent with Order 01, the Company proposes that interest
will accrue on the deferred balance at the Company's authorized net of tax rate of return
grossed up for federal income tax until such time as the deferral is approved for recovery
and begins amortizing. Once approved for recovery, Avista is requesting that the
unamortized balance accrues interest at the then-published FERC rate, which is updated
quarterly.

DISCUSSION

6 The Commission requires that companies requesting to defer costs through accounting
petitions demonstrate that such treatment is necessary due to extraordinary circumstances
that have a material impact. In this instance, however, the applicable statute specifically
allows deferral of financial assistance provided by the utilities, and Order 01 specifically
addresses allowable carrying charges.

7 The Petition is consistent with the deferral and accounting guidance provided in statute
and in the Commission's Policy Statement.

8 We clarify here that although accounting petitions do not contemplate recovery, the
Commission expects Avista to comply with Order 01 in Docket U-210595 and file an
annual true-up to recover any costs deferred under this Petition. This annual true-up
mechanism is an important component of Order 01 as it prevents deferred costs from
accumulating for long periods of time.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9 (1) The Commission is an agency of the State of Washington vested by statute with the authority to regulate the rates, rules, regulations, practices, accounts, securities, transfers of property, and affiliated interests of public service companies, including electric and natural gas companies.
- 10 (2) Avista is an electric and gas company providing service with the state of Washington. As a public service company, it is subject to Commission jurisdiction.
- 11 (3) WAC 480-07-370(3) allows companies to file petitions including that for which Avista seeks approval.
- 12 (4) Staff has reviewed the Petition filed in Dockets UE-220151 and UG 220596, including related work papers.
- 13 (5) Staff believes the proposed accounting order Avista requests is reasonable and should be granted, and that the Petition is consistent with the public interest.
- 14 (6) This matter came before the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on August 25, 2022.
- 15 (7) After reviewing Avista's Petition filed in Dockets UE-220151 and UG-220596 on March 4, 2022, as revised on August 8, 2022, and giving due consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission finds that the Petition filed should be granted. The Petition provides a way for the Company to recover costs incurred to fund the Participatory Funding Program and is thus in the public interest.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 16 (1) Avista Corporation d/b/a Avista Utilities' request to use deferred accounting for financial assistance distributed through the interim participatory funding agreement and accrue interest as detailed in the Petition is granted.

- 17 (2) This Order shall not affect the Commission's authority over rates, services, accounts, valuations, estimates, or determination of costs, on any matters that may come before it. Nor shall this Order granting Petition be construed as an agreement to any estimate or determination of costs, or any valuation of property claimed or asserted.
- 18 (3) The Commission retains jurisdiction over the subject matter and Avista Corporation d/b/a Avista Utilities to effectuate the provisions of this Order.

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 August 25, 2022.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

AMANDA MAXWELL
Executive Director and Secretary