In the Matter of:

THE REQUEST OF THE EMPIRE DISTRICT ELECTRIC COMPANY d/b/a LIBERTY, etc.

ER-2021-0312, VOL. I

June 23, 2021



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                       STATE OF MISSOURI
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                  PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
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                  TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
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 8
                    Prehearing Conference
 9
                         June 23, 2021
10
                  Jefferson City, Missouri
11
                           Volume 1
12
    In the Matter of:
13
    The Request of the Empire
14
    District Electric Company
    d/b/a Liberty for Authority )
    to File Tariffs Increasing ) File No. ER-2021-0312 Rates for Electric Service )
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    Provided to Customers in its )
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    Missouri Service Area
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                            JOHN CLARK, Presiding
                               REGULATORY LAW JUDGE
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    REPORTED BY:
    Shelley L. Bartels, CCR
    TIGER COURT REPORTING, LLC
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PROCEEDINGS
JUDGE CLARK: Okay. Let's go on the
record. Today's date is June 23rd of 2021, and I
have 2:00 p.m. as the time right now. We're in
Room 310 of the Governor Office Building and the
Commission has set aside this time for a prehearing
conference in the case captioned as In the Matter of
the Request of the Empire District Electric Company
doing business as Liberty for authority to File
Tariffs Increasing Rates for Electric Service
Provided to Customers in its Missouri Service Area,
File No. ER-2021-0312.
My name's John Clark. I'm the regulatory
law judge in this matter and I'm going to begin by
asking the attorneys to enter their appearance for
the record starting with Empire District Electric
Company doing business as Liberty.
MS. CARTER: Good afternoon. Diana
Carter, in-house counsel with the Empire District
Electric Company and also Dean Cooper from Brydon,
Swearengen and England, and we gave our addresses to
the court reporter.
JUDGE CLARK: Thank you so much. For the
commission staff.

MS. MERS: For staff, Nicole Mers and

25

1	Casi Aslin and we have provided our information to
2	the court reporter.
3	JUDGE CLARK: Thank you. For the Office
4	of the Public Counsel.
5	MR. WILLIAMS: Nathan Williams appearing
6	on behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel and the
7	public and I also have provided my information to the
8	court reporter.
9	JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Williams.
10	Mr. Woodsmall from Midwest Energy Consumers Group
11	indicated that he would be unable to attend today,
12	but that he would get in touch with you all. I
13	believe you all should have received that email.
14	Are there any I can see other
15	attorneys. If you'll go ahead and just introduce
16	yourself for the record and let me know who you're
17	representing.
18	MR. OPITZ: Tim Opitz on behalf of Renew
19	Missouri Advocates.
20	MR. FISCHER: And also James Fischer on
21	behalf of Evergy Metro, Inc. doing business as Evergy
22	Missouri Metro and Evergy Missouri West doing
23	business as Evergy Missouri West.
24	JUDGE CLARK: Thank you. Anyone I
25	haven't called?

1	MR. HEALY: Douglas Healy on behalf of
2	City of Ozark.
3	JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Healy.
4	MR. JARRETT: And Terry Jarrett on behalf
5	of the Empire retirees.
6	JUDGE CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Jarrett.
7	Which brings me to my next point. Interventions.
8	I'm going to go ahead and do some of these on the
9	record right now. Are there any objections to
10	allowing the Empire District Retired Members and
11	Spouses Association to intervene? I hear no
12	objections. They will be granted intervention.
13	Are there any objections to allowing
14	Renew Missouri to intervene in this case? I see no
15	objections. Intervention is granted to Renew
16	Missouri.
17	Any objections to the Empire District
18	Electric SERP Retirees intervention? I see none.
19	They will be granted intervention.
20	Any objection to the City of Ozark
21	Missouri's intervention? I see none. They will be
22	granted intervention.
23	The Office of Public Counsel has opposed
24	the intervention of Evergy. I thought if I had
25	somebody from Evergy here, which I do, I'd give you

an opportunity to respond to that.

2.5

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Judge. We had intended to file a written response, but I can certainly respond on the record. Evergy has filed a timely application to participate in this case, and they participated in previous Empire cases over the years. They're principally interested in the renewable energy policies, wind facilities that I think Empire is suggesting be put in the rate base in this case and any regulatory policies that may be coming out of this case that could affect Evergy and its wind and other renewable facilities in the future.

That's their interest, and they would like to participate. They certainly don't have a major concern about schedule or anything like that, but they just want to be a participant so they can influence the regulatory decision in that regard.

JUDGE CLARK: Okay. I think the complaint, as I understood it, is not really just that we don't know what your interest is, although that is one of the complaints, but really just that the application was deficient on its face.

MR. FISCHER: Well, I would, I guess, dispute that. The -- the application indicates that

we would be accepting I think the procedural schedule. Let's see. No, that was the other one. I'm sorry.

2.5

We would be participating and attempting to build a record and promote the public interest in that regard by participating and adding to the record as we've done in the past in such Empire cases or other utility cases. And I think that, to the extent we didn't address public interest, that would be the public interest, that we would participate in the case and help the development of the record.

JUDGE CLARK: Okay. Why don't you go ahead and file your written response and I'll go ahead and put this before the Commission.

MR. FISCHER: Okay. Sounds good. And with your permission I'd just like to sit here today and participate.

JUDGE CLARK: I think that's fine. Any objection to that by anybody? I see none.

Okay. It was brought up that I did not post a call-in number for this, and the reason why is because this is the first one of these and I really kind of want to see everybody as much as I can. I will for future prehearing and discovery conferences allow participation as much as possible via call-in

numbers. So I'll make arrangements for that in the future.

2.5

Given internal discussions that have been had recently regarding the way the judges in particular handle certain procedures, I wanted to try and make things a little bit easier for all the parties involved in this rate case as much as possible. So the tariff currently has been suspended and I want to give you an idea, set some kind of outward parameters for the timeline of this case, and hopefully that'll make it easier for you to do a procedural schedule. And it is a tight timeline and I apologize for that. There's nothing I can really do about that. There's intervening holidays as well as some already-set hearings.

But the tariff is suspended until

April 25th, 2022, and that means that the latest
an order can go to agenda in this case is

April 13th, 2022. Now, given my experience in the
last Empire rate case, I'm going to need at least a
month minimum of solid writing time, which is
probably going to include a few all nighters. Also,
if the last rate case was any indication, I suspect
that in order to digest the post-hearing memo and
reach decisions regarding each of the potential

issues in this case, could take as many as three agendas. So I'm setting that up. And unfortunately that, to my mind, puts any final briefs in this case due no later than March 11th, 2022.

So what I'm actually thinking of right now is an evidentiary hearing would need to be in early to mid-February of 2022. And I'll caution you right now that a case is currently already set for hearing on February 14th to the 18th that I currently don't see going anywhere. Does anybody need me to repeat any of those dates? Okay.

Hopefully that will give you some parameters to work within. I'd like to do, just out of an abundance of caution, I'd like to do monthly discovery conferences. Now, obviously we can cancel those if there's no discovery issues; I'll do the standard two-day thing, but I would like to check in with people and deal with discovery issues before they get out of hand.

Now, one of the things that's been expressed is that these discovery conferences have typically been where perfunctory to being given an opportunity to file a motion to compel with the commission. And the Commission has wanted to be more hands-on with these discovery issues, but that's not

particularly helpful to the parties. So what I'm going to try to do to the best of my ability is rule on the things that I feel I can safely rule on, which is generally going to be matters of relevance or similar such things, or if it's something that I believe needs to go to the commission, I'm going to at least try and give the parties an idea of what I'm going to be recommending to the commission. There's no guarantee that's what they'll do, but that might be helpful to the parties.

2.5

So hopefully discovery issues will be handled a little bit better that way. Is there anybody opposed to doing it that way or thinks that's a bad idea?

Next on my list is motions for expedited treatment. Nobody in this room has really been an offender on this front. However, for the duration of this case what I would like to see is if anybody files a motion for expedited treatment, I would like them to be available for an immediate phone conference that day so that I can ascertain what the problem is and why the motion could not have been filed earlier. So that means if you file a motion for expedited treatment on a Friday and then take off for the Lake or somewhere, you stand very little

chance of having your motion for expedited treatment addressed at the next agenda. So bear that in mind.

2.5

Procedural issues. I think generally the commission and the judges have communicated with the parties and the commission staff via orders. And again, from the last -- I think there was -- I think in the last Empire case there was some confusion at times as to where myself or the Commission were coming from in regard to certain procedural issues as well as what some of the parties were trying to accomplish and there seemed to be a mismatch with that. And so I kind of want to remind everybody that in regards to procedural issues, if there's something that I'm doing that is unclear or is hampering things that are going on, I would rather know than not know.

And I would remind you that ex parte rules generally do not apply to purely procedural matters. So I'm happy to discuss procedural matters that would not be covered under any of the ex parte rules or as long as there's nothing substantive. I don't think I'm exactly clear on that, but what I'm trying to do with these last few things is address some of the concerns that I've received in the past in regard to communication and to try to be a little bit more transparent so that what it doesn't feel

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like is that I am exerting some sort of top-down
 1
 2
    pressure on any of the parties to do anything in
    particular. At the same time, as much as possible
 3
     once the schedule is established, I'd like to stick
 4
     to it.
 5
 6
                Now, I anticipate some hiccups with this.
 7
     I can't remember off the top of my head, I've read
 8
     through the testimony that's been filed so far, but
 9
     it's been about -- it's been a while. Has a test
10
     year been proposed?
11
                MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.
12
                JUDGE CLARK: What's the proposed test
    year right now? What test year was put forth in
13
14
     testimony?
15
                MR. WILLIAMS: September of last year.
16
     Or --
17
                MS. McMELLEN: September 30th, 2021.
18
                JUDGE CLARK: One year from
19
     September 30th, 2020?
20
                MS. CARTER: Yes.
                                   Is the main test year.
21
                               That's the end date --
                MS. McMELLEN:
22
                MS. CARTER: Yeah.
23
                MS. McMELLEN: -- of September 30 --
24
                MS. CARTER: Yes. And then we proposed
25
     an update period.
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1	JUDGE CLARK: That's obviously in
2	testimony; that's not any kind of an official filing
3	on that. I assume parties are going to get together
4	and request a test year.
5	MR. WILLIAMS: Oh, we'll discuss it, I'm
6	sure.
7	JUDGE CLARK: I can imagine. And Asbury
8	once again is going to be an issue. I believe there
9	was an AAO ordered in the last case. Is that
10	correct?
11	MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.
12	MS. CARTER: Yes.
13	JUDGE CLARK: Okay. So that's been
14	tracked for this.
15	MS. CARTER: Yes, Judge.
16	MR. WILLIAMS: Asbury is also an issue on
17	appeal.
18	JUDGE CLARK: Yes, but that is not this
19	case.
20	MR. WILLIAMS: Correct.
21	JUDGE CLARK: Are there any questions at
22	this point? Everybody looks so sad. I don't know
23	why that is. Are there any other issues or matters
24	that need to be addressed by the commission at this
25	time? Okay. I hear none, and so we'll go off the

1	record.
2	(Off the record.)
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CERTIFICATE

I, Shelley L. Mayer, a Certified Court Reporter, CCR No. 679, the officer before whom the foregoing transcript of proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the testimony was taken by me to the best of my ability and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this transcript of proceedings was taken, and further, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

Shilly Barkle

Shelley L. Bartels, CCR

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