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PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

IN THE MATTER OF: Case Nos. :
21-637-GA-AIR
THE APPLICATIONS OF 21-638-GA-ALT
COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO, INC. 21-639-GA-UNC
21-640-GA-AAM

PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: Tuesday, June 7, 2022
TIME: 6:03 p.m.
BEFORE: Attorney Examiner Jacky St. John
LOCATION: City Council Chambers
Athens City Building, Third Floor
8 East Washington Street
Athens, OH 45701
REPORTED BY: Nic Joseph Saul, Notary Public
JOB NO.: 5246617

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<p>1 A P P E A R A N C E S</p> <p>2 ON BEHALF OF COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO:</p> <p>3 JOHN RYAN, ESQUIRE</p> <p>4 NiSource</p> <p>5 290 West Nationwide Boulevard, Suite 700</p> <p>6 Columbus, OH 43215</p> <p>7 johnryan@nisource.com</p> <p>8 (614) 285-2220</p> <p>9</p> <p>10 ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE OHIO CONSUMERS'</p> <p>11 COUNSEL:</p> <p>12 ANGELA O'BRIEN, ESQUIRE</p> <p>13 The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel</p> <p>14 65 East State Street</p> <p>15 Columbus, OH 43215</p> <p>16 (614) 466-9531</p> <p>17</p> <p>18 Also Present:</p> <p>19 Dennis Deters, Commissioner, Public Utilities</p> <p>20 Commission</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>	<p>1 E X H I B I T S</p> <p>2 NO. DESCRIPTION ID/EVD</p> <p>3 Exhibit 1 Sign-in Sheet N/A</p> <p>4 (Exhibit attached.)</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>
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<p>1 I N D E X</p> <p>2 WITNESS STATEMENTS: PAGE</p> <p>3 Elizabeth Clodfelter 10</p> <p>4 Keith Wasserman 14</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>	<p>1 P R O C E E D I N G S</p> <p>2 THE REPORTER: Good evening. My name</p> <p>3 is Nic Joseph Saul; I am the reporter assigned by</p> <p>4 Veritext to take the record of this proceeding. We</p> <p>5 are now on the record at 6:03 p.m. on June 7, 2022, at</p> <p>6 the City Council Chambers of Athens City Building,</p> <p>7 Third Floor, 8 East Washington Street, Athens, Ohio</p> <p>8 45701.</p> <p>9 Go ahead.</p> <p>10 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Good evening. The</p> <p>11 Public Utilities Commission of Ohio has scheduled for</p> <p>12 public hearing at this time and place, Case Nos.:</p> <p>13 21-637-GA-AIR, which relates to</p> <p>14 Columbia's application for authority to amend its</p> <p>15 filed tariffs, to increase the rates and charges for</p> <p>16 gas services and related matters;</p> <p>17 21-638-GA-ALT, which relates to</p> <p>18 Columbia's application for approval of an alternative</p> <p>19 form of regulation;</p> <p>20 21-639-GA-UNC, which relates to</p> <p>21 Columbia's application for approval of a demand side</p> <p>22 management program for its residential and commercial</p> <p>23 customers;</p> <p>24 And 21-640-GA-AAM, which relates to</p> <p>25 Columbia's application for approval to change</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 accounting methods. 2 My name is Jacky St. John, and I am the 3 Attorney Examiner assigned by the Commission to hear 4 this case. Presiding with me this evening is 5 Commissioner Deters. 6 Commissioner Deters, would you like to 7 say a few words? 8 COMMISSIONER DETERS: Yes, thank you, 9 Judge St. John. 10 Welcome, everybody, to this public 11 hearing as it relates to Columbia Gas's rate case. I 12 just wanted to thank everybody that decided to come 13 tonight, the stakeholders, those that will participate 14 and those that may not participate, this is a very 15 important process as it relates to the Commission's 16 proceeding and setting rates. And I'm very excited to 17 see people here tonight. 18 I will give a special thanks to the 19 Public Utilities Commission staff, especially Judge 20 St. John, who's prepared for this hearing, as well as 21 the City of Athens, who is willing to host us tonight. 22 So thank you. 23 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you. 24 And there are also staff members from 25 the Commission, of course, assisting with us --</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 don't see any other parties here this evening that 2 would be making an appearance. 3 The subject of today's hearing is a 4 combined application filed by Columbia Gas of Ohio 5 seeking to increase rates and charges and for approval 6 of an alternative rate plan. The application was 7 filed on June 30, 2021. The Commission staff filed a 8 report of investigation on April 6, 2022. This report 9 is a recommendation of the Commission staff and does 10 not necessarily reflect what the Commission's final 11 determination in this case will be. 12 The purpose of this evening's public 13 hearing is to receive testimony about the application 14 from people in the local community who are affected by 15 the proposed rates, but who are not parties to this 16 case. Tonight's public hearing will not be treated as 17 a question and answer session, but rather, an 18 opportunity to let the Commission know what you think 19 about Columbia's application. 20 Tonight's public hearing is only one 21 aspect of the process in this case. An evidentiary 22 hearing is scheduled to commence on July 13, 2022, at 23 the Commission's offices in Columbus. The purpose of 24 that evidentiary hearing is for the parties and the 25 commission staff to provide testimony and other</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 assisting us with the hearing tonight, as well as 2 individuals from the Public Affairs Department. You 3 passed them on your way in this evening, and they're 4 the individuals wearing a PUCO badge or shirt. 5 They're available if you have any questions concerning 6 the Commission's process, if you need assistance in 7 accessing any of the documents submitted in this case, 8 or if you just have any general questions about the 9 hearing tonight. 10 And at this time, I'd like to take 11 appearances on behalf of the parties, starting with 12 Columbia Gas of Ohio. 13 MR. RYAN: Thank you, Your Honor. On 14 behalf of the Applicant in this case, Columbia Gas of 15 Ohio, John Ryan, 290 West Nationwide Boulevard, 16 Columbus, Ohio 43215. 17 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you. 18 And on behalf of Ohio Consumers' 19 Counsel? 20 MS. O'BRIEN: Good evening, Your 21 Honors. On behalf of the Office of the Ohio 22 Consumers' Counsel, Bruce Weston, Ohio Consumers' 23 Counsel Angela O'Brien, Assistant Consumers' Counsel, 24 65 East State Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215. 25 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you. And I</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 evidence regarding the project. 2 Tonight's hearing is being transcribed 3 by a court reporter. If you plan to testify, please 4 speak clearly so the court reporter can accurately 5 reflect your comments on the record. And if you have 6 prepared a written statement, it would be helpful if 7 you provide a copy to the court reporter for reference 8 to ensure that the transcript is accurate. 9 After I finish with this introduction, 10 we will begin by inviting individuals on the sign-in 11 sheet to provide his or her testimony. Each person 12 who signed up to testify will be permitted to speak 13 once about the proposed rates. Before you present 14 your testimony, I will ask you to take an oath or 15 affirmation that what you are about to say is the 16 truth. I will also ask you to state your name and 17 address for the record. You will then provide your 18 thoughts on the proposed rates. 19 The parties to the case, Commissioner 20 Deters, and I will be permitted to ask you questions 21 about your statement. The testimony that you provide 22 tonight will be considered part of the official record 23 in this case, and it will be reviewed by the 24 Commission before a final determination is made on the 25 application.</p>

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1 A couple of other notes. If you decide
 2 that you do not want to testify when we read your name
 3 from the sign-in sheet, you can pass to the next
 4 witness. If you decide that you prefer to file
 5 written comments in the case docket, the Commission
 6 staff can answer your questions about how to do that.
 7 And once you've finished testifying or if you are here
 8 just to observe, you may leave at any time that you
 9 wish.

10 The Commission appreciates your
 11 participation in tonight's hearing, and at this time,
 12 we will begin with the testimony.

13 COMMISSIONER DETERS: Okay. First on
 14 the list is Beth Clodfelter.

15 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Please raise your
 16 right hand.

17 WHEREUPON,
 18 ELIZABETH CLODFELTER
 19 called as a witness, and having been first duly sworn
 20 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
 21 the truth, was examined and testified as follows:

22 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you. Could
 23 you please state and spell your name for the record?

24 THE WITNESS: Sure. My full first name
 25 is Elizabeth, and my last name is Clodfelter, which is

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1 spelled C-L-O-D, as in David, F, as in Frank,
 2 E-L-T-E-R.

3 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: And are you
 4 testifying on behalf of yourself or on behalf of
 5 another entity tonight?

6 THE WITNESS: On behalf of myself and
 7 other people who live in Appalachian Ohio.

8 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Okay. Thank you.
 9 Please provide your address.

10 THE WITNESS: 35 South Shannon Avenue,
 11 Athens, Ohio 45701.

12 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you. And
 13 please proceed with your testimony.

14 THE WITNESS: All right. Thank you.
 15 I really appreciate the chance to say
 16 something about this. The people here from Columbia
 17 Gas are very nice. They all seem pleasant. I've been
 18 a Columbia Gas customer for 20 years, and I've always
 19 been happy with my service.

20 But this is a terrible time for such a
 21 large rate increase. Right now, even though
 22 unemployment is as low as it's been in decades, right,
 23 people are suffering, especially lower income people
 24 and people on fixed incomes, with the rate of increase
 25 in food costs and gasoline costs, in particular, but

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1 really the price of everything is up. The price of
 2 rent. Interest rates are going up for people who want
 3 to buy a house or get a car loan. I mean, things are
 4 just getting a little bit squeezed by inflation right
 5 now, and that, as always, carries the biggest weight
 6 for the people on the lower end of the income spectrum
 7 and people on fixed incomes.

8 And this is the biggest increase,
 9 proposed increase, that I've ever seen from Columbia
 10 Gas, and I just think the timing could not be worse.
 11 A 27 percent increase all at once on the distribution
 12 costs of people's gas bills is going to make a
 13 difference for people. It's going to make it harder
 14 for them to pay for their gas. I fear that more
 15 people's gas will be turned off, you know, and that
 16 might not really hit till winter, when it's really
 17 terrible when that happens.

18 I have a job that allows me to travel
 19 to and meet people and get to know people pretty well
 20 in 25 counties of Appalachian Ohio. There are some
 21 counties where this will be -- that I know there are
 22 Columbia Gas customers where this will be felt even
 23 harder than here in Athens, though there are plenty of
 24 people it would hurt badly in Athens.

25 But in some counties, this is going to

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1 be awful. And this 27 percent increase will be more
 2 money leaving our community than could be spent at
 3 local businesses, local restaurants, helping our local
 4 economy. It's all going to be going to Columbus, as
 5 so many things do in the state of Ohio.

6 But I guess the thing that I find the
 7 most objectionable is the suddenness -- the few
 8 things -- I guess it's three things -- the suddenness
 9 of this, the amount, the 27 percent increase at one
 10 time, and the timing. It's just truly terrible
 11 timing. When gas -- I just paid \$4.84 for gas the
 12 last time I filled up. A year ago, it was half that.

13 So it's a tough time for people, and I
 14 think it's really unfortunate, and I hope that there's
 15 still a chance for the Public Utility Commission of
 16 Ohio to decide to keep the rates lower than this
 17 proposed 27 percent increase.

18 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you.

19 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Your Honor.

20 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Are there any
 21 questions for this witness?

22 Hearing none, thank you for your
 23 testimony.

24 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER DETERS: Okay. Next up is

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1 Keith Wasserman.
 2 MR. WASSERMAN: Good evening.
 3 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Good evening.
 4 Please raise your right hand.
 5 WHEREUPON,
 6 KEITH WASSERMAN
 7 called as a witness, and having been first duly sworn
 8 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
 9 the truth, was examined and testified as follows:
 10 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you. Please
 11 state and spell your name for the record.
 12 THE WITNESS: Keith Wasserman,
 13 K-E-I-T-H, W-A-S-S-E-R-M-A-N.
 14 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: And please provide
 15 your address.
 16 THE WITNESS: 16 Currier Street in
 17 Athens, Ohio 45701.
 18 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: And are you
 19 providing your testimony this evening on behalf of
 20 yourself or on behalf of an entity?
 21 THE WITNESS: Myself.
 22 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you. And
 23 please proceed.
 24 THE WITNESS: This is my 42nd year in
 25 Athens County working among people who have way too

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1 much month left over at the end of their income. I
 2 pay for some of their gas bills and help them find
 3 resources to get money to pay for their gas bills.
 4 And I have witnessed them in cold weather and space
 5 heaters.
 6 Poverty hasn't gone away, and this
 7 burden that you're proposing seems a little outlandish
 8 to me. I'm not allowed to ask questions, but if I
 9 could get a record, if it would be possible, of the
 10 previous requests and how the PUCO has granted
 11 previous rate increases maybe in the last 20 years,
 12 that would be helpful, from my perspective. That's
 13 not something I would have access to.
 14 But I work every day with people who
 15 really struggle to pay their electric bills. They're
 16 not dishonest people. Many of them are on disability
 17 and many of them work, but the challenge that you just
 18 heard from Beth is a reality in the lives of people I
 19 work with every day.
 20 So we go out to the homes of widows who
 21 live in Coolville and New Marchfield, Albany, and
 22 Gloucester, and we do repairs at their house. We get
 23 to know them and get to know what's important to them
 24 and what bothers them and what they're concerned
 25 about. This is a great challenge, but it's not the

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1 only challenge that they're facing. So my concern is
 2 while it's reasonable that within a certain amount of
 3 time a company would want a rate increase, what you're
 4 projecting is really going to be harming the people of
 5 this community that I work with.
 6 I don't know if it's possible for me to
 7 get the record of the profits for Columbia Gas for the
 8 past maybe five years, but I don't know where to go to
 9 get an accurate view of that, and I would request that
 10 that could be public. Maybe it is public, and I just
 11 haven't seen that tonight. But I think the people of
 12 our community would need to see that in comparison
 13 with the rate increase that you're asking.
 14 And maybe -- what I also don't know is
 15 what are the people earning who work for Columbia Gas?
 16 What kind of salaries do they get? What are the tiers
 17 from the CEO down to the frontline workers? I think
 18 the public would be helped by understanding a little
 19 of that perspective, as well.
 20 The people I work to help are in the
 21 20- to 30,000 range working, and the burden of this
 22 increase is pretty substantial. Of course, you're not
 23 the only increase, as you know. Lots of multinational
 24 corporations are instituting increases. As recently
 25 as yesterday, Verizon Corporation instituted a

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1 economic necessity increase on all of their phones,
 2 and I suspect AT&T will follow on. And so it wouldn't
 3 be news to you that everything is going up.
 4 But as people have the limited ability
 5 compared to their disability assistance, which is not
 6 actually going up at the rate of -- is it 16 percent?
 7 Is that -- do I have that -- is that accurate? How
 8 much is it? 27 percent, yeah. So I'm not, I'm not
 9 consciously aware that someone who is on SSDI is
 10 receiving a 27 percent increase in their income. So
 11 they're struggling, and I'm here to just voice their
 12 voice.
 13 This, as I said, is my 42nd year
 14 working every day with people whom I've grown to love
 15 and care about, and so I've come to speak on their
 16 behalf.
 17 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you for that
 18 testimony.
 19 Are there any questions for this
 20 witness?
 21 All right, hearing none, one thing I
 22 will mention, I know you had some questions. We do
 23 have representatives from Columbia here tonight. We
 24 also have folks outside from the Public Utilities
 25 Commission. I know you asked -- one of your questions

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1 was about a previous case rate increase. So they
 2 would be happy to answer your questions about that
 3 case number, where you can find documents related to
 4 that case.
 5 But then, in terms of questions that
 6 you had specifically about Columbia Gas, I would maybe
 7 direct those questions to the representatives that we
 8 have here tonight from Columbia.
 9 THE WITNESS: May I say one more thing?
 10 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Sure.
 11 THE WITNESS: One of the things that
 12 bothers me is the lack of contact that people who are
 13 making these decisions and proposing them have with
 14 people who are struggling in poverty. I'm not talking
 15 about the addicted population right now. I'm talking
 16 about good, hardworking, honest people. Those
 17 relationships are transformational in how we think
 18 about compassion and care.
 19 Thank you very much.
 20 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you.
 21 And at this time, I don't see that we
 22 have anyone else here who would like to provide
 23 testimony at this time. I see the time is 6:18 p.m.
 24 So just on the off chance that we have somebody else
 25 who might be making their way to us, maybe stuck in

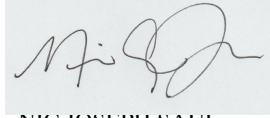
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1 traffic, just delayed for some reason or another, I'd
 2 like to go off the record just for a few minutes and
 3 see if anyone else will be showing up this evening
 4 that would like to provide testimony.
 5 So at this time, let's go off the
 6 record.
 7 THE REPORTER: We are going off the
 8 record at 6:18 p.m.
 9 (Off the record.)
 10 THE REPORTER: We are back on the
 11 record at 6:31 p.m.
 12 ATTORNEY EXAMINER: Thank you all for
 13 your patience. It appears that nobody else has showed
 14 up that would like to give testimony this evening. So
 15 thank you, everyone, for your participation this
 16 evening. We'd also like to thank the Athens City
 17 Council for allowing us to use their facilities in
 18 order to conduct this public hearing.
 19 And with that, the public hearing is
 20 now concluded, and the hearing transcript will be
 21 submitted on the record for the Commission's
 22 consideration in this case.
 23 Thank you all, again, and have a nice
 24 evening.
 25 COMMISSIONER DETERS: Thank you.

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1 THE REPORTER: We are going to go off
 2 the record at 6:31 p.m.
 3 (Whereupon, at 6:31 p.m., the
 4 proceeding was concluded.)
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1 CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSITION OFFICER
 2 I, NIC JOSEPH SAUL, the officer before whom
 3 the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby
 4 certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing
 5 proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn;
 6 that the proceedings were recorded by me and
 7 thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified
 8 transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of
 9 said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the
 10 best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am
 11 neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any
 12 of the parties to the action in which this was taken;
 13 and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of
 14 any counsel or attorney employed by the parties
 15 hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the
 16 outcome of this action.
 17

 18 NIC JOSEPH SAUL
 19 Notary Public in and for the
 20 State of Ohio
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

1 CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER
2 I, DANIELLE S. VANRIPER, do hereby certify
3 that this transcript was prepared from the digital
4 audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said
5 transcript is a true and accurate record of the
6 proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and
7 ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to,
8 nor employed by any of the parties to the action in
9 which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a
10 relative or employee of any counsel or attorney
11 employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or
12 otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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DANIELLE S. VANRIPER

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Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure

Title V. Discovery

Rule 30

(e) Submission to Witness; Changes; Signing.

When the testimony is fully transcribed, the deposition shall be submitted to the witness for examination and shall be read to or by the witness, unless examination and reading are waived by the witness and by the parties. Any changes in form or substance that the witness desires to make shall be entered upon the deposition by the officer with a statement of the reasons given by the witness for making them. The deposition shall then be signed by the witness, unless the parties by stipulation waive the signing or the witness is ill, cannot be found, or refuses to sign. The witness shall have thirty days from submission of the deposition to the witness to review and sign the deposition. If the deposition is taken within thirty days of a trial or hearing, the witness shall have seven days from submission of the deposition to the witness to review and sign the deposition. If the trial or hearing is scheduled to commence less than seven days before the deposition is submitted to the witness, the court may establish a deadline for the

witness to review and sign the deposition. If the deposition is not signed by the witness during the period prescribed in this division, the officer shall sign it and state on the record the fact of the waiver or of the illness or absence of the witness or the fact of the refusal to sign together with the reason, if any, given therefor; and the deposition may then be used as fully as though signed, unless on a motion to suppress the court holds that the reasons given for the refusal to sign require rejection of the deposition in whole or in part.

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