

1 BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

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3 In the Matter of the :
Application of the East :
4 Ohio Gas Company dba :
Dominion East Ohio for : 07-829-GA-AIR
5 authority to increase : 07-830-GA-ALT
rates for its gas : 07-831-GA-AAM
6 distribution service and : 08-169-GA-ALT
other related matters : 06-1453-GA-UNC

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9 PROCEEDINGS

10 before Mr. Scott Farkas, Hearing Examiner, at
11 Marietta College, 215 5th Street, McDonough
12 Auditorium, Marietta, Ohio, called at 1:30 p.m. on
13 Tuesday, August 5, 2008.

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1 APPEARANCES:

2 Janine L. Migden-Ostrander, Ohio Consumers'
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5

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1 Tuesday Afternoon Session,

2 August 5, 2008.

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4 EXAMINER FARKAS: I'd like to start the

5 hearing since it's 1:30.

6 The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

7 is assigned for public hearing at this time and

8 place, case numbers 07-829-GA-AIR, 07-830-GA-ALT,

9 07-831-GA-AAM, 08-169-GA-ALT, and 06-1453-GA-UNC

10 which are captioned: In the Matter of Application of

11 the East Ohio Gas Company d/b/a Dominion East Ohio

12 for authority to increase rates for its gas

13 distribution service and other related matters.

14 My name is Scott Farkas. I'm an Attorney

15 Examiner with the Commission's legal department and

16 will be conducting this hearing.

17 At this time, I'd like to announce that

18 there are commission personnel representing our

19 service and monitoring enforcement division. They

20 are out at the table, out in the front, Tammy
21 Mitchell and Andrea Smith, and these PUCO staff
22 members are available if you have a question
23 concerning a utility matter other than the
24 applications which are the focus of today's hearing.

1 I'd like to take appearances on behalf of
2 the parties now. On behalf of the Company.

3 MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you, Your Honor
4 Andrew Campbell on behalf of Dominion East Ohio with
5 the law firm Jones Day.

6 EXAMINER FARKAS: Okay. On behalf of
7 OCC.

8 MR. REESE: Yes. Thank you, Your Honor.
9 On behalf of the residential rate payers, Dominion
10 East Ohio, and the Ohio Consumers' Council, Janine L.
11 Migden-Ostrander, I'm Assistant Consumers Counsel,
12 Rick Reese.

13 EXAMINER FARKAS: Okay. Thank you. And
14 there are other parties in this case that aren't here
15 today, including the Ohio Partners for Affordable
16 Energy, The Neighborhood Environmental Coalition,
17 Interstate Gas Supply, Integris Energy Services,
18 Inc., Dominion Retail, Inc., Stand Energy
19 Corporation, the Utility Workers Union of America,

20 the Ohio Oil and Gas Association, the City of

21 Cleveland.

22 Dominion filed the rate case proceedings

23 application on August 30, 2007.

24 The local public hearings scheduled in

1 this case are only one aspect of the process in this
2 case. We have had public hearings in Youngstown,
3 Lima, Cleveland, Geneva, Akron, Canton, today,
4 Marietta.

5 We're also going to have additional
6 hearings in Cleveland, Youngstown, and Akron.

7 There is a court reporter present who is
8 sitting to my left. She will be recording in
9 typewritten fashion the statements made under oath
10 today.

11 When you arrived, you were offered the
12 opportunity to sign up to testify. If you missed
13 that opportunity, you may still add your name to the
14 list at the -- in the front as you walk in.

15 At this time, I'll begin calling
16 witnesses forward who wish to give statements for the
17 record.

18 Before you begin your statement, I'll ask
19 for your name, and address, and your testimony will

20 be considered part of the official record of this
21 case to be reviewed by the Commissioners before they
22 make their final decision.

23 Before presenting sworn testimony, I will
24 swear you in, swear or affirm, that the testimony you

1 give will be the truth, and attorneys for the company
2 and/or OCC or myself will ask you questions if they
3 want to.

4 Should you decide you do not want to
5 testify when I call your name, you are perfectly
6 within your decision not to testify. You can simply
7 pass to the next witness.

8 Once you finish testifying, if you're
9 just in attendance to observe the hearing, you may
10 leave at any time you wish.

11 And since today's hearing is being
12 transcribed, I'd ask that if you plan to testify,
13 please speak plainly and clearly so that the court
14 reporter can accurately reflect your comments on the
15 record; and if you have a prepared written statement,
16 it would be helpful for you to provide a copy to the
17 court reporter.

18 So I appreciate your participation in
19 today's hearing, and I want everybody who wishes to

20 make a public statement to be able to do so.

21 So at this time I'll begin calling

22 witnesses forward, and I'd ask that just if you would

23 come up to the podium here and give your testimony

24 from there.

1 The first person I have is Mary Jane

2 Williams.

3 - - -

4 MARY ANNE WILLIAMS

5 presented herself as a public witness, and being

6 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

7 DIRECT TESTIMONY

8 EXAMINER FARKAS: Please state your name

9 and address.

10 MS. WILLIAMS: It's Mary Anne Williams.

11 My address is 221 Smith Drive, Marietta, Ohio 45750.

12 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you.

13 MS. WILLIAMS: You're welcome. Good

14 afternoon. My name is Mary Ann Williams, and I

15 appreciate the opportunity to speak in opposition to

16 the proposed Dominion East Ohio gas rate hike.

17 The Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel has

18 done an excellent job in laying out many of the

19 reasons to oppose this increase.

20 As a private citizen and a candidate for
21 public office, I would like to focus on the impact of
22 this proposed increase on the citizens of Washington
23 County, many of whom are on fixed income, a low
24 income, or unemployed.

1 Many of our individuals and families are
2 being stretched to the breaking point. Gasoline
3 price increases have resulted in higher costs for
4 almost everything. The price of our most basic
5 necessity -- food -- has skyrocketed. The clothing
6 that we need costs more. The costs of medication
7 have gone up. The cost of back to school supplies
8 has gone up.

9 Many of our citizens today are already
10 being forced to choose between food or medication or
11 gas to drive to work.

12 Many of our citizens are already at their
13 breaking point, and now we hear that our electric
14 company wants to increase its rates too.

15 I believe that if this proposed rate hike
16 by Dominion is allowed to go through, many of our
17 citizens will be very cold this winter, or worse yet,
18 they could lose their homes due to fires caused by
19 make-shift heating.

20 Every day we hear on the news what we
21 need to cut -- that we need to cut back and become
22 more efficient with our resources. My question to
23 Dominion East Ohio is "What are you doing to cut back
24 to become more efficient?"

1 This proposed rate increase comes at an
2 unreasonable time. There are some who might not
3 understand how, for many of us, every single dollar
4 must be stretched for life's necessities such as
5 food, clothing, medicines and shelter.

6 I oppose this proposed rate increase. It
7 is unfair, ill timed, and piles on additional costs
8 to consumers at a time when we are all trying to find
9 ways to conserve and cut back.

10 I urge Dominion and the Public Utilities
11 Commission to oppose this rate hike.

12 I also want to add to what I did not have
13 prepared here that as I look around here today, I
14 don't see very many people here. And I was sitting
15 here thinking it is especially our elderly people who
16 would be affected the most by this rate hike, and I
17 wonder if maybe a better location for this hearing
18 would maybe have been, like, the O'Neil Senior Center
19 which has wonderful facilities and would have been

20 able to accommodate many of our elderly people. This
21 is a wonderful place right here, a perfect place for
22 something like this, but I wonder if maybe another
23 location would have been more accessible to the
24 people who are really being affected by this rate

1 increase. Thank you.

2 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you. Jack Brown.

3 - - -

4 JACK BROWN

5 presented himself as a public witness, and being

6 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

7 DIRECT TESTIMONY

8 EXAMINER FARKAS: Please state your name

9 and address.

10 MR. BROWN: Jack L. Brown, 357 Briggs

11 Hill Road, Belpre, Ohio 45714.

12 EXAMINER FARKAS: Okay.

13 MR. BROWN: I'd like to thank you very

14 much for the opportunity to make this statement which

15 will be short.

16 The lady in front of me here is one

17 that's covered most questions that so many people in

18 my position in our county face. Myself, I'm 82 years

19 old. I'm on a fixed income, and I have bills like

20 everybody else. I believe in companies making fair

21 profits on their products.

22 The thing that I can't quite understand

23 is the fact that should I want to do something in my

24 house, my farm, and so on, I have to take the money

1 that I have saved through my pension and what I have
2 worked and saved for over the years and for -- I'm
3 sure that this company does similar things, but --
4 and they should make a fair profit, but my one
5 question is this, after this is all over, over this
6 period of time with all the excess fees that we are
7 going to have, are any of them, after the
8 infrastructure is finished, are we going to get any
9 reduction from these fees or are they going to be an
10 add-on to the gas or our services we have at that
11 time.

12 Thank you very much. That's about all I
13 have to say.

14 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you. David
15 Brightbill.

16 - - -

17 DAVID BRIGHTBILL

18 presented himself as a public witness, and being
19 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

20 DIRECT TESTIMONY

21 MR. SPEAKER: State your name and

22 address.

23 MR. BRIGHTBILL: David E. Brightbill. My

24 home address is 347 Main Street, Lower Salem, Ohio.

1 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you.

2 MR. BRIGHTBILL: My name is David
3 Brightbill. I'm the Executive Director of
4 Washington-Morgan Counties Community Action. For
5 those of you that don't know, we're a two-county
6 agency serving low income families in a whole variety
7 of ways.

8 My testimony today will be brief. I'm
9 here to express concern over Dominion East Ohio's
10 proposed rate increase. I support the position of
11 Ohio Consumers' Counsel particularly on the area of
12 the flat rate customer charge. It negatively impacts
13 consumers who try to conserve, and subsidizes people
14 who are high users.

15 Once -- with that fixed rate, no matter
16 what I use, as I lower my usage, the percentage that
17 I have to pay of my bill, that fixed rate impacts
18 negatively.

19 The more I use, the less a percentage of

20 my total bill that is, and I think in today's era of
21 conservation, that's exactly the opposite direction.
22 You should be encouraging people to conserve not
23 discouraging them.
24 I certainly see this working against the

1 families that we serve as mentioned before me. These
2 are people that are struggling to pay their bills
3 now. This increase just adds to the difficulty of
4 doing that.

5 So hopefully the Commission will reject
6 their staff's position on this issue and maintain the
7 base rate that is currently in regulation.

8 We also agree with the Consumers' Counsel
9 that Dominion East Ohio should increase a proposed
10 investment in energy efficiency.

11 Specifically we encourage an increase in
12 Housewarming which is the weatherization effort
13 funded by Dominion rate payers to at least 9.5
14 million.

15 Housewarming is a comprehensive approach
16 to reducing energy use particularly for low income,
17 low and moderate income families, and, as we all
18 know, conservation is the best way and the least
19 expensive way to reduce our use and dependence on

20 natural gas.

21 Our agency is a provider of Warm Choice

22 Services, and there are certainly more people

23 interested in this service and interested in having

24 their houses either weatherized or an inefficient

1 furnace replaced by an efficient furnace, than there
2 are funds available to do that.

3 I appreciate the opportunity to speak
4 today, and thank you very much. I can answer any
5 questions if there are any.

6 EXAMINER FARKAS: Any questions.

7 Kara Wright.

8 - - -

9 KARA WRIGHT

10 presented herself as a public witness, and being
11 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

12 DIRECT TESTIMONY

13 EXAMINER FARKAS: State your name and
14 address please.

15 MS. WRIGHT: Kara Wright. Actually I'm
16 going to give you my work address. P.O. Box 370,
17 Reno, Ohio 45773.

18 I'm here on behalf of the Area Agency on
19 Aging which runs the Passport program. On behalf of

20 more than 750 in-home passport consumers across an
21 eight-county region that we cover, the Area Agency on
22 Aging is very concerned with the proposed dramatic
23 increase of flat rate consumer charge. Our consumers
24 are already at risk and frail and live on very fixed

1 incomes.

2 Such a change in the rate structure would
3 also negatively impact consumers who attempt to
4 conserve energy, and ultimately result in low-use
5 consumers subsidizing high-use consumers.

6 In addition, adding more Dominion's cost
7 into a fixed consumer charge limits the ability for a
8 consumer to control their monthly bills by being more
9 energy efficient.

10 With consumers' budgets stretched thin,
11 and a higher flat-rate customer charge, means
12 consumers would at least pay \$17 per month regardless
13 of how much gas they use.

14 Ohio Passport consumers on average
15 statewide are 76 years of age. The majority of them
16 are on food stamps or HEAP.

17 Last year HEAP served a record number,
18 and the Ohio Department of Development has already
19 projected short falls for this coming year's budget.

20 In 2007, over 400,000 households were
21 supported by HEAP funds and most of the funds were
22 gone by December. 60,000 households also were on the
23 PIP program, and these are the concerns that we have
24 at the Area Agency on Aging for the consumers that we

1 have. Thank you.

2 EXAMINER FARKAS: Gretchen Otto.

3 - - -

4 GRETCHEN OTTO

5 presented herself as a public witness, and being

6 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

7 DIRECT TESTIMONY

8 MR. SPEAKER: State your name and

9 address.

10 MS. OTTO: My name is Gretchen Otto. I

11 live at 627 Fourth Street here in Marietta. I notice

12 everybody had a prepared statement, and I don't

13 prepare statements.

14 It's been a long time since I have talked

15 in front of any group in a microphone. I think now

16 that all Marietta Times subscribers know that

17 Gretchen Otto turned 70.

18 I want to represent myself personally. I

19 find these prepared statements excellent because they

20 are dealing with facts, and they are dealing with
21 issues, and I would like to get even more personal
22 and represent all the people in the room who are not
23 here, all the empty seats in the room. God, I just
24 love a microphone.

1 I had a very successful professional
2 career. I'll need about 12 minutes. I had a very
3 successful professional career. Born and raised --
4 or born and reared in Marietta.

5 My career was on the east coast in a
6 private psychiatric hospital mental health
7 services.

8 I was a rehabilitation and guidance
9 counselor, and, after burnout, once every 13 years,
10 though I loved my career, I thought I needed to do
11 something different.

12 So assessing my skills, I decided to go
13 to the other side of people's needs and become a
14 concierge for Marriott Corporation.

15 I worked at three different Marriotts,
16 and to work with people falling through the cracks in
17 private psychiatric or in state mental hospitals, and
18 then -- who are needy, and it is much easier today
19 than it was in the '50s or '60s for them to come in

20 and ask for and receive treatment. Then to move to
21 the hospitality field where, I suppose you could say,
22 the guests are also needy, they are also demanding,
23 and it is a totally different side of the coin.

24 To work with those who run the risk, if

1 we don't correctly diagnose and don't correctly
2 treat, and don't correctly verify our treatment, they
3 run the risk of falling between the cracks. To those
4 who check into hotels, Marriotts, Sheratons,
5 Renaissance, and they don't fall between the cracks
6 because the cracks for business managers from all
7 over the country who come to these hotels for
8 industrial parks and live in other cities, they
9 simply -- the cracks close for them, or they simply
10 step over them.

11 Now, the reason I mentioned this is
12 because I wanted you to know a little bit about my
13 background. I never thought with the successful
14 career that I had for 30 years with hospitals, almost
15 ten years in the hospitality field, I never thought
16 that I would run the risk of falling between the
17 cracks. I just -- it isn't that I didn't think it
18 could happen. I didn't think I could let it happen.

19 But now I find myself -- I returned to

20 Marietta in 2002. I find myself retired, and that
21 was fun for a long time. I miss my work, but I found
22 myself retired and that has been a new challenge for
23 me.

24 But I also find myself struggling and

1 struggling hard for the first time. I think the last
2 time I really struggled was in the 1970s when I got
3 in line and was maybe 85th in line of people buying
4 gasoline, and you got up at 4:00 A.M. to do that, and
5 then you got your tank of gasoline, you know, if you
6 could stay awake long enough in that line to move
7 your car forward, then you go home and go to bed,
8 set the alarm so you can get up and go to work.
9 That was the last time that I really remember a
10 struggle.

11 I didn't live lavishly, and I don't live
12 lavishly now. I live comfortably. In fact, my
13 sister, Mimi, who lives in Florida wants me to move
14 down there to live with her and that we might pool
15 expenses.

16 Well, personally in our family that
17 wouldn't work because all four of us children, each
18 of us wanted to be the boss one day. So we went out
19 into the world as leaders, but now to come back

20 together and live with family where everybody wants

21 to be the boss, I don't think that's going to work.

22 I live in four rooms in a house on Fourth

23 Street, and these rooms are like 15 by 20. They are

24 adequate size rooms, but let me tell you what has

1 happened.

2 The one thing the newspaper didn't
3 mention was when I said I have to rethink my
4 priorities, I have to reorder my priorities at this
5 age.

6 Is it time for me to go and see J.C.
7 Estates, tour J.C. Estates? Is it time for me to
8 look into Norwood Green that is being built out on
9 Colgate? I don't know yet. I think this meeting and
10 this year will help decide that for me, but what the
11 paper didn't say, I'm paying close to \$300 a month
12 for gas.

13 I drive a '91 Mercury Marquis. I haven't
14 even figured out how much gas that uses. I'm sure
15 it's not a gas economy car by a long shot. It's more
16 like a love boat. It's big and it's old.

17 My furnace was a clunker, and that might
18 account for a good bit why I'm paying \$300 a month
19 for gas.

20 But on the other hand, the landlord at
21 the end of the winter replaced it because when I
22 smelled gas, and the gas company came, they said,
23 well we tagged this a year ago. Who took the tag
24 off?

1 Well, there is an electric company here
2 in town that took the tag off. I didn't know what
3 the tag was about. He really didn't explain it to
4 me. I read the large print. I didn't have my
5 glasses on, and I Xeroxed both sides and gave it to
6 my landlord. This year, not only would they not turn
7 the gas on, they red tagged it again.

8 Now, I just explained to you that I
9 thought I did very well with my career, and I thought
10 that I was living comfortably, and I thought that
11 things were going to go along smoothly in my
12 retirement, but all these empty seats, a lot of these
13 people who are not here today, if I'm not living
14 comfortably, then what is someone who has an income
15 of 50 percent of what I have?

16 I have Social Security. I have
17 retirement. I have some savings left. I don't live
18 in the areas where you would say these are the
19 streets, and these are the places and the parks in

20 the county in Marietta where people are not living
21 comfortably where people speak up, but it's in the
22 line at the supermarket to the person behind them
23 where they speak up to their neighbors. It's not
24 always comfortable for people with lesser education

1 to speak up and share their personal struggles in a
2 nonemotional way.

3 And I think that they are -- we -- now
4 I'm a part of them -- are sometimes intimidated by
5 people who address the issues in the sophisticated
6 auditorium. This is a very sophisticated auditorium.
7 I see many, many people in suits. I see many well
8 dressed people. I think we all are well dressed, but
9 we all our uncomfortable, and we could become even
10 more uncomfortable. My sister tells me I live in
11 genteel poverty, and I say there is a book title
12 there.

13 Now, I'm going to get even more personal.
14 The truth of the matter is that at the end of winter,
15 they were not allowed to relight my furnace.

16 The risk of carbon monoxide became
17 increasingly great. The landlord put in a new
18 furnace, and I thought, well, this is really going to
19 make a big difference in my life, and it has. But

20 owing \$300 a month and not being able to afford \$300

21 a month because of all the other expenses that are

22 arising, my gas bill began to accumulate into an

23 IOU.

24 Now, I've talked with Dominion on the

1 telephone, and they never hang up on you, and they
2 are trained not to hang up on you. I'm sure every
3 other gas company is trained to be cordial and polite
4 to the consumer.

5 But I find them detached. It's not the
6 job of the person on the phone to correct your
7 problems or even address them. There are other
8 offices and avenues for that. So I would imagine
9 that their job is becoming increasingly tough too.
10 My gas was shut off the first week of June.

11 Now, having been a concierge for
12 Marriott -- for those of you who may not know what a
13 concierge is, a concierge makes magic for the guest.
14 If the guest has just won a -- some kind of a boat or
15 something, while they are in Baltimore, Maryland, and
16 they have won one of these wind sailing things, which
17 a young married couple won, and then came to me
18 because it was 20-foot long.

19 It was in their hotel room, ran from the

20 door to the air conditioner on the opposite wall.

21 They were not water people, and they didn't know what

22 to do with this thing.

23 So they came to see if I could help them

24 with that. They had been offered 450 at the

1 nightclub where one of them won the limbo contest,
2 but here they had this 20-foot thing, this monster in
3 their room.

4 Well, I happen to know a few people, and
5 the few people knew more people, and they had an
6 avenue for me to pursue, and within ten hours, I had
7 their wind surfing rig sold to a former lifeguard
8 that I had hired at the hospital who was into that
9 kind of equipment, and for \$750 they went away in
10 their little Renault. Could you imagine that tied on
11 top of a Renault. They went away very happy.

12 At the nightclub they had been offered
13 \$400. So this is what a concierge does. Makes
14 magic.

15 Now, I can't make magic for myself, and I
16 can't make magic for you, and I can't make magic for
17 all the empty seats in this room.

18 So back to my gas being turned off the
19 first of June. I take that back. It was not the

20 first of June. That was not a lie. It was not the

21 first of June. Yes, it was.

22 One of the things that I found having

23 been a concierge and being resourceful and having a

24 gas stove and oven is that if you heat hot water in

1 the coffee maker like you're going to make hot tea,
2 and if you use your crock pot, plug it in first thing
3 in the morning, go back to bed. Let the dog out.
4 Let the dog in. Sleep some more, and also if you
5 heat water in your microwave, you can get enough
6 water, one basin at a time, to have a very adequate
7 sponge bath one section of your body at a time. And
8 this is what I have been doing. It's working.

9 I go to friends' homes to shower. I
10 never thought I would be showering at a friend's home
11 unless I was a guest in their home for a weekend.
12 This is what I'm doing. I'm making do with what I've
13 got, and it's working, but not everybody in these
14 empty seats can make do with what they've got and
15 have it work for them, and some of them cannot think
16 that way, because they weren't trained that way.

17 So what's my point? I must be nearing 12
18 minutes. What is my point? My point is I find this
19 neither embarrassing nor heartbreaking, nor even

20 frustrating. I find it disgusting. I find it

21 totally disgusting.

22 I'm not going to repeat what Mary Anne

23 Williams came up here and said because I think she

24 spoke for all of us. And I think each of you who

1 preceded me have spoken to the facts of the issue for
2 all of us.

3 I wanted to speak for those who are not
4 here because I'm fast becoming one of them, but as
5 long as I can be resourceful, I think I'm going to
6 make it. I'm paying the gas and electric company
7 \$200 a month for the IOU. My gas is off. I go out
8 and about in public feeling clean. I wash my clothes
9 in cold water, but then most all of us do that now
10 anyway.

11 I don't know how long I can keep this up.
12 They told me if I paid half of what I owe them, which
13 would have been \$600, they would turn my gas back on,
14 but then they told me there's a \$135 reconnection
15 fee. So June they got \$200. July they got \$200. I
16 had a whole collection of basins. All sizes. In
17 August they will get another \$200. And when I talked
18 to them on the telephone the last time, this is
19 Dominion I'm speaking of, they said, well, we can't

20 turn it on now because, you know, you owe another
21 \$600. Even though they had told me when I paid half
22 of it, they would turn it on with a connection fee.
23 I have that new furnace. I'm hoping it
24 works when October or November first comes. I'm sure

1 it will. I'm not sure how much is going to be left
2 in my till, but I'm eating a lot of fruits and
3 vegetables, and I steam a lot on the two burner
4 electric.

5 I just wanted those of you present, and
6 I'm sorry those empty seats are not here to hear
7 this, to know what consequences are of something
8 getting very out of hand that at one time you thought
9 you had control over and would not pose a situation.
10 I'm now in a situation.

11 I think I'm going to make it, but all the
12 people who are not here today, I don't know if they
13 are going to make it with the rising costs of
14 everything. I wish them well. I wish all of us
15 well. Thank you.

16 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you. Thomas
17 Vukovic.

18 - - -

19 THOMAS VUKOVIC

20 presented himself as a public witness, and being

21 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

22 DIRECT TESTIMONY

23 EXAMINER FARKAS: State your name and

24 address.

1 MR. VUKOVIC: My name is Thomas Vukovic.
2 I am a resident at 115 Flintwood Drive here in
3 Marietta. I'm also a Fourth Ward City Councilman,
4 and I represent a substantial number of retirees on
5 fixed incomes and residents who are low to moderate
6 income who are unable to get additional assistance to
7 pay their gas bills.

8 My concern is that the cost that we're
9 facing, the increased cost, a transportation cost of
10 an additional -- or of a total \$210 per year at the
11 \$17 rate, the infrastructure cost of \$13.44 per year,
12 and the electronic meter reading of \$3 per year for a
13 total of \$227.44, if you take a look at
14 transportation costs now at \$68.40 which means that
15 my constituents and I will be paying just in costs
16 before we get any gas \$159 plus.

17 That concerns me because the rate
18 increase, this \$17 increase, represents basically a
19 200 percent increase over the next year or when it is

20 implemented, and that as a City councilman, that
21 concerns me because in our budget, our local income
22 tax budget, we're basically flat, which tells me that
23 people who are working in this community who are wage
24 earners and paying, of course, municipal income tax,

1 basically are not getting any kind of increases that
2 can easily afford this kind of increase.

3 Also the kind of jobs that we're looking
4 at here in Marietta are not the kind of jobs that are
5 manufacturing and high paying jobs. We have an awful
6 lot of low income kind of jobs. You take the locally
7 owned restaurants, we have low income -- or we have
8 lower paying production kind of jobs, but we're not
9 the kind of community here that earns major dollars
10 and can afford -- easily afford that plus a
11 retiree -- I'm also a retired teacher, and my
12 increase this year that -- I just finished my first
13 year -- I got a three percent increase. I'll be
14 facing that same three percent increase with the same
15 amount of money for the rest of my life. So those
16 kinds of -- this particular increase, I feel, has
17 really -- will have a really detrimental impact on
18 this community and on the people that live here.

19 I'd also like to say that as a City

20 official, one of the things that we have been looking
21 at is electronic meter reading for our water
22 department. In determining whether or not we're
23 going to do that, we have determined that this
24 system, if we're going to implement it, will pay for

1 itself, but it's not going to be borne on the backs

2 of consumers.

3 My question to the PUCO is how is it that
4 this cost is being passed on, and where are the
5 savings from this particular kind of program going
6 to? How is that going to benefit the users of this
7 service?

8 Again, the gentleman who raised the issue
9 earlier about the cost and that cost being passed on,
10 is it going to be passed on forever? There's no
11 determination made in this proposal, and I think that
12 needs to also be dealt with.

13 I'm also -- I've done everything that I
14 possibly can in my own personal life to make my house
15 as energy efficient as possible. You know, my August
16 bill for gas was \$4.24. Okay. That -- I'm sorry.
17 That's incorrect. My total cost for gas was \$4.24.
18 My total bill for August was \$11 -- for July was
19 \$11.15. What I'll be facing is that charge, that \$17

20 charge which will be more than the cost of me using
21 gas, and I feel that that is grossly -- that's
22 grossly disproportionate, and I have real a problem
23 with subsidizing larger users of gas, and I --
24 personally, I think that's a real serious problem.

1 My historical background in terms of gas
2 use is very low. I, like a lot of other people, keep
3 my temperature -- my thermostat at 65 degrees, and I
4 have done everything I possibly can -- I wear lots of
5 sweaters in the wintertime also -- to be able to keep
6 that bill low.

7 I think that this particular proposal is
8 going to cause problems for the users of this -- of
9 Southeastern Ohio, and I think that it needs to be
10 reviewed and rejected, and I urge the PUCO to not
11 allow this increase. Thank you.

12 EXAMINER FARKAS: Mike Joyce.

13 MR. JOYCE: I have nothing to say, sir.

14 EXAMINER FARKAS: Okay. Robert Huffman.

15 - - -

16 ROBERT HUFFMAN

17 presented himself as a public witness, and being
18 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

19 DIRECT TESTIMONY

20 MR. HUFFMAN: As far as I know. I'm not
21 exactly positive that some of the statements I make
22 are exactly, perfectly correct, but I'm going to try
23 to be as close to accurate as I can.

24 EXAMINER FARKAS: Okay. Thank you.

1 State your name and address.

2 MR. HUFFMAN: My name is Robert Huffman,
3 and my address is 110 Sunset Lane, Marietta, Ohio.

4 I think that it's a crying shame that
5 these people want to raise any cost at all,
6 considering the gasoline cost, the food cost going
7 up. I saw a 10-pound bag of potatoes was 7.99 at
8 Kroger's the other day.

9 The tremendous budget deficit that we're
10 incurring because of the war in Iraq and the money
11 that we're borrowing from the Communist Chinese to do
12 it would buy the layer trailing our ships and
13 submarines in the Persian Gulf, and they -- in no way
14 are they going to let us steal all the oil in the
15 mideast without having a nuclear war with us.

16 And also the home mortgage problems where
17 so many people are losing their homes, and so many
18 people are just walking away from their homes because
19 their homes are worthless than they are paying for

20 them actually because the value of the homes has gone
21 down, and at the same time, the mortgage interest
22 rates have gone up. They were fluctuating.

23 This inflation is caused by greed and the
24 worship of money. CEOs should take pay cuts and

1 learn how to stick to a budget and sacrifice for once
2 to help us.

3 These continual price hikes and tax
4 increases are immoral. I'm a member of the Ron Paul
5 campaign group, and we have discovered that there's
6 something called a comprehensive annual finance --
7 financial report, and we have discovered that at the
8 same time our State is crying that they have to raise
9 taxes, and they don't have money, they have
10 approximately \$33 billion stashed in slush funds, and
11 if they would release this money to the people of
12 this state, we could turn this whole economy around,
13 and we could come out of the recession. We could use
14 that money to -- we could use that money for the poor
15 people to save money which is the way a country gets
16 ahead when the people are able to save money, and
17 then they invest their savings in businesses that
18 help produce American-made products, and that's the
19 true way a country gets ahead, not from buying all

20 their stuff from China. Thank you. God bless you

21 guys for showing up.

22 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you. That's the

23 list of people that signed up. Is there anyone that

24 wants to testify?

1 - - -

2 ROSE MARIE THOMAS

3 presented herself as a public witness, and being
4 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

5 DIRECT TESTIMONY

6 EXAMINER FARKAS: Please state your name
7 and address.

8 MS. THOMAS: Rose Marie Thomas, 117
9 Woodcrest Drive, Marietta 45750.

10 I'm one of those older people, and I'm
11 retired, have been. I worked until I was 70. I
12 tried to plan for my retirement as best I could.

13 My life had many ups and downs, but I too
14 had been at a successful job, but never worked long
15 enough to be vested in pensions because, as we
16 mother's did, we went home, and took care of our
17 kids, and so forth. And then there were some
18 changes, but, anyway, when I first retired, the IRAs
19 were earning me, like, 12 percent interest, and I

20 locked them up for ten years.

21 Now, of course, when you try to get any

22 savings, you don't -- there isn't very much, and the

23 longer you live, of course, the longer your life

24 expectancy. So that presents a lot of cause for

1 thought as I can appreciate Gretchen Otto's

2 situation.

3 I'm 84, and I invested -- two years ago,

4 I invested in a 97 percent efficient furnace so that

5 I could have better, you know, gas bills, and I

6 insulated -- added some insulation to my home, and

7 I'm trying to do everything I can to conserve both,

8 you know, not spending and investing so that I will

9 have lower bills.

10 But this will really hurt the seniors if

11 they put that flat charge on, and I don't -- that is

12 not really what Dominion has asked, but it's what the

13 PUCO has asked.

14 So that concerns me, and I feel it should

15 really -- that it is unfair to those of us who are

16 trying to save on our expenses to have that large

17 cost be the consumer charge, and I mean from, you

18 know, whatever -- I can't remember what it is, how it

19 is termed on the bill. Let me see what they call it,

20 the monthly service charge and the gas transportation

21 charge.

22 Well, if you reduce your bills, you have

23 less gas for transportation charges, but this is

24 going to all be one large amount as Tom Vukovic said.

1 This month my total bill was \$12.37, and 7.16 of that
2 alone was the monthly service on the gas
3 transportation charge. Only \$5.22 was for actual
4 gas.

5 So it really will be very
6 disproportionate, and I really feel it should be
7 reviewed and some other plan worked out.

8 I don't deny that Dominion, you know,
9 needs some reimbursement for some of their expenses,
10 but it is really hurting the older population, and,
11 you know, even though we try, as Gretchen said, those
12 who didn't even have the assets that some of us may
13 have been fortunate enough to have saved for our
14 retirement, it still does present a problem.

15 I mean it's going to be a greater problem
16 for them. I really don't know how they will handle
17 it, and then it becomes a problem for the whole
18 community.

19 I mean, you know, everybody will have to

20 help subsidize people who need additional help.

21 So I thank you very much.

22 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you. Is there

23 anyone else?

24 MS. THOMAS: My grandson -- this is

1 beside the point. He always makes -- he jokes about
2 me being the little old lady in tennis shoes, and
3 here I am with my cane and now my tennis shoes.

4 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you.

5 Is there anyone else that wants to
6 testify?

7 Seeing that there is no one and hearing
8 no one -- There is. Okay. Thank you.

9 - - -

10 JOHN POLING

11 presented himself as a public witness, and being
12 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

13 DIRECT TESTIMONY

14 EXAMINER FARKAS: Please state your name
15 and address.

16 MR. POLING: My name is John Poling,
17 P-o-l-i-n-g. I live at 123 Brentwood Street,
18 Marietta, Ohio.

19 When I look at my gas bill and see all

20 the charges other than the cost of the gas itself,
21 it's way higher than the cost of gas, and I think
22 going from \$5.70 a month base charge to 17 something
23 is ridiculous, and I hope that the Commission will
24 not allow it. Thank you.

1 EXAMINER FARKAS: Thank you. Okay. Is
2 there anyone else that wishes to make a statement or
3 give testimony? Okay.

4 If there are no more witnesses, this will
5 conclude the public hearing, and the testimony will
6 be submitted on the record for the Commission's
7 consideration in this case, and I thank you all for
8 coming.

9 (Thereupon, at 2:30 p.m., the hearing was
10 concluded.)

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1 CERTIFICATE

2 I do hereby certify that the foregoing is a
3 true and correct transcript of the proceedings taken
4 by me in this matter on Tuesday, August 5, 2008, and
5 carefully compared with my original stenographic
6 notes.

7 _____
8 Deborah J. Guzzo, Registered
9 Professional Reporter and Notary
 Public in and for the
 State of Ohio.

10
11 My commission expires June 25, 2012.

12 (1702-DJG)

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