

**BEFORE
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO**

In the Matter of the Application of Co-) lumbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Authority) to Amend its Filed Tariffs to Increase the) Rates and Charges for Gas Services and) Related Matters.)	Case No. 21-637-GA-AIR
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In the Matter of the Application of Co-) lumbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Approval of) an Alternative Form of Regulation.)	Case No. 21-638-GA-ALT
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In the Matter of the Application of Co-) lumbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Approval of) a Demand Side Management Program) for its Residential and Commercial Cus-) tomers.)	Case No. 21-639-GA-UNC
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In the Matter of the Application of Co-) lumbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Approval to) Change Accounting Methods.)	Case No. 21-640-GA-AAM
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**MEMORANDUM CONTRA OCC'S
REQUEST FOR VIRTUAL LOCAL PUBLIC HEARINGS OF
COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO, INC.**

INTRODUCTION

On May 20, 2022, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel ("OCC") filed a motion in the above-captioned cases requesting that the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (the "Commission") create a virtual option for customers to participate in currently scheduled local public hearings and also asked the Commission to schedule two additional virtual public hearings. Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. ("Columbia") respectfully requests that the Commission consider the financial impact this request will have on the rate case expense that is recovered from Columbia's customers.

ARGUMENT

On May 28, 2021, and on June 30, 2021, Columbia filed a Notice of Intent to File and an Application for an Increase in Rates pursuant to R.C. 4909.18. On May 11, 2022, the Attorney Examiner issued an Entry scheduling local public hearings beginning on June 1, 2022, in Canton, Bowling Green, Athens, and Columbus. In accordance with the Entry¹ and R.C. 4903.083, Columbia published notice of the hearings in publications in each of the sixty-one counties in which it serves customers beginning the week of May 16, 2022. On May 19, 2022, the Attorney Examiner issued an Entry scheduling an additional local public hearing in Zanesville. In response, Columbia scheduled the publication of an additional notice beginning the week of May 30, 2022.

On May 20, 2022, OCC filed a Motion requesting that the Commission schedule two additional, virtual local public hearings. To support its motion, OCC cites to potential customer concerns with attending events in person. OCC also requested that the currently scheduled local public hearings identified above be webcasted. Because Columbia was not involved in the complex logistics involved with scheduling these hearings, it does not possess the information necessary to determine the feasibility of webcasting in-person public hearings. As a result, Columbia takes no position on the webcast portion of OCC's request. However, Columbia does suggest, to the extent virtual only public hearings are established, that a single virtual only public hearing is sufficient.

Of note, each additional publication of notice for new local public hearings adds to Columbia's rate case expense, which is eventually recovered from customers. As recognized by the OCC in its motion,² Columbia's customers have multiple meaningful opportunities to share information with the Commission about the case. Should the Commission find it necessary to grant OCC's motion and schedule a single additional virtual local public hearing, Columbia is more than willing to participate. However, Columbia requests that it not be required to publish additional newspaper notices, in order to prevent corresponding additional rate case expense.

¹ *In the Matter of the Application of Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. for Authority to Amend its Filed Tariffs to Increase the Rates and Charges for Gas Services and Related Matters*, Case Nos. 21-0637-GA-AIR, *et al.*, Entry (May 11, 2022) at ¶12.

² *Id.*, Motion to Allow Columbia's Consumers to Participate Virtually in the PUCO's Local Public Hearings on Columbia's Proposed Rate Increase and Request for Expedited Ruling (May 20, 2022) at 2 ("It is true that consumers have other ways to express their opinions regarding the case. They can call the PUCO, write the PUCO by mail, or submit comments on the PUCO's website").

WHEREFORE, Columbia respectfully requests that the Commission consider the arguments raised herein when reviewing OCC's May 20, 2022 motion.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Joseph M. Clark

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's e-filing system will electronically serve notice of the filing of this document on the parties referenced on the service list of the docket card who have electronically subscribed to the case. In addition, the undersigned hereby certifies that a copy of the foregoing document is also being served via electronic mail on the 23rd day of May, 2022 upon the parties listed below.

/s/ Joseph M. Clark

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Summary: Memorandum Memorandum Contra OCC Motion for Additional Local Public Hearings electronically filed by Mr. John R. Ryan on behalf of Columbia Gas of Ohio