

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATIONS OF
COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO, INC.

LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2022, 6:00 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL
218 CLEVELAND AVENUE, S.W., CANTON, OHIO, 44702

Present:

Administrative Law Judges:
Jacky St. John, Attorney Examiner
Lawrence K. Friedeman, Commissioner

P R O C E E D I N G S

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2 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: Good evening,
3 everyone. Let's go on the record.

4 The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio has
5 scheduled for public hearing at this time and place
6 Case No. 21-637-GA-AIR, which relates to Columbia's
7 application for authority to amend its filed tariffs
8 to increase the rates and charges for gas services
9 and related matters; 21-638-GA-ALT, which relates to
10 Columbia's application for approval of an alternate
11 form of regulation; 21-639-GA-UNC, which relates to
12 Columbia's application for approval of a demand side
13 management program for its residential and
14 commercial customers; and 21-640-GA-AAM, which
15 relates to Columbia's application for approval to
16 change accounting methods.

17 My name is Jacky St. John. I'm an Attorney
18 Examiner assigned by the Commission to hear this
19 case. Presiding with me this evening is
20 Commissioner Friedeman.

21 Commissioner Friedeman, would you like to
22 say a few words?

23 COMMISSIONER FRIEDEMANN: Sure.

24 Good evening. First of all, thank you for
25 appearing tonight and sharing your thoughts with us.

1 As Jacky has indicated in her recitation, I'm sure
2 you can infer that these kinds of proceedings are
3 complex, many moving parts. The Commissioners take
4 to heart testimony offered by members of the public
5 in our deliberations relative to an eventual
6 outcome. So, what you are about to say tonight is
7 truly valuable and are much appreciated by the
8 Commissioners. Thank you.

9 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: There are also
10 staff members from the Commission assisting us with
11 the hearing tonight as well as individuals from the
12 Public Affairs Department. You have likely passed
13 them on your way in this evening. But they are the
14 individuals wearing a PUCO badge or shirt. They are
15 available if you have questions concerning the
16 Commission's process, if you need assistance in
17 accessing any of the documents submitted in this
18 case, or if you just have general questions about
19 the hearing tonight.

20 At this time, I would like to take
21 appearances on behalf of the parties.

22 First, Columbia Gas of Ohio.

23 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Your Honor. Joseph
24 M. Clark on behalf of Columbia Gas of Ohio.

25 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: Thank you.

1 And I see we also have Ohio Consumers'
2 Counsel with us tonight.

3 If you would like to state your appearance
4 at this time.

5 MS. O'BRIEN: Yes. Thank you, Your Honor.
6 On behalf of the Office of the Ohio Consumers'
7 Counsel, Bruce Weston, Ohio Consumers' Counsel,
8 Angela O'Brien, assistant counsel. Thank you.

9 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: Thank you.

10 And I don't see any other parties here with
11 us tonight.

12 The subject of today's hearing is a
13 combined application filed by Columbia Gas of Ohio
14 seeking to increase rates and charges and for
15 approval of an alternate rate plan. The application
16 was filed on June 30, 2021.

17 I would also note that the Commission's
18 staff filed a Report of Investigation on April 6th,
19 2022. The report is not -- is a recommendation of
20 the Commission's staff and does not necessarily
21 reflect what the Commission's final determination in
22 this case will be.

23 The purpose of this evening's public
24 hearing is to receive testimony regarding the
25 application from people in the local community who

1 are, who are affected by the proposed rates but who
2 are not parties to the case.

3 Tonight's public hearing will not be
4 treated as a question-and-answer session but rather
5 an opportunity to let the Commission know what you
6 think about Columbia's application.

7 Tonight's public hearing is only one aspect
8 of the process in this case. An evidentiary hearing
9 is scheduled to commence on June 15th, 2022, at the
10 Commission's offices in Columbus. The purpose of
11 the evidentiary hearing is for the parties and the
12 Commission's staff to provide testimony and other
13 evidence regarding the project.

14 Tonight's hearing is being transcribed by a
15 court reporter. If you plan to testify, please,
16 speak clearly so that the court reporter can
17 accurately reflect your comments on the record.
18 Also, if you have prepared a written statement, it
19 would be helpful if you provide a copy to the court
20 reporter for reference to ensure that the transcript
21 is accurate.

22 After I finish with this introduction,
23 we'll begin by inviting individuals on the sign-in
24 sheet to provide his or her testimony. Each person
25 who signed up to testify will be permitted to speak

1 once about the proposed rates.

2 Before you present your testimony, I will
3 ask you to take an oath or affirmation that what you
4 are about to say is the truth. I will also ask you
5 to state your name and address for the record. You
6 will then provide your thoughts on the proposed
7 rates.

8 The parties to the case and Commissioner
9 Friedeman and I will be permitted to ask you
10 questions about your statement. The testimony that
11 you provide tonight will be considered part of the
12 official record in this case, and it will be
13 reviewed by the Commission before its final decision
14 is made on the application.

15 The Commission appreciates your
16 participation in tonight's hearing. And at this
17 time, we will proceed with the testimony.

18 COMMISSIONER FRIEDEMAM: Would Mr. Andrews
19 take the podium, please.

20 MR. ANDREWS: Thank you.

21 MR. FRIEDEMAM: Mr. Andrews, please, raise
22 your right hand.

23 (Thomas E. Andrews was duly administred an
24 oath by Commissioner Friedeman.)

25 MR. ANDREWS: Yes.

1 COMMISSIONER FRIEDEMANN: Thank you. Could
2 you, please, spell your name for the record.

3 MR. ANDREWS: Thomas Andrews. T-H-O-M-A-S.
4 Andrews, A-N-D-R-E-W-S.

5 COMMISSIONER FRIEDEMANN: And could you
6 provide your address, please.

7 MR. ANDREWS: 7880 Lincole Place, Lisbon,
8 Ohio, 44432.

9 COMMISSIONER FRIEDEMANN: Thank you.
10 Please, proceed.

11 MR. ANDREWS: I'm speaking as the CEO of
12 the Community Action Agency of Columbiana County
13 based in Columbiana County. We're the county right
14 next to you. We're a rural Appalachian community.
15 Population's about a hundred and one thousand,
16 probably mostly very poor individuals.

17 I'm here to talk to you tonight about our
18 partnership with Columbia Gas, WarmChoice, and how
19 it has impacted our community. The Community Action
20 Agency of Columbiana County was incorporated into a
21 501(c)(3) on July 9th, 1965. We'll be 57 years old
22 this July. We're a human service -- social service
23 organization. We serve early education through Head
24 Start, Early Head Start. We are the public transit
25 for the community. We also have health, behavioral

1 health, and dental centers. And we also have
2 homeless services, housing services, and energy
3 conservation programs, which I'm going to highlight
4 tonight.

5 Our agency's annual budget is about 25
6 million dollars. We employ over 300 employees. We
7 started weatherization back in 1976 and have
8 weatherized, through the Department of Energy and
9 Health and Human Services' federal funding,
10 weatherized over 5,000 homes.

11 In 1987 we joined a group called COAD,
12 which is the Corporation for Appalachian
13 Development. They oversee 17 other Community Action
14 Agencies that do energy conservation within the
15 rural Appalachian region down through Athens and
16 around that area.

17 In '87, WarmChoice -- Columbia Gas [sic]
18 partnered with Columbia Gas to start WarmChoice. We
19 do an average of 80 units a year. Now, what
20 WarmChoice does is we have an energy assistance
21 program. And what happens is people that have high
22 energy bills and get in trouble with Columbia Gas or
23 the utilities and get locked out, they come to our
24 agency through qualification of low income. Then
25 they get qualified. We help them with payment plans

1 to get back on utilities. They're all high-energy
2 users; so, they get referred to our energy
3 conservation programs.

4 What happens is we go in and do an energy
5 audit. We look at the home for that individual or
6 that family: Where is energy escaping. We use
7 D.O.E. money, weatherization, to insulate the attic,
8 the windows, the basement.

9 If they are a Columbia Gas user, we go into
10 their basement, look at their furnace: Is their
11 furnace energy efficient. If it is, we shore it up.
12 If not, using Columbia Gas philanthropic money,
13 using WarmChoice, we replace that with a high-energy
14 furnace. And if their hot water tank happens to be
15 a utility of Columbia Gas, we replace that with a
16 high-energy water heater.

17 What happens, well, what else happens is
18 the electric company comes in, whatever it is, and
19 we look at their lighting. Is it LED. If not, we
20 replace it and give them high-energy lighting.
21 What's the refrigerator? Is that high-energy? If
22 not, we replace it using the electric utilities.

23 So, we have taken this, this building, this
24 home and energized it completely. So, now the
25 family can afford, those low-income, can afford

1 their utility bills and not get behind and not be
2 without energy when they need it, especially in the
3 winter and the summer months.

4 So, as I said, we do 80 units a year.
5 We've been doing this since 1987. That translates
6 into about 28 hundred units within our community.
7 Our average cost for just WarmChoice is about 48
8 hundred dollars. So, if you do the math with
9 today's..., that's over 13.4 million dollars that
10 Columbia Gas has invested in our community, in
11 Columbiana County.

12 Now, if you take into account..., it's
13 probably about 10 million, but that partnership has
14 been there for a long time. And we need them to
15 help create more energy-efficient homes in our
16 communities.

17 I just want to highlight one program. And
18 Adrian Andrews is the director for WarmChoice. And
19 we have a social service organization that is in our
20 community, East Liverpool. It's Community Resource
21 Center. It's an outfit that works -- has a soup
22 kitchen, has daycare 24 hours a day for people that
23 work second shift. They have a food pantry. They
24 have a number of other social services.

25 Its building is an 1888 school building.

1 So, no weatherization, no energy efficiency. So,
2 the executive director, Denise Taylor, called
3 Columbia Gas, and then AEP, and said, "I can't
4 afford my 25-hundred-dollars-a-month utility bill."
5 Same thing with AEP: "...my 23-hundred-dollars...."

6 But Adrian knew about COAD, knew about our
7 agency and our expertise. And we did the largest
8 weatherization, energy conservation program in our
9 history in 2018. They had nine furnaces.
10 WarmChoice replaced six of those. We added over
11 10,000 pounds of insulation in that building and
12 helped that program continue on today.

13 That was a huge partnership with WarmChoice
14 and AEP. They spent over a hundred thousand dollars
15 in resource in that one facility I'm talking about.

16 That's the kind of partnership that we have
17 with Columbia Gas through all these years. And we
18 believe they need to stay a relevant utility that
19 helps give back to their community. They've helped
20 our agency grow from that energy conservation.

21 So, I just want to make sure that as they
22 ask for an increase after eight years that part of
23 that will be philanthropic dollars they give to the
24 communities of Ohio. And I'm just one county, one
25 rural Appalachian county. And I hope we hear from

1 the other 48 weatherization programs that benefit
2 from WarmChoice.

3 It's been my honor to testify here today.
4 So, that's, that's all I have.

5 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: Thank you very
6 much for your testimony.

7 Are there any questions for this witness
8 from the parties or Commission Friedeman?

9 COMMISSIONER FRIEDEMANN: No.

10 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: Hearing none,
11 thank you very much.

12 MR. ANDREWS: Thank you.

13 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: And at this
14 time, I would like to briefly go off the record for
15 a few minutes while we wait and see if anyone else
16 in the local community is running just a little bit
17 late and would still like to testify.

18 So, at this time, we'll go off the record
19 for a few minutes.

20 (A recess was taken at 6:18 p.m.)

21 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: Let's go back
22 on the record. The time is now 6:31 p.m. and no
23 additional witnesses have arrived who would like to
24 give testimony.

25 That concludes the witnesses who signed up

1 to testify this evening. And I would like to thank
2 everyone for their participation.

3 We'd also like to thank City Council for
4 allowing us to use the facilities in order to
5 conduct this public hearing.

6 Commissioner Friedeman, do you have any
7 additional thoughts before we conclude?

8 COMMISSIONER FRIEDEMANN: Just want to say
9 "thank you" for everybody's participation tonight.
10 Appreciate it.

11 ATTORNEY EXAMINER ST. JOHN: Thank you.

12 The hearing is now concluded. And the
13 hearing transcript will be submitted on the record
14 for the Commission's consideration in this case.

15 Thank you all again. And have a nice
16 evening.

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18 (The record closed at 6:32 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF OHIO

COUNTY OF SUMMIT

I, Jocelyn S. Lombardi, a Registered Professional Reporter, do hereby certify that with my presence on June 1, 2022, the public hearing was to the best of my ability reduced to machine shorthand, afterwards transcribed under my direction by means of computer, and that to the best of my ability the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the hearing.

I further certify that this hearing was taken at the time and place in the foregoing caption specified.

I further certify that I am not a relative or employee of an attorney of any of the parties in the above-captioned action and that I am not, nor is the court reporting firm with which I am affiliated, under a contract as defined in Ohio Civil Rule 28(D).

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand at Copley, Ohio, on June 6, 2022.

/s/ Jocelyn S. Lombardi,
Registered Professional Reporter

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**Case No(s). 21-0637-GA-AIR, 21-0638-GA-ALT, 21-0639-GA-UNC, 21-0640-GA-
AAM**

Summary: Transcript of Local Public Hearing on June 1, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers of City Hall, Canton, Ohio electronically filed by Ms. Mary E. Fischer on behalf of Jocelyn S. Lombardi, RPR, Hill Court Reporters