

OHIO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

IN RE:

In the Matter of the Application
of Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc.

LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: Thursday, June 2, 2022

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BEFORE: Attorney Examiner Jacky St. John

LOCATION: Simpson Garden Park

1291 Conneaut Avenue

Banquet Room of Simpson Building

Bowling Green, OH 43402

REPORTED BY: Michael R. Rennillo, Notary Public

JOB NO.: 5246374

A P P E A R A N C E S

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO:

JOHN RYAN, ESQUIRE

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ON BEHALF OF OHIO CONSUMERS' COUNSEL:

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(614) 466-1291

ALSO PRESENT:

M. Beth Trombold, Commissioner

William Farnsel, Chief Executive Officer,

NeighborWorks Toledo

William Herald, Attendee

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E X H I B I T S

NO.	DESCRIPTION	ID/EVD
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(None attached.)

P R O C E E D I N G S

COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio has scheduled for a public hearing at this time and place, Case Nos. 21-637-GA-AIR, which relates to Columbia's application for authority to amend its filed tariffs to increase the rates and charges for gas services and related matters; 21-638-GA-ALT, which relates to Columbia's application for approval of an alternative form of regulation; 21-639-GA-UNC, which relates to Columbia's application for approval of a demand side management program for its residential and commercial customers; and 21-640-GA-AAM, which relates to Columbia's application for approval to change accounting methods.

My name is Jacky St. John, and I am the Attorney Examiner assigned by the Commission to hear this case. Presiding with me this evening is Commissioner Trombold. Commissioner Trombold, would you like to say a few words?

COMMISSION TROMBOLD: Welcome, everyone. Thank you for coming out today. We are always interested in hearing what consumers and constituents and stakeholders are saying or interested in a weight case or any kind of case that's pending before us. I'm one of five commissioners that will be

1 making the final decision as to what's going to happen
2 in this case at some point in the future.

3 Do we have --- or do you get to that
4 point of when we'll be making a decision?

5 Okay. She'll be talking more about
6 that. I just wanted to give you a sense of timing.
7 The next step, it takes several months to go through
8 the process.

9 So this is an important part of the
10 process. Everything that's said tonight will be part
11 of the record and like I said, the commissioners, we
12 typically like to come to public hearings to hear what
13 all of you have to say.

14 Currently we have two people registered
15 to testify this evening. If anyone else comes in or
16 would like to, we're happy to have them join us. Both
17 of them are named "William." I should have brought my
18 son whose name is William. Happen to be named -- it's
19 a great name.

20 So anyway, thank you again for coming,
21 and I'll turn back to Jacky.

22 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Thank you.
23 There are also staff members from the Commission
24 assisting with us with the hearing tonight, as well as
25 individuals from the Public Affairs Department. You

1 probably passed them in on your way in this evening.
2 And they are individuals wearing a PUCO badge or
3 shirt. They're also available if you have any
4 questions concerning the Commission's process, or if
5 you need assistance in accessing any of the documents
6 in this case.

7 At this time I'd like to take
8 appearances on behalf of the parties, starting with
9 Columbia Gas of Ohio.

10 MR. RYAN: Thank you, Your Honor. On
11 behalf of the applicant, Columbia Gas of Ohio, John
12 Ryan, 290 West Nationwide Boulevard, Columbus, Ohio,
13 43214.

14 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Thank you.
15 And do we have another party present
16 this evening?

17 MR. MICHAEL: Good evening, Your Honor.
18 On behalf of Columbia's residential utility consumers,
19 Bill Michael from the Office of the Ohio Consumers'
20 Counsel.

21 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Thank you.
22 And I'm not seeing anyone else. Go
23 ahead and proceed.

24 The subject of today's hearing is a
25 combined application filed by Columbia Gas of Ohio

1 seeking to increase rates and charges and for approval
2 of an alternative rate plan. The application was
3 filed on June 30, 2021, and the Commission's Staff
4 filed a Report of Investigation on April 6, 2022.

5 The report is a recommendation of the
6 Commission's Staff and does not necessarily reflect
7 what the Commission's final determination in this case
8 will be.

9 And the purpose of this evening's
10 public hearing, as Commission Trombold has already
11 mentioned, is to receive testimony regarding the
12 application from those in the local community who are
13 affected by the proposed rates and are not parties to
14 this case.

15 This is your opportunity to let the
16 Commission know what you think about Columbia's
17 application. Tonight's public hearing is only one
18 step of the process in this case.

19 An evidentiary hearing is scheduled to
20 commence on June 15, 2022, at the Commission's offices
21 in Columbus. And the purpose of that hearing is for
22 parties and the Commission's Staff to provide
23 testimony and other evidence regarding this project.

24 Tonight's hearing is being transcribed
25 by a court reporter. If you plan to testify, please

1 speak clearly so the court reporter can accurately
2 reflect your comments on the record.

3 And if you've prepared a written
4 statement, it would be helpful if you provided a copy
5 to the court reporter for reference to make sure that
6 the transcript is accurate.

7 And after I finish here shortly, we'll
8 begin by inviting individuals on the sign-in sheet to
9 provide testimony. Each person who signed up to
10 testify will be permitted to speak once about the
11 proposed rates. And before you present your
12 testimony, I will ask you to take an oath or
13 affirmation of what you are about say is the truth.

14 I will also ask you to state your name
15 and address for the record. And then if you provide
16 your thoughts on the the proposed rates.

17 The parties in the case as well as
18 Commission Trombold and I will be permitted to ask you
19 questions about your statement, if we have any. And
20 the testimony you provide tonight will be considered
21 part of the official record in this case and it will
22 be reviewed by the Commission before a final decision
23 is made on the application.

24 And with that, we will go ahead and
25 begin with testimony.

1 COMMISSIONER TROMBOLD: So like I said,
2 we have two people that are signed up to testify.
3 First one, William Farnsel. Okay. Do you want to
4 come forward, please?

5 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Please raise
6 your right hand.

7 WHEREUPON,

8 WILLIAM E. FARNSEL,
9 called as a witness, and having been first duly sworn
10 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
11 the truth, was examined and testified as follows:

12 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Please state
13 and spell your name for the record.

14 THE WITNESS: My name is William
15 Farnsel. That's W-I-L-L-I-A-M Farnsel, F-A-R-N-S-E-L.

16 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Thank you.
17 Please provide your address.

18 THE WITNESS: My address is 704 2nd
19 Street, Toledo, Ohio, 43605.

20 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: And please
21 proceed with your testimony.

22 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Your Honor.

23 Good evening. My name is William
24 Farnsel. I have served as chief executive officer of
25 Neighborhood Housing Services, Incorporated doing

1 business as NeighborWorks Toledo Region. From here
2 forward, I will refer to my organization as
3 "NeighborWorks Toledo."

4 My purpose for providing testimony this
5 evening is to provide some background information on
6 our involvement in Project WarmChoice. Columbia Gas
7 of Ohio has provided the funding for Project
8 WarmChoice since 1986. That works out to 36 years,
9 and it is still running.

10 NeighborWorks Toledo has served as one
11 of the original program providers since the beginning.
12 Columbia's support for Project WarmChoice is
13 voluntary, but this investment has tremendous impact
14 on the lives of the program participants and has been
15 a sustaining support for our organization as well.

16 Our area of operation includes the
17 Columbia Gas service territory within Lucas County,
18 Ohio. The method we use to carry out program
19 activities is direct service delivery. In other
20 words, NeighborWorks employees perform customer
21 intake, income eligibility determination, consumer
22 education, health and safety inspections, initial
23 energy audit, construction, and post construction
24 energy audit. At each step, the progress of a
25 particular case through our system is documented in

1 the IMS.

2 The acronym "IMS" stands for
3 "Information Management System." We use IMS to gather
4 data about each job, share that information with
5 Columbia Gas and submit invoices for work completed.
6 Columbia Gas sponsored the development of the IMS
7 system in 2014 so that all the non-profit program
8 providers in Ohio could achieve a level of uniformity
9 with client data without incurring the expense of
10 developing and launching individual systems.

11 The importance of the Columbia Gas role
12 in sponsoring the development of IMS cannot be
13 overstated. IMS has proven to be a gamechanger in the
14 overall delivery of Project WarmChoice services.

15 The implementation of IMS achieved the
16 hoped-for goal of uniformity across all Project
17 WarmChoice providers and gained efficiencies in data
18 retrieval and analysis.

19 It also enabled our inspectors and
20 technicians to input measurements while working at the
21 individual jobsites while the information was still
22 very fresh. This capability created real time job
23 progress updates, right from the client's home.

24 The first job NeighborWorks Toledo
25 entered into the IMS system was 2016. Since January

1 of 2016, NeighborWorks Toledo has completed 1,267 jobs
2 for a total WarmChoice investment of approximately
3 \$7.67 million.

4 From our perspective, Project
5 WarmChoice and other privately funded energy
6 conservation programs are as important today as at
7 anytime in the past and more critically needed in our
8 current environment of rising energy costs. Demand
9 side management helps all consumers.

10 Both private and publicly energy
11 conservation initiatives are focused on lower income
12 households. The idea is to support demand side
13 management for this consumer group to enhance their
14 housing stability. The less this consumer spends on
15 private utility expenses, the more financial resources
16 are available for all living -- for all other living
17 needs. In the process, less energy is consumed.

18 Since the goal of Project WarmChoice is
19 reducing energy consumption, what are the results? We
20 measure consumption in two ways. First, we predict
21 the amount of energy savings by setting goals for air
22 leakage reduction on each job. Second, we collect
23 natural gas consumption through billing data before
24 the work is commenced, and then follow the use for 12
25 months post completion. What we have documented

1 across our unit completions is an average of a 30
2 percent reduction of natural gas use.

3 How that reduction translates into
4 dollar savings varies with the current pricing. The
5 mere fact that less natural gas is consumed is good
6 for all consumers.

7 If we accept that a 30 percent
8 reduction results in a \$500 annual savings per program
9 participant and during the year, an average of 231
10 consumers receive weatherization in Lucas County, the
11 annual natural gas bill savings amounts to \$115,500.
12 This savings compounds each year as another 231
13 consumers are weatherized.

14 If we begin calculations in 2016
15 through to the present, the accumulated savings in
16 cost to the lower income consumer would be
17 approximately \$3 million just in Lucas County alone.

18 Imagine that 40 percent of the cost of
19 Project WarmChoice since 2016 has been realized as
20 savings back to the consumer in Lucas County. Imagine
21 that same percentage of savings back to the consumer
22 across the entire Columbia Gas service territory in
23 Ohio. This impact is long lasting and monumental.

24 The cost of Project WarmChoice is not
25 inexpensive. But consider the economic impact of this

1 investment in the lives of the program participants
2 and it supports housing stability.

3 On the topic of lives, there is one
4 other aspect I would like to point out. The
5 WarmChoice pram literally saves lives.

6 In our process, the first action
7 following eligibility determination is a health and
8 safety inspection. All natural gas appliances in a
9 home are evaluated for operational efficiency and
10 safety. In most instances, the occupants have no idea
11 that there is a problem until NeighborWorks brings it
12 to their attention.

13 In our experience, seven of ten
14 furnaces are evaluated for -- seven of ten furnaces
15 that are evaluated for safety need to be replaced
16 because of carbon monoxide. That's seven households
17 that are experiencing the unhealthy effects of carbon
18 monoxide that otherwise would not be aware.

19 Project WarmChoice provides the
20 resources needed to replace the unsafe furnace. When
21 we say that Project WarmChoice saves lives, it sounds
22 very dramatic, but it is true.

23 On behalf of the many lower income
24 consumers that have been assisted, we wish to thank
25 Columbia Gas for supporting this service, and I thank

1 you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

2 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Thank you for
3 that testimony.

4 Are there any questions for this
5 witness from the parties?

6 All right. Thank you.

7 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.

8 COMMISSIONER TROMBOLD: Next witness,
9 William Harold, if you want to come forward, please.
10 Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Good evening.
12 Please raise your right hand.

13 WHEREUPON,

14 WILLIAM HAROLD,
15 called as a witness, and having been first duly sworn
16 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
17 the truth, was examined and testified as follows:

18 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Please state
19 and spell your name for the record.

20 THE WITNESS: William, W-I-L-L-I-A-M,
21 Harold, H-E-R-A-L-D. Address, 1030 Conneaut Avenue.
22 That's C-O-N-N. Don't need that.

23 THE REPORTER: One more time slower.
24 Your address.

25 THE WITNESS: Oh, yeah.

1 1030 Conneaut. That's C-O-N-N-E-A-U-T,
2 Avenue, Bowling Green, Ohio, 43402.

3 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

4 THE WITNESS: I signed up just in case
5 I wanted to say something. I don't really have
6 anything to say, so sorry.

7 But I thought, you know, maybe there
8 would be something. So ...

9 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Well, thank you
10 for attending --

11 THE WITNESS: Thank you for your time.

12 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: -- and
13 considering any comments for this evening. We do
14 appreciate your attending.

15 And with that, I see the time is 6:15.
16 So at this time I would like to go ahead and go off
17 the record for a few more minutes, maybe until around
18 6:30 so that we can see if there are any other
19 individuals who are still planning on attending this
20 evening, maybe just got home -- for a little bit. So
21 we'll go ahead and go off the record at this time.

22 THE REPORTER: Going off the record
23 6:15 p.m.

24 (Off the record.)

25 COMMISSIONER ST. JOHN: Thank you,

1 everyone, for waiting a few moments to see if anyone
2 else would show up to give testimony. The time is now
3 6:30 and nobody else has arrived who would like to
4 give any statements, so at this time, that concludes
5 the witnesses who signed up to testify.

6 I want to thank everyone for their
7 participation this evening. We'd also like to thank
8 the Bowling Green Parks for allowing us to use their
9 facilities in order to conduct this public hearing.
10 The hearing is now concluded, and the hearing
11 transcript will be submitted on the record for the
12 Commission's consideration in this case.

13 Thank you all again and have a nice
14 evening.

15 THE REPORTER: Going off the record at
16 6:31 p.m.

17 (Whereupon, at 6:31 p.m., the
18 proceeding was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSITION OFFICER

I, MICHAEL R. RENNILLO, the officer before whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that the proceedings were recorded by me and thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

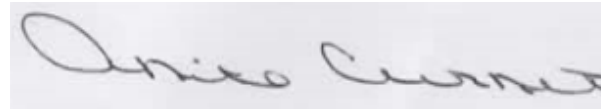


MICHAEL R. RENNILLO

Notary Public in and for the
State of Ohio

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I, ANITA CURNETT, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from the digital audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.



ANITA CURNETT

1	5246374 1:16	alt 4:8	avenue 1:12 15:21 16:2
1,267 12:1	6	alternative 4:9 7:2	average 13:1,9
1030 15:21 16:1	6 7:4	amend 4:6	aware 14:18
115,500 13:11	614 2:8,16	amount 12:21	b
12 12:24	637 4:5	amounts 13:11	b 3:3
1291 1:12	65 2:13	analysis 11:18	back 5:21 13:20 13:21
15 7:20	6:00 1:9	anita 19:2,15	background 10:5
1986 10:8	6:15 16:15,23	annual 13:8,11	badge 6:2
2	6:30 16:18 17:3	anytime 12:7	banquet 1:13
2 1:8	6:31 17:16,17	anyway 5:20	beginning 10:11
2014 11:7	7	appearances 6:8	behalf 2:2,10 6:8 6:11,18 14:23
2016 11:25 12:1 13:14,19	7.67 12:3	appliances 14:8	best 18:10 19:6
2021 7:3	704 9:18	applicant 2:2 6:11	beth 2:19
2022 1:8 7:4,20	7th 2:13	application 1:4 4:5,9,11,14 6:25 7:2,12,17 8:23	bill 2:11 6:19 13:11
21 4:4	a	appreciate 16:14	billing 12:23
21-638 4:8	aam 4:13	approval 4:9,11 4:14 7:1	bit 16:20
21-639 4:10	ability 18:10 19:7	approximately 12:2 13:17	boulevard 2:5 6:12
21-640 4:13	accept 13:7	april 7:4	bowling 1:14 16:2 17:8
21018 18:17	accessing 6:5	area 10:16	brings 14:11
231 13:9,12	accounting 4:14	arrived 17:3	brought 5:17
26295 19:14	accumulated 13:15	aspect 14:4	building 1:13
285-2220 2:8	accurate 8:6 18:9 19:5	assigned 4:16	business 10:1
290 2:5 6:12	accurately 8:1	assistance 6:5	c
2nd 9:18	achieve 11:8	assisted 14:24	c 2:1 4:1 15:22 16:1
3	achieved 11:15	assisting 5:24	calculations 13:14
3 13:17	acronym 11:2	attached 3:6	called 9:9 15:15
30 7:3 13:1,7	action 14:6 18:12 18:16 19:8,12	attendant 2:22	capability 11:22
36 10:8	activities 10:19	attending 16:10 16:14,19	carbon 14:16,17
4	address 8:15 9:17 9:18 15:21,24	attention 14:12	carry 10:18
40 13:18	affairs 5:25	attorney 1:10 4:16 18:14 19:10	case 4:4,17,24,24 5:2 6:6 7:7,14,18 8:17,21 10:25 16:4 17:12
43214 2:6 6:13	affirmation 8:13	audio 18:8 19:3	
43215 2:14	ahead 6:23 8:24 16:16,21	audit 10:23,24	
43402 1:14 16:2	air 4:5 12:21	authority 4:6	
43605 9:19	allowing 17:8	available 6:3 12:16	
466-1291 2:16			
5			
500 13:8			

certificate 18:1 19:1 certify 18:4 19:2 change 4:14 charges 4:7 7:1 chief 2:20 9:24 clearly 8:1 client 11:9 client's 11:23 collect 12:22 columbia 1:5 2:2 6:9,11,25 10:6,17 11:5,6,11 13:22 14:25 columbia's 4:5,8 4:10,13 6:18 7:16 10:12 columbus 2:6,14 6:12 7:21 combined 6:25 come 5:12 9:4 15:9 comes 5:15 coming 4:21 5:20 commence 7:20 commenced 12:24 comments 8:2 16:13 commercial 4:12 commission 1:1 4:3,16,20 5:23 7:10,16 8:18,22 commission's 6:4 7:3,6,7,20,22 17:12 commissioner 2:19 4:2,18,18 5:22 6:14,21 9:1,5 9:12,16,20 15:2,8 15:11,18 16:9,12 16:25	commissioners 4:25 5:11 community 7:12 completed 11:5 12:1 completion 12:25 completions 13:1 compounds 13:12 concerning 6:4 concluded 17:10 17:18 concludes 17:4 conduct 17:9 conneaut 1:12 15:21 16:1 conservation 12:6 12:11 consider 13:25 consideration 17:12 considered 8:20 considering 16:13 constituents 4:23 construction 10:23,23 consumed 12:17 13:5 consumer 10:21 12:13,14 13:16,20 13:21 consumers 2:10 2:12 4:22 6:18,19 12:9 13:6,10,13 14:24 consumption 12:19,20,23 copy 8:4 corporate 2:4 cost 13:16,18,24 costs 12:8	counsel 2:10,12 6:20 18:11,14 19:7,10 county 10:17 13:10,17,20 court 7:25 8:1,5 created 11:22 critically 12:7 curnett 19:2,15 current 12:8 13:4 currently 5:14 customer 10:20 customers 4:12 d d 3:1 4:1 15:21 data 11:4,9,17 12:23 date 1:8 decision 5:1,4 8:22 delivery 10:19 11:14 demand 4:11 12:8 12:12 department 5:25 deposition 18:1 description 3:4 determination 7:7 10:21 14:7 developing 11:10 development 11:6 11:12 digital 18:8 19:3 direct 10:19 documented 10:25 12:25 documents 6:5 doing 9:25 dollar 13:4 dramatic 14:22 duly 9:9 15:15 18:5	e e 2:1,1 3:1,3 4:1,1 9:8,15 15:21 16:1 east 2:13 economic 13:25 education 10:22 effects 14:17 efficiencies 11:17 efficiency 14:9 eligibility 10:21 14:7 employed 18:11 18:14 19:8,11 employee 18:13 19:10 employees 10:20 enabled 11:19 energy 10:23,24 12:5,8,10,17,19,21 enhance 12:13 entered 11:25 entire 13:22 environment 12:8 es 18:4 esquire 2:3,11 evaluated 14:9,14 14:15 evd 3:4 evening 4:17 5:15 6:1,16,17 9:23 10:5 15:11 16:13 16:20 17:7,14 evening's 7:9 evidence 7:23 evidentiary 7:19 examined 9:11 15:17 examiner 1:10 4:16 executive 2:20 9:24
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expense 11:9 expenses 12:15 experience 14:13 experiencing 14:17	ga 4:5,8,10,13 gained 11:17 gamechanger 11:13 garden 1:11 gas 1:5 2:2 4:7 6:9 6:11,25 10:6,17 11:5,6,11 12:23 13:2,5,11,22 14:8 14:25 gather 11:3 give 5:6 17:2,4 go 5:7 6:22 8:24 16:16,16,21,21 goal 11:16 12:18 goals 12:21 going 5:1 16:22 17:15 good 6:17 9:23 13:5 15:11 great 5:19 green 1:14 16:2 17:8 group 12:13	hereto 18:15 19:11 home 11:23 14:9 16:20 honor 6:10,17 9:22 hoped 11:16 households 12:12 14:16 housing 9:25 12:14 14:2	inspectors 11:19 instances 14:10 intake 10:21 interested 4:22,23 18:15 19:12 investigation 7:4 investment 10:13 12:2 14:1 inviting 8:8 invoices 11:5 involvement 10:6
f		i	j
f 9:15 facilities 17:9 fact 13:5 farnsel 2:20 9:3,8 9:15,15,24 filed 4:6 6:25 7:3,4 final 5:1 7:7 8:22 financial 12:15 financially 18:15 19:11 finish 8:7 first 9:3,9 11:24 12:20 14:6 15:15 five 4:25 floor 2:13 focused 12:11 follow 12:24 following 14:7 follows 9:11 15:17 foregoing 18:3,4 19:4 form 4:9 forward 9:4 10:2 15:9 fresh 11:22 funded 12:5 funding 10:7 furnace 14:20 furnaces 14:14,14 further 18:13 19:9 future 5:2	h h 3:3 15:21 hand 9:6 15:12 happen 5:1,18 happy 5:16 harold 15:9,14,21 health 10:22 14:7 hear 4:16 5:12 hearing 1:7 4:4,22 5:24 6:24 7:10,17 7:19,21,24 17:9,10 17:10 hearings 5:12 helpful 8:4 helps 12:9 herald 2:22	idea 12:12 14:10 imagine 13:18,20 impact 10:13 13:23,25 implementation 11:15 importance 11:11 important 5:9 12:6 ims 11:1,2,3,6,12 11:13,15,25 includes 10:16 income 10:21 12:11 13:16 14:23 incorporated 9:25 increase 4:6 7:1 incurring 11:9 individual 11:10 11:21 individuals 5:25 6:2 8:8 16:19 inexpensive 13:25 information 10:5 11:3,4,21 initial 10:22 initiatives 12:11 input 11:20 inspection 14:8 inspections 10:22	jacky 1:10 4:15 5:21 january 11:25 job 1:16 11:4,22 11:24 12:22 jobs 12:1 jobsites 11:21 john 1:10 2:3 4:2 4:15 5:22 6:11,14 6:21 9:5,12,16,20 15:2,11,18 16:9,12 16:25 johnryan 2:7 join 5:16 june 1:8 7:3,20
g			k
g 4:1			kind 4:24 know 7:16 16:7 knowledge 18:10 19:6
			l
			l 9:15,15,15 15:20 15:20,21 lasting 13:23 launching 11:10 leakage 12:22 level 11:8

literally 14:5 little 16:20 lives 10:14 14:1,3 14:5,21 living 12:16,16 local 1:7 7:12 location 1:11 long 13:23 lower 12:11 13:16 14:23 lucas 10:17 13:10 13:17,20	n n 2:1 3:1 4:1 9:15 15:22,22 16:1,1 name 4:15 5:18,19 8:14 9:13,14,23 15:19 named 5:17,18 nationwide 2:5 6:12 natural 12:23 13:2 13:5,11 14:8 necessarily 7:6 need 6:5 14:15 15:22 needed 12:7 14:20 needs 12:17 neighborhood 9:25 neighborworks 2:21 10:1,3,10,20 11:24 12:1 14:11 neither 18:11 19:7 nice 17:13 nisource 2:4 nisource.com 2:7 non 11:7 nos 4:4 notary 1:15 18:19	ohio 1:1,5 2:2,10 2:12 4:3 6:9,11,12 6:19,25 9:19 10:7 10:18 11:8 13:23 16:2 18:20 okay 5:5 9:3 once 8:10 operation 10:16 operational 14:9 opportunity 7:15 15:1 order 17:9 organization 10:2 10:15 original 10:11 outcome 18:16 19:12 overall 11:14 overstated 11:13	perform 10:20 permitted 8:10,18 person 8:9 perspective 12:4 place 4:4 plan 7:2,25 planning 16:19 please 7:25 9:4,5 9:12,17,20 15:9,12 15:18 point 5:2,4 14:4 post 10:23 12:25 pram 14:5 predict 12:20 prepared 8:3 19:3 present 2:18 6:15 8:11 13:15 presiding 4:17 pricing 13:4 prior 18:5 private 12:10,15 privately 12:5 probably 6:1 problem 14:11 proceed 6:23 9:21 proceeding 17:18 19:4 proceedings 18:3 18:5,6,9 19:6 process 5:8,10 6:4 7:18 12:17 14:6 profit 11:7 program 4:12 10:11,14,18 11:7 13:8 14:1 programs 12:6 progress 10:24 11:23 project 7:23 10:6 10:7,12 11:14,16 12:4,18 13:19,24
m			
m 2:19 9:15 15:20 making 5:1,4 management 4:11 11:3 12:9,13 matter 1:4 matters 4:8 measure 12:20 measurements 11:20 members 5:23 mentioned 7:11 mere 13:5 method 10:18 methods 4:14 michael 1:15 6:17 6:19 18:2,18 micheal 2:11 million 12:3 13:17 minutes 16:17 moments 17:1 monoxide 14:16 14:18 months 5:7 12:25 monumental 13:23	o o 4:1 15:22 16:1 oath 8:12 occ.ohio.gov 2:15 occupants 14:10 office 2:12 6:19 officer 2:20 9:24 18:1,2 offices 7:20 official 8:21 oh 1:14 2:6,14 15:25	p p 2:1,1 4:1 p.m. 1:9 16:23 17:16,17 park 1:11 parks 17:8 part 5:9,10 8:21 participant 13:9 participants 10:14 14:1 participation 17:7 particular 10:25 parties 6:8 7:13,22 8:17 15:5 18:12 18:14 19:8,11 party 6:15 passed 6:1 pending 4:24 people 5:14 9:2 percent 13:2,7,18 percentage 13:21	

14:19,21 proposed 7:13 8:11,16 proven 11:13 provide 7:22 8:9 8:15,20 9:17 10:5 15:1 provided 8:4 10:7 providers 10:11 11:8,17 provides 14:19 providing 10:4 public 1:1,7,15 4:2 4:4 5:12,25 7:10 7:17 17:9 18:19 publicly 12:10 pucio 6:2 purpose 7:9,21 10:4	19:5 recorded 18:6 recording 18:8 19:4 reduced 18:7 reducing 12:19 reduction 12:22 13:2,3,8 refer 10:2 reference 8:5 reflect 7:6 8:2 regarding 7:11,23 region 10:1 registered 5:14 regulation 4:10 related 4:7 18:11 19:7 relates 4:5,8,10,13 relative 18:13 19:10 rennillo 1:15 18:2 18:18 replace 14:20 replaced 14:15 report 7:4,5 reported 1:15 reporter 7:25 8:1 8:5 15:23 16:3,22 17:15 residential 4:12 6:18 resources 12:15 14:20 results 12:19 13:8 retrieval 11:18 reviewed 8:22 right 9:6 11:23 15:6,12 rising 12:8 role 11:11	room 1:13 running 10:9 ryan 2:3 6:10,12 s s 2:1 3:3 4:1 9:15 safety 10:22 14:8 14:10,15 saves 14:5,21 savings 12:21 13:4 13:8,11,12,15,20 13:21 saying 4:23 scheduled 4:3 7:19 second 12:22 see 16:15,18 17:1 seeing 6:22 seeking 7:1 sense 5:6 served 9:24 10:10 service 10:17,19 13:22 14:25 services 2:4 4:7 9:25 11:14 setting 12:21 seven 14:13,14,16 share 11:4 she'll 5:5 sheet 8:8 shirt 6:3 shortly 8:7 show 17:2 side 4:11 12:9,12 sign 8:8 signature 18:17 19:14 signed 8:9 9:2 16:4 17:5 simpson 1:11,13 skills 18:10 19:6 slower 15:23	son 5:18 sorry 16:6 sounds 14:21 speak 8:1,10 spell 9:13 15:19 spends 12:14 sponsored 11:6 sponsoring 11:12 st 1:10 4:2,15 5:22 6:14,21 9:5,12,16 9:20 15:2,11,18 16:9,12,25 stability 12:14 14:2 staff 5:23 7:3,6,22 stakeholders 4:23 stands 11:2 starting 6:8 state 2:13 8:14 9:12 15:18 18:20 statement 8:4,19 statements 17:4 step 5:7 7:18 10:24 street 2:13 9:19 subject 6:24 submit 11:5 submitted 17:11 support 10:12,15 12:12 supporting 14:25 supports 14:2 sure 8:5 sustaining 10:15 sworn 9:9 15:15 18:5 system 10:25 11:3 11:7,25 systems 11:10
q			
qualified 18:7 questions 6:4 8:19 15:4			
r			
r 1:15 2:1 4:1 9:15 15:21 18:2,18 raise 9:5 15:12 rate 7:2 rates 4:7 7:1,13 8:11,16 real 11:22 realized 13:19 really 16:5 receive 7:11 13:10 recommendation 7:5 record 5:11 8:2,15 8:21 9:13 15:19 16:17,21,22,24 17:11,15 18:9			

t	tonight's 7:17,24 topic 14:3 total 12:2 transcribed 7:24 transcriber 19:1 transcript 8:6 17:11 19:3,5 transcriptionist 18:8 translates 13:3 tremendous 10:13 trombold 2:19 4:18,18,20 7:10 8:18 9:1 15:8 true 14:22 18:9 19:5 truth 8:13 9:10,10 9:11 15:16,16,17 turn 5:21 two 5:14 9:2 12:20 typewriting 18:7 typically 5:12	w	years 10:8
t 3:3 16:1 take 6:7 8:12 taken 18:3,12 19:9 takes 5:7 talking 5:5 tariffs 4:6 technicians 11:20 tell 9:10 15:16 ten 14:13,14 territory 10:17 13:22 testified 9:11 15:17 testify 5:15 7:25 8:10 9:2 17:5 testifying 18:5 testimony 7:11,23 8:9,12,20,25 9:21 10:4 15:1,3 17:2 thank 4:21 5:20,22 6:10,14,21 9:16,22 14:24,25 15:2,6,7 15:10 16:3,9,11,25 17:6,7,13 think 7:16 thought 16:7 thoughts 8:16 thursday 1:8 time 1:9 4:4 6:7 11:22 15:23 16:11 16:15,16,21 17:2,4 timing 5:6 today 4:21 12:6 today's 6:24 toledo 2:21 9:19 10:1,3,10 11:24 12:1 tonight 5:10,24 8:20	u	w 9:15 15:20 waiting 17:1 want 9:3 15:9 17:6 wanted 5:6 16:5 warmchoice 10:6 10:8,12 11:14,17 12:2,5,18 13:19,24 14:5,19,21 way 6:1 ways 12:20 wearing 6:2 weatherization 13:10 weatherized 13:13 weight 4:24 welcome 4:20 west 2:5 6:12 william 2:20,22 5:17,18 9:3,8,14 9:23 15:9,14,20 william.michael 2:15 wish 14:24 witness 9:9,14,18 9:22 15:5,7,8,15 15:20,25 16:4,11 18:4 witnesses 17:5 words 4:19 10:20 work 11:5 12:24 working 11:20 works 10:8 written 8:3	
	u 16:1 unc 4:10 unhealthy 14:17 uniformity 11:8 11:16 unit 13:1 unsafe 14:20 updates 11:23 use 10:18 11:3 12:24 13:2 17:8 utilities 1:1 4:3 utility 6:18 12:15	x	
	v	x 3:1,3	
	varies 13:4 voluntary 10:13	y	
		yeah 15:25 year 13:9,12	

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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Veritext Legal Solutions represents that the foregoing transcript is a true, correct and complete transcript of the colloquies, questions and answers as submitted by the court reporter. Veritext Legal Solutions further represents that the attached exhibits, if any, are true, correct and complete documents as submitted by the court reporter and/or attorneys in relation to this deposition and that the documents were processed in accordance with our litigation support and production standards.

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Summary: Transcript of Local Public Hearing on June 2, 2022, 6:00 p.m. at
Simpson Garden Park, Bowling Green electronically filed by Ms. Mary E. Fischer
on behalf of Anita Curnett, Veritext Legal Solutions