

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

CASE NUMBER 22-4100-TF

TARIFF FILING OF WASHINGTON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE,
INC. FOR APPROVAL OF A 14.19 PERCENT RATE INCREASE
EFFECTIVE ON A SERVICE-RENDERED BASIS COMMENCING
NOVEMBER 1, 2022

January 4, 2023
7 p.m.

Public Hearing held before the Vermont Public
Utility Commission via Go to Meeting on January 4, 2023,
beginning at 7 p.m.

P R E S E N T

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Anthony T. Roisman, Chairman
Riley Allen

STAFF: Andrea Poppiti
Kyle Landis-Marinello
Thomas Knauer

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PARTICIPANTS

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Barry Bernstein	10

1 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Good evening and
2 thank you for being here. This is a Vermont Public
3 Utility Commission public hearing in Case Number
4 22-4100-TF concerning the tariff filing of Washington
5 Electric Cooperative for approval of a 14.19 percent
6 rate increase effective November 1, 2022. My name is
7 Anthony Roisman. I am the Chair of the Vermont
8 Public Utility Commission. With me today are
9 Commissioner Riley Allen; the Commission staff,
10 Andrea Poppiti, Tom Knauer, and Kyle
11 Landis-Marinello. Commissioner Margaret Cheney is
12 unable to be here tonight. There are representatives
13 of WEC present as well as representatives from the
14 Vermont Department of Public Service here tonight.
15 The Department is an automatic party in Commission
16 cases and is charged with representing the public
17 interest.

18 The purpose of tonight's hearing is to
19 provide an opportunity to hear input from the public
20 regarding WEC's proposed rate increase. The comments
21 received in this hearing will become part of the
22 public record in this case. They will not be
23 evidence. That is we will not rely on these comments
24 in reaching our final conclusion on WEC's
25 application, but the comments will provide us with

1 insights into concerns that members of the public who
2 are customers of WEC have and will allow us to focus
3 our attention on those issues and make sure that we
4 get the information we need from WEC and the
5 Department and any other parties in the proceeding to
6 decide the questions that you believe we need to
7 address.

8 We will not be answering questions
9 tonight, but we will be listening carefully. This
10 entire proceeding is being recorded and will be
11 available on the Commission's electronic data base
12 called ePUC. I'll provide some more information on
13 accessing that later in these comments.

14 You can also provide written comments at
15 any time during the course of the proceeding. So if
16 you don't say something tonight publicly, you can
17 still send us comments and again file them in ePUC,
18 our electronic data base. Those comments will
19 equally be part of the record even though they will
20 not be evidence that we will rely upon in reaching a
21 decision.

22 You can subscribe to this case in ePUC
23 which means that you can sign up with virtually no
24 information provided by you to get notice any time
25 something is filed in this case and you can then see

1 how the case is progressing. So should there be a
2 question you have or a point you wish to make that
3 you haven't made before and a filing is made in the
4 case that raises a concern or a comment that you wish
5 to make, you can make your comment after you've seen
6 what was filed in the case, and the filings take
7 place periodically throughout the case and as a
8 subscriber you will get notice that something has
9 been filed. More information about how to
10 participate in Commission proceedings is available in
11 the public participation section of the Commission's
12 web site which is available through the state or
13 directly through the internet.

14 Tonight's hearing will be transcribed by
15 a court reporter. This transcript, along with all
16 other comments received by the Commission, will be
17 part of the public file. The transcript will be
18 available in ePUC in a few days which is accessible
19 directly online at the following location
20 <https://epuc.vermont.gov> or through links on the
21 Commission's web site.

22 If a party or member of the public
23 intends to record a public hearing via video or
24 audio, please indicate this when you provide your
25 name for the court reporter. Although public

1 comments do not become part of the formal evidence as
2 I mentioned, they are helpful in having the
3 Commission understand better what you, who are
4 basically the customers of WEC, feel about this
5 proposal.

6 Because we are using remote procedures
7 and not in-person public hearing proceedings there
8 are some special rules which I will now go through.
9 They go on for a little bit. Please do not be
10 reluctant to speak up while I'm reading to you if you
11 are concerned or do not understand something that I
12 have said. Attendees may raise concerns about these
13 procedures either now or at any point during the
14 public hearing if the platform is not performing as
15 expected or if you are having difficulties. We
16 expect the public hearing will proceed more slowly
17 than usual and you may need to stop along the way to
18 resolve technical issues. We also recognize that
19 because we are all in remote locations such as our
20 homes there may be unexpected interruptions at those
21 locations. Your children and pets are welcome.

22 Anyone who anticipates speaking during
23 the public hearing should keep their cameras on until
24 they provide their public comments. It's very
25 helpful for us to see you particularly when you are

1 speaking. If you plan to just listen throughout the
2 public hearing, it is helpful if you turn your camera
3 off. Even with your camera turned off you will be
4 able to see and hear everyone who has their camera
5 turned on. Our preference is that people who are not
6 actively participating in the proceeding leave their
7 cameras off so that the pictures of active
8 participants are larger. Similarly people who are
9 not actively participating in the hearing at any
10 given moment should mute their speakers in order to
11 eliminate background noises that may make it
12 difficult for us to hear or understand the person who
13 is speaking.

14 The Commission staff will not mute
15 anyone's microphone whether a party or a member of
16 the public. If you would like to speak, please enter
17 your name into the chat. If you are using this
18 platform for the first time, you will find that there
19 is an opportunity for you to chat through a button
20 that is located at the upper right corner of your
21 screen. It looks like a little circle with a little
22 tail on it like the letter Q and you click on that
23 and then type in your name. We will check chat to
24 identify the names of the people who want to speak
25 and will call on you in the order in which your name

1 appears in the chat. So if you want to speak, please
2 use the chat function.

3 If you are not able to participate in
4 this proceeding through the Go To Meeting video and
5 are calling in only on the telephone, I see for
6 instance we have a caller here identified only as
7 caller number two, then you need -- and caller number
8 one, you need to speak up and say I would like to
9 speak. On our screens those of you who are calling
10 in by phone show up with your telephone green which
11 means that you are not muted. One way to let us know
12 if you want to speak is to turn off your phone until
13 you want to speak and then when you want to speak
14 turn it back on. That doesn't turn off the phone,
15 just mutes the phone, and I think the little green
16 phone will appear in red if I understand how the
17 system works. In any event if you're on the phone
18 and nothing else seems to be working, just speak up
19 and say hey I want to speak. Tell us your name and
20 then we'll give you time to speak.

21 Each time you begin talking please
22 identify yourself by name for the court reporter and
23 spell your name the first time. If your internet
24 connection cuts out or if you lose your telephone
25 connection, please try to rejoin Go To Meeting or

1 call into the public hearing using the Go To Meeting
2 telephone number that was provided in the public
3 hearing notice. If at any point any of you become
4 aware of another participant, party, or member of the
5 public having trouble accessing the video or audio
6 feeds of this remote public hearing, please let us
7 know immediately. We'll pause the public hearing to
8 try to resolve the issue. Does anyone have any
9 questions about these procedures?

10 All right. Hearing none we will then
11 begin the substantive portion of the public hearing.
12 I do not see any names in the chat. Is there anybody
13 who would like to make a comment from the public? I
14 trust that all of you if you had questions about what
15 this is that WEC is proposing to do and why it's
16 proposing to do it, what the procedures will be in
17 similar matters, that you had a chance to raise those
18 questions and that the representatives of WEC who are
19 sitting around what appears to be a conference table
20 I assume at their offices would be able to answer
21 your questions.

22 Similarly with regard to the role of the
23 Department of Public Service, as Mr. Guzman is one of
24 the attorneys for the Department and Ms. Flint who
25 runs many things for the Department but in this

1 context the public outreach portion of the
2 Department's activities, are also available to answer
3 questions either now or later if you want to contact
4 them directly.

5 MR. BERNSTEIN: Mr. Chairman, this is
6 Barry Bernstein calling -- speaking.

7 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Yes, Mr. Bernstein.
8 Please proceed. Thank you.

9 MR. BERNSTEIN: Okay. So I'm a member
10 of the Co-op 51 years and a former board president
11 and I have been sitting in the -- in the last several
12 months on the finance committee of the Co-op in
13 regards to this rate filing. So I just want to
14 underline the Co-op has had a history of always
15 trying to limit the rate increases to what -- what
16 they actually knew they needed as opposed to padding
17 it, and in this particular time period and this last
18 year the reason the Co-op has been filing this rate
19 increase is because of two major areas, and I think
20 it's important to underline that as someone whose had
21 a history with the Co-op and I'm sure the staff will
22 do it with the DPS, but number one is the cost of
23 wholesale power in January and February and March of
24 2022, as the PUC knows because other utilities are
25 filing for similar rate increases, has been the

1 highest that I have ever seen in nearly 45 years of
2 being actively involved in the Co-op both from the
3 outside and within as the president of the board, and
4 that represents somewhere over a million -- somewhere
5 between a million and a million and a half dollars of
6 this request.

7 The second is because the landfill,
8 Coventry landfill, which the Co-op built in 2005 and
9 has been an incredible investment for our members was
10 going -- undergoing expansion and because of that it
11 caused -- after a record year of output it caused
12 over the last two years extremely low output which we
13 had no control over -- which the Co-op had no control
14 over and so we lost in two ways there. One, instead
15 of producing close to three-quarters of our power or
16 over 56 million kilowatthours we were producing
17 somewhere in the 40 million to 50 million range and
18 it looked like at the end of this year of 2022 we
19 still would not even make it back with 50 million
20 kilowatthours. I don't know what the actual
21 production ended up at the end of the year. So we
22 also not only had to buy more power in an overpriced
23 market, but we also had less renewable energy credits
24 to sell in a market that was pricing those credits at
25 a fairly reasonable price.

1 So when the PUC is taking a look at this
2 I just want to underline that there is no slop in
3 this. The Co-op will be faced with dealing with the
4 expenses of this last storm we had on Christmas which
5 was the most -- I've just been reviewing all of our
6 storms going back 12 years and this is by far the
7 most expensive storm we've ever had. I'm sure it's
8 the most expensive one we've ever had in the history
9 of the Co-op. So I just want to underline those
10 points as someone whose been very involved in this
11 and I'll leave it at that and I thank you for your
12 time.

13 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Thank you, Mr.
14 Bernstein, for your comments. Does anybody else have
15 a comment they would like to make? All right. Well
16 I'm going to ask our staff leading this, Ms. Poppiti,
17 thank you for doing the script. It didn't include
18 this option, namely that we would have a number of
19 people at the public hearing but that no one except
20 for Mr. Bernstein had wanted to comment. Should we
21 continue to wait with the possibility there may be
22 other people joining, and I see now we have a name in
23 the chat. Hold on. All right. We have one written
24 statement. It's not identified other than as a WEC
25 member. I'll read it just so we have it in the

1 record because I don't know that the chat gets
2 preserved.

3 MS. POPPITI: No it doesn't.

4 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: All right. So this
5 is a comment from someone identified as WEC member.
6 Net metering production parentheses behind the meter
7 generation parentheses should be used to reduce WEC's
8 load demand and therefore reduce the need to purchase
9 expensive power.

10 Thank you for your comment. Any
11 additional comment or anybody wanting to speak up?
12 So I come back to Ms. Poppiti. Should we wait
13 another 10 minutes and see if any other people join
14 or should we conclude the public hearing at this
15 point?

16 MS. POPPITI: I think it's 7:18 now and
17 I think we can safely conclude and assume anyone that
18 was interested in attending is here.

19 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Okay. Well I want to
20 thank all of you for coming for participating in the
21 information session and for making yourselves
22 available. I again emphasize the fact that there are
23 unlimited opportunities for you to submit comments in
24 this docket if you wish by simply using the ePUC
25 process, which as I mentioned before is fully

1 described on our web site. You should know that the
2 process of questions from the parties to each other
3 is already started and those questions and the
4 responses to those questions are appearing in the
5 docket where you can see them. The opportunity also
6 exists for the Commission and its staff to ask
7 questions so that either the Department or WEC and
8 that process is also available for you to follow in
9 ePUC.

10 Thank you all very much for your
11 interest and for taking some time this evening to
12 participate in the public hearing and unless anybody
13 else has anything to add, Commissioner Allen, any
14 additional comments that you wish to make?

15 MR. ALLEN: Thank you. I have no
16 additional comments.

17 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: All right. Then
18 thank you all very much. Have a pleasant evening and
19 we look forward to hearing from you throughout the
20 process should you have comments you wish to make,
21 and thank you to the representatives of Washington
22 Electric Co-op and the Department for your time this
23 evening. Bye.

24 (Adjourned at 7:20 p.m.)
25

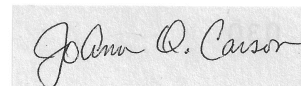
C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JoAnn Q. Carson, do hereby certify that
I recorded by stenographic means the public hearing re:
Case Number 22-4100-TF via Go To Meeting on January 4,
2023, beginning at 7 p.m.

I further certify that the foregoing
testimony was taken by me stenographically and thereafter
reduced to typewriting, and the foregoing 14 pages are a
transcript of the stenograph notes taken by me of the
evidence and the proceedings, to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am not related to
any of the parties thereto or their Counsel, and I am in
no way interested in the outcome of said cause.

Dated at Burlington, Vermont, this 4th day
of January, 2023.



JoAnn Q. Carson
Court Reporter

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