

OREGON PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

PUBLIC HEARING IN THE MATTER OF AVISTA CORPORATION
DBA AVISTA UTILITIES
REQUEST FOR A GENERAL RATE REVISION

Docket Number UG 519

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

1 PARTICIPANTS:

2 CHRISTOPHER J. ALLWEIN, Administrative Law
3 Judge

4 LES PERKINS, Commissioner

5 LETHA TAWNEY, Commissioner

6 CURTIS DLOUHY, OPUC Staff Presenter

7 DAVID MEYER, Avista Chief Counsel

8 PATRICK EHRBAR, Avista Director of Regulatory
9 Affairs

10 STEPHANIE ANDRUS, Staff Counsel DOJ

11 VICTOR SHEPHERD, Translator

12 SONIA FORNONI, Translator

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Okay. All right. I
3 think we're ready to go ahead and get started.
4 Since the introduction takes a few minutes, we can
5 -- that'll be enough time for other people to join
6 us tonight if they want to.

7 All right. Good evening, everybody.
8 This is Administrative Law Judge Chris Allwein.
9 Kim, please go ahead and start the recording.
10 Okay. We will begin public comment, the public
11 comment hearing in a moment.

12 This evening we have Spanish translation
13 services available through the Zoom platform,
14 which will enable you to hear this proceeding
15 translated into Spanish and to have any comments
16 provided in Spanish translated into English. I
17 will now turn it over to the interpreters to
18 introduce themselves in English and Spanish and to
19 provide instructions for accessing the Spanish
20 translation channel. Sonia or Victor, please go
21 ahead.

22 MS. FORNONI: (Speaking in Spanish.)

1 MR. SHEPHERD: (Speaking in Spanish.) As
2 mentioned earlier, we have interpretation
3 available, so please take a moment now to select
4 your language of preference.

5 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Just one moment, folks.
6 Were working on --

7 MR. SHEPHERD: Okay. Interpretation has
8 been disabled.

9 JUDGE ALLWEIN: There we go.

10 MR. SHEPHERD: Okay. Now I can give
11 instructions. (Speaking in Spanish.)

12 SPEAKER: I haven't started it yet.

13 MR. SHEPHERD: For those of you who have
14 joined us, as mentioned, we will have
15 interpretation available, so please look for the
16 interpretation icon at the bottom of your screen.
17 It's been disabled at this moment, so that way we
18 can give instructions. But in a moment, you will
19 be able to see it in your toolbar on the bottom
20 part of your Zoom app. If you're using a tablet
21 or an iPhone, there will be three dots with the
22 word "More." From there, there will be a new

1 menu, and that menu you will be able to select
2 your language interpretation.

3 So once again, if you prefer to listen
4 to the meeting in English, please select English,
5 or if you want to hear in Spanish, please select
6 Spanish. And please let us know if you have any
7 difficulties and we'll do our best to help you.
8 Thank you. And we're ready to be assigned
9 (phonetic) again.

10 JUDGE ALLWEIN: All right. Thank you
11 very much, Victor. We appreciate that. Please go
12 ahead and turn on the interpretation feature. All
13 right. Everyone, please either select English or
14 Spanish after clicking the interpretation button
15 at the bottom of your screen. It looks like a
16 small globe, as Victor said, when you click on the
17 three dots. If you click the Spanish option, you
18 will hear a Spanish translation of everything this
19 evening and will be able to have your comments
20 translated from Spanish to English. You must
21 choose a channel, English or Spanish, in order to
22 participate in and properly hear the entirety of

1 the proceeding this evening. I will now give
2 everyone a moment to choose a language channel.

3 All right. And now we'll go ahead and
4 get started. Thanks, everybody. It is just after
5 6 p.m. on February 11, 2025. I am Chris Allwein,
6 an Administrative Law Judge assigned to these
7 proceedings. We are here tonight to hear your
8 comments on the rate increase proposed by Avista
9 in Docket Number UG 519, Avista's request for a
10 general rate revision.

11 Okay. We are recording tonight's
12 session so that we have a record of your comments
13 for consideration by the PUC staff and our
14 commissioners. We are going to get started with a
15 few words from Commissioner Tawney and
16 Commissioner Perkins, who are here with us this
17 evening. So, Commissioner Tawney, welcome, and
18 the floor is yours. Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER TAWNEY: Thanks so much,
20 Judge Allwein, and just want to express my
21 appreciation for everyone joining us this evening.
22 These rate cases are really important, and we look

1 forward to hearing your thoughts and staff's
2 paying close attention. They'll provide more
3 direction on what that looks like. We'll take in
4 what you have to say, and it will be a part of the
5 conversation as we grapple with these really hard
6 issues. So thank you. Commissioner Perkins?

7 COMMISSIONER PERKINS: Hey, good
8 evening. Excuse me. Good evening. Good evening,
9 everyone. This is Commissioner Perkins. Want to
10 thank you all for taking time out of your evening
11 to let us know your thoughts on Avista's proposed
12 rate increase.

13 Just want to say this is the beginning
14 of a long process where we have staff and
15 interveners investigating and scrutinizing all
16 aspects of the proposed rate increase. And at the
17 end of that process, we act as judges in making a
18 decision based on the record that's developed. So
19 it's really important for ratepayers to stay
20 involved. It's a big part of our rate case
21 process.

22 So, again, thank you all for being here

1 tonight. Please stay tuned as we move through
2 this process over the next few months.

3 JUDGE ALLWEIN: All right, thank you,
4 Commissioner Tawney and Commissioner Perkins.
5 Appreciate that.

6 Before we turn to comments from the
7 public, I will provide a brief overview of the
8 process in these proceedings, and then the PUC
9 staff will provide a brief presentation on
10 Avista's request for a general rate increase and
11 staff's role in these proceedings. All right. So
12 we'll put up a couple of slides. Thank you.

13 This public comment hearing is before
14 the Oregon Public Utility Commission, which serves
15 as the regulatory body overseeing utility service
16 in the state, including rates and requests for
17 rate changes, such as those involved in this
18 recent request by Avista. Today's public comment
19 hearing is one step of many in these proceedings.
20 As you can see in this slide, we are at step
21 number 3.

22 After today's hearing, Commission staff

1 will review the comments received, summarize them,
2 and file them as a part of their opening
3 testimony, along with comments received via other
4 means. Comments received by February 18th will be
5 summarized and included in staff's opening
6 testimony. Comments received by April 22nd will
7 be included in staff's rebuttal testimony. And
8 you can see that the testimony portion of this
9 case is down at step number 6.

10 All comments will be considered by the
11 Commission along with other evidence provided by
12 Avista, Commission staff, and interveners in
13 deciding whether and to what extent to grant
14 Avista's request. In making its decision, the
15 Commission will balance the interests of the
16 utility customers and the utility itself. The
17 Commission could decide to grant the request in
18 full or with changes or even deny the request.

19 In addition to today's public comment
20 hearing, again, step 3, the Commission has
21 scheduled an evidentiary hearing for May 29th.
22 You can see that up there at the top of the third

1 column. That's step 7. And in addition to
2 written briefs from the parties, the Commission
3 will hear oral arguments from the parties on July
4 8th. That's step 8. The Commission anticipates
5 issuing a final order in this docket by August
6 25th, and any new rates would become effective on
7 September 1st, 2025.

8 And so now we'll talk about ways that
9 you can submit comments in addition to those that
10 we'll receive tonight. Any member of the public
11 who wishes to comment, but cannot do so this
12 evening, may submit written comments via our
13 website by email or U.S. Mail as shown on this
14 slide and on our website. Please include an
15 attention line that identifies the docket as UG
16 519.

17 Public comment is also accepted via
18 telephone by calling our Consumer Services
19 Division on the toll-free number here listed on
20 the slide. Members of the public may request an
21 interpreter at the time that they call and will be
22 connected to an interpreter to the extent that one

1 is available in their language. PUC consumer
2 services representatives will provide a summary of
3 any of comments -- of any comments received in
4 that -- via that method to staff.

5 And as noted above, staff will provide
6 an overview of any comments received by February
7 18th as part of its opening testimony and by April
8 22nd, any comments received by April 22nd as a
9 part of staff's rebuttal testimony.

10 And with that, we're going to provide
11 you with more specifics on this case. And to do
12 so, I'm going to turn things over to Curtis Dlouhy
13 with the Commission staff and Mr. Dlouhy will
14 provide a brief presentation. Thank you, Curtis.
15 Please go ahead.

16 MR. DLOUHY: Yeah, thank you, Chris.
17 Give me just one second to share my screen. And
18 are y'all seeing this?

19 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Yes, we can see. Yes,
20 we can see it.

21 MR. DLOUHY: All right then. Good
22 evening. As Chris mentioned, my name is Curtis

1 Dlouhy and I'm the manager of the Policy and
2 Economic Analysis section of the PUC. Part of my
3 role here is to manage the Commission staff's
4 analysis of Avista's rate case. Tonight I'll be
5 providing a high level overview of Avista's
6 general rate case filing and the potential impact
7 to residential customers if the rate case is
8 approved as filed. You'll notice that I said "as
9 filed" in the previous sentence. The reason I say
10 that is because the company's proposal may not
11 reflect the final decision, as Chris alluded to
12 earlier. As part of the general rate case
13 process, staff and stakeholders will be reviewing
14 the company's request to ensure it's reasonable
15 and necessary for providing service to Avista's
16 Oregon customers before the Commission makes a
17 final decision.

18 On this slide, you'll see a comparison
19 of what a typical residential bill looks like
20 under Avista's current rates and proposed rates.
21 The first thing you'll likely notice is that under
22 Avista's proposed rates, the typical single family

1 residential gas bill would increase by
2 approximately \$4.37 and the typical multifamily
3 residential gas bill would increase by \$3.17.
4 This is driven by proposals to increase both the
5 basic charge and the volumetric rate for both
6 types of these customers. All told, this would
7 result in approximately a 6.8 percent increase in
8 bills for the average single family residential
9 customer and a 5.0 percent increase for an average
10 multifamily residential customer.

11 Here you'll see the impact of the
12 company's overall proposed rates -- rate increase
13 on all of its customers as well as just its
14 residential customers. The top row compares the
15 effects of the proposed increase to just base
16 rates, which includes only the costs that are
17 unlikely to change with the volume of gas used and
18 are the main subject of this rate case. Among
19 other things, this includes things such as new
20 investment, financing, expenses, and salaries.
21 The bottom row shows the effect of this rate
22 increase when commodity costs, such as the cost to

1 acquire gas, are included. The commodity costs
2 are not subject are not the subject of this rate
3 case and are not assumed to change in this table.
4 As you can see, the company's 7.8 million proposed
5 increase to Oregon revenues equates to a 9.2
6 percent increase in base rates and a 6.6 increase
7 in total rates across all customer classes.

8 On the next slide, I break down the
9 proposed 7.8 million increase into three main
10 categories. The first category in the table is
11 changes to expenses. At a high level the proposed
12 changes to expenses are largely updating costs for
13 inflation.

14 The second category in this table is
15 costs of new investments at the currently approved
16 rate of return. According to the company's
17 filing, this is driven by a combination of the
18 expansion of the gas system to meet customer and
19 reliability needs, compliance with local and
20 federal regulations, and the replacement of assets
21 at the end of their useful life to ensure a safe
22 system.

1 The third category is cost associated
2 with the company's proposed increase to its rate
3 of return. This is driven both by updating the
4 company's cost of long-term debt and the company's
5 proposal to increase its rate of return -- or,
6 excuse me, its return on equity from 9.5 percent
7 to 10.4 percent. As can be seen, all three
8 buckets contribute roughly a third each to the
9 overall increase. And I'll pause there for a
10 second because I'm getting feedback that I'm
11 speaking a bit too fast for the interpreters.

12 All right. To review Avista's
13 proposals, the Public Utility Commission employs
14 experts from a variety of areas. Rate cases are
15 complex. The company must demonstrate that their
16 spending is necessary, prudent, and reasonable.
17 As staff, our responsibilities in this case are to
18 undertake technical analysis to review both
19 whether certain costs are justified based on the
20 company's needs and current market conditions, but
21 also how these costs are most fairly distributed
22 amongst the customers -- or, excuse me, the

1 company's customers. To do this, we employ a team
2 of accountants, financial analysts, economists,
3 engineers, and policy analysts, among other
4 experts, to review the company's filing and make
5 recommendations. Attorneys from the Department of
6 Justice provide assistance throughout the
7 proceeding as well. At the end of the day,
8 staff's end goal is to ensure Oregonians have safe
9 and reliable service at a just rate.

10 The general rate case process is carried
11 out similar to a legal proceeding, much like Chris
12 explained earlier. Since the company made their
13 initial 2,000-page filing in November, staff has
14 been reviewing the company's filing and asking for
15 additional information. This review and the
16 subsequent request for additional information will
17 culminate in staff filing opening testimony in
18 just a few weeks on March 4th. At the same time,
19 stakeholders will also file their testimony.
20 Following that, staff, stakeholders, and the
21 company will review each other's testimony,
22 develop settlement positions, and prepare for

1 settlement discussions and future legal process if
2 no settlement is reached. Throughout this
3 process, attorneys from the Department of Justice
4 will assist staff to form settlement positions,
5 cross examine witnesses, submit legal briefs, and
6 make oral arguments as needed.

7 I strongly encourage everyone that is
8 interested to track the docket and receive updates
9 by going to oregon.gov/puc and follow Avista's
10 rate case UG 519. Much like Chris did, I've
11 included the email address to submit public
12 comments here.

13 In addition to that, I thought it would
14 be useful to show you all how to navigate to
15 another portal to submit comments on this docket.
16 Here I have a screenshot of the Oregon PUC
17 homepage with eDockets circled up here. If you
18 click this button, you will be taken to eDockets,
19 which allows you to search for any open docket.
20 After searching for UG 519, you'll be navigated to
21 this page that has a button to Submit Public
22 Comments. If you click this button, you will be

1 taken to a form to submit public comments within
2 the web browser.

3 Thank you. That's all I have for you
4 today and I'm looking forward to hearing why what
5 everyone has to say.

6 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Thank you very much,
7 Curtis. I appreciate that. I just want to point
8 out both of these slide presentations are
9 available as a part of the docket, so if you
10 didn't catch the addresses while they were on the
11 screen or you need to review that last slide that
12 Curtis put together, they're on the docket on our
13 website. And if you have trouble finding it, you
14 can always call our Consumer Services Division and
15 they can help navigate you to the proper spot.

16 We are now going to hear public comments
17 on Avista's request. Let me go over the process
18 we will be following tonight to help ensure that
19 everyone has a chance to speak. Just a reminder,
20 please make sure that you have selected either the
21 English or Spanish channel after clicking the
22 Interpretation button at the bottom of your

1 screen. If you click the Spanish option, you will
2 hear a Spanish translation of everything this
3 evening and will be able to have your comments
4 translated from English to Spanish.

5 Next, in order to stay organized
6 tonight, we will be using the Raise Your Hand
7 function of Zoom. That's also at the bottom of
8 the screen towards the middle. For participants
9 using a computer, you can find it, as I said,
10 right there at the bottom of the screen close to
11 the middle. For those of you that are joining us
12 by telephone, you can raise your hand by pressing
13 Star 9. I will call on individuals by name or the
14 last digits of your phone number when it is your
15 turn to speak and will unmute you at that time.
16 You may also need to unmute your computer
17 microphone or telephone. If you have a telephone,
18 you would unmute yourself by pressing Star 6. I
19 ask that everyone stay muted until called upon to
20 minimize background noise while others are
21 speaking. Thank you.

22 This is an opportunity for you to offer

1 comments on Avista's rate request. The
2 Commissioners will be listening carefully tonight.
3 They're both here, but they will not be answering
4 questions or responding to individual comments
5 this evening.

6 At this time, I ask that anyone wishing
7 to provide comment raise your hand using the Raise
8 Your Hand feature so that I can get an idea of how
9 many people are interested in commenting tonight.
10 And I'll pause here for a second.

11 All right, thank you. So we have a few
12 hands up. I will -- I have just a couple more
13 things before I start calling on folks. When
14 called to speak, please speak clearly and state
15 your name for the record. Your comments are being
16 recorded and we want to ensure that they can be
17 clearly heard and translated into Spanish. All
18 right. At the end of your comments, please let us
19 know that you're done speaking. If you have
20 prepared written comments, you may submit those
21 and I encourage you to do so, but I would ask that
22 you summarize rather than read your entire written

1 comment.

2 All right. With that, we'll get
3 started. If you would like to provide comments,
4 again, please use the Raise Your Hand function in
5 Zoom, if you have not already done so. If you are
6 called upon this evening and you're using the
7 telephone, press -- or if you'd like to be called
8 upon, press Star 9 to raise your hand if you're
9 using the phone. I will call on people in the
10 order they appear on my screen and we'll start
11 now.

12 The first person that I have is looks
13 like Alan Journet or "Journay." Alan Journet,
14 please go ahead and let us know who you are.
15 Maybe pronounce your name properly if I
16 mispronounced it and provide us with your
17 comments. Thank you. Mr. Alan Journet, it looks
18 like you need to unmute your microphone.

19 MR. JOURNET: Okay. Sorry, I didn't see
20 that.

21 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Ah, there you are.

22 MR. JOURNET: Okay.

1 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Hello. Good evening.

2 MR. JOURNET: Hi, Judge Allwein and
3 Commissioners. My name is Alan Journet. I
4 co-founded and serve as co-facilitator of Southern
5 Oregon Climate Action Now, an organization of some
6 2,000 Southern Oregonians who are concerned about
7 the climate crisis and seek action to address it.
8 I testify today in opposition to the rate hike
9 sought by Avista with comments from my submitted
10 testimony.

11 A couple of decades ago, many
12 climate-conscious activists would probably have
13 argued that natural gas was, as gas corporations
14 argued, a relatively clean fossil fuel and could
15 serve as a bridge fuel to the future. Then
16 research started appearing demonstrating that
17 because of fugitive emissions of the potent
18 greenhouse gas methane, natural gas is as bad as
19 or worse than coal. But the gas companies and
20 their association continue to claim gas was the
21 clean fossil fuel even in the face of this new
22 reality.

1 As recognition of the threat posed by
2 these fugitive emissions grew, the gas companies
3 adjusted their language to claim gas is the clean
4 burning fossil fuel, presumably thinking that
5 customers and potential customers wouldn't notice
6 the subtle change in language or they're ignoring
7 the fugitive emissions issue. Now that the
8 climate and health problems posed by gas are
9 becoming well known, the gas companies are trying
10 a new gambit: To claim they can reduce emissions
11 by incorporating renewable natural gas, hydrogen,
12 or synthetic gas into their product.
13 Unfortunately, each of these proposals comprises a
14 false solution. They are just more scams.

15 Avista is clearly committed to
16 continuing its business model of increasing the
17 distribution of a product that is toxic to
18 inhabitants of buildings that use it and
19 contribute substantially to the climate crisis.
20 Rather than requesting a rate hike allowing Avista
21 to replace its pipes, we agree with the Citizens
22 Utility Board that the best way for Avista to

1 reduce its emissions is for the company to
2 encourage electrification by its customers. In
3 short, we urge the PUC to deny this request.
4 Thank you very much indeed.

5 JUDGE ALLWEIN: All right, thank you,
6 Mr. Journet. And I will note that we did docket
7 the comments that you sent this afternoon, so
8 those are part of the preceding docket on our
9 website.

10 All right. Next we'll go to Zöe
11 Serrano. Zöe Serrano, go ahead and unmute
12 yourself and please provide your comments. Thank
13 you.

14 MS. SERRANO: Are you able to hear me?

15 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Yes, yes, we can hear
16 you.

17 MS. SERRANO: Wonderful.

18 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Good evening. Please,
19 please go ahead.

20 MS. SERRANO: Good evening. For the
21 record, my name is Zöe Serrano and I am here on
22 behalf of Rogue Climate. Rogue Climate serves and

1 works alongside Southern Oregon and South Coast
2 communities most impacted climate change,
3 including low income, rural, youth, and
4 communities of color by organizing for clean
5 energy, sustainable jobs, and a healthy
6 environment. Many community members we organize
7 alongside our Avista customers who have already
8 felt the impact of gas rate increases over the
9 past five years.

10 Rogue Climate strongly opposes Avista's
11 request to increase rate 7 percent for the sake of
12 gas system expansion and investor profit.
13 Replacing old, unsafe pipes is expensive and will
14 add millions of dollars to customers bills for
15 many decades to come, which is especially
16 detrimental to communities in Southern and Eastern
17 Oregon already facing high energy burdens and low
18 energy resilience. If Avista's 7 percent increase
19 is permitted, customers could pay bills that are
20 on average \$4.27 higher per month. Single family
21 homes may see an average monthly bill of \$69 and
22 may be as high as \$130 in December. And

1 multifamily homes will see an average monthly bill
2 of \$66 or \$126 in December.

3 We need to prioritize a just transition
4 today and electrification is one key step. As we
5 move closer to deadlines for emission reductions,
6 the cost of the gas transition is only going to
7 increase. Trimming the gas system now avoids
8 costs that will be with customers until the 2070s.
9 Rather than expanding and repairing the existing
10 antiquated gas system, Avista can instead reduce
11 emissions and cost by investing in transitioning
12 willing homes to all electric appliances. Natural
13 gas --

14 JUDGE ALLWEIN: I'm sorry, Ms. Serrano,
15 I don't mean to interrupt you, but just -- we have
16 an interpreter who's interpreting your comments.
17 If you could just speak at --

18 MS. SERRANO: I will slow down. I
19 apologize.

20 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Yeah. No. Okay. I
21 just want to make sure everybody can hear what you
22 have to say tonight. So if you could just --

1 MS. SERRANO: Thank you. Let me go back
2 maybe a couple sentences --

3 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Sure.

4 MS. SERRANO: -- and then I'll take it
5 slower from there.

6 JUDGE ALLWEIN: All right. I appreciate
7 it. Thank you. And I'm sorry to have to
8 interrupt you.

9 MS. SERRANO: Oh, no, I appreciate the
10 interruption. Let me start up here. Rather than
11 expanding and repairing the existing antiquated
12 gas system, Avista can instead reduce emissions
13 and cost by investing and transitioning willing
14 homes to all electric appliances. Natural gas
15 infrastructure is also at risk for dangerous and
16 severe damage during natural disasters, like pipes
17 breaking, which will be exacerbated by the looming
18 threat of earthquakes.

19 Rogue Climate has been organizing with
20 Rogue Valley youth and community members to pass
21 strong climate policy to move towards the goals
22 set out in Ashland's Climate and Energy Action

1 Plan. It is clear that community members and the
2 city of Ashland overwhelmingly want to transition
3 away from fossil fuels and towards safer and
4 healthier energy systems.

5 Avista has the opportunity to be a part
6 of that transition. Yet it is clear that Avista
7 is not committed to reducing the negative impacts
8 of gas. Rather, they have been tied to spreading
9 disinformation and blocking critical climate
10 policy as the treasurer for the gas industry front
11 group, Northwest Coalition for Energy Choice. Our
12 utilities should be providing essential services
13 to meet the needs of our communities, not using
14 ratepayer money to block policy that protects
15 residents from pollution and climate impacts.

16 We urge you to hold Avista accountable
17 to state climate goals, and push for a shift to
18 100 percent electric homes, not an expanded gas
19 system. To save money and keep communities safe
20 please do not approve any additional returns for
21 Avista. I'm finished.

22 JUDGE ALLWEIN: All right. Thank you

1 very much, Zöe Serrano. We appreciate your
2 comments tonight.

3 And next we have, and forgive me if I
4 say your name incorrectly, it looks like Maroon
5 Aguero (phonetic). Maroon --

6 COMMISSIONER TAWNEY: Judge Allwein?

7 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER TAWNEY: I'm going to pause
9 you because I see one of our interpreters has his
10 hand up.

11 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Oh, okay. I'm sorry,
12 Victor, go ahead. Okay. Hang on one second and I
13 will find out whether that -- we can do that.

14 MS. FORNONI: Yeah, thank you. Kimberly
15 was trying.

16 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Ah, there you are.

17 MS. FORNONI: Yeah, if she can just
18 switch us. That's what I was asking her.

19 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Ah, okay.

20 MS. FORNONI: To take out Victor and put
21 me in since she can't put both of us like what we
22 usually have it.

1 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Okay. Hang on one
2 moment.

3 MS. FORNONI: Thank you. Sorry, Victor.

4 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Thank you for catching
5 that, Commissioner Taney. I did not see the hand
6 up. Apologies.

7 MR. SHEPHERD: And Kim, you can actually
8 have both of us. You just need to click update
9 and then make sure that Sonia has the pair English
10 to Spanish.

11 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Okay. Victor and Sonia,
12 Kim is working on that. Is it okay if we proceed
13 with the next commenter while she's working on
14 that?

15 MS. FORNONI: Victor, are you okay
16 continuing? Victor, are you on the Spanish
17 channel? Sorry, this is tricky without both of us
18 activated like we are usually.

19 JUDGE ALLWEIN: I know, I apologize.
20 We're kind of getting -- sort of run into a
21 glitch.

22 MS. FORNONI: Okay. He will continue.

1 He just texted me. He will continue. Go ahead.

2 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Okay. Well, my
3 apologies, but we're -- it's -- we're a little bit
4 vexed with what's going on. And I just want to
5 remind everybody, you need to -- we tried a couple
6 of things, so you're going to need to pick a
7 channel again, either English or Spanish. So I'll
8 give everybody a moment. Down at the bottom of
9 the screen, there's an Interpretation button and
10 you need to pick English or Spanish, depending on
11 the language that you would prefer to hear or
12 listen to the proceedings tonight.

13 All right. And with that, while we're
14 working on that, and I appreciate the indulgence
15 of the interpreters, let's go to Maroon Aguerro.

16 MR. AGUERO: Hello. Can I be heard?

17 JUDGE ALLWEIN: Yes, hello and good
18 evening. I'm sorry about the delay. We're doing
19 the best we can with this crazy technology stuff,
20 so. But please go ahead and introduce yourself
21 and provide us with your comments. Thank you.

22 MR. AGUERO: Hello, my name is Maroon

1 Aguero. I am from the Rogue Valley down here in
2 Southern Oregon. I come to you as a young person.
3 I'm 24 years old, actively involved in the climate
4 justice movement, and as a voice of the many young
5 folks in our world feeling the dread, anxiety and
6 hopelessness. I know many of us are here today
7 because we want to continue imagining creating a
8 place that puts people first.

9 I know I'm young, and many in this room
10 have been part of the climate justice movement for
11 years. I have been actively involved in tackling
12 this crisis since I was 18. In my seven years of
13 being involved, I've never been more proud to be
14 with so many folks doing so many good and
15 different things. We have progressed and made
16 lots of meaningful steps to live in actual harmony
17 on this Earth. But I am continuously disappointed
18 by the continued barriers fossil fuel industries
19 put in front of folks when these folks trying to
20 do good, their priority is their community, not
21 profit. I'm also disappointed by the continued
22 influence these fossil fuel groups have on our

1 institutions meant to keep us safe and thriving.

2 There are many experienced people here
3 today and are going to share lots of facts,
4 reports, and experiences and why you should deny
5 the recent rate case by Avista. I encourage you
6 all to listen and read up on those words, but I'm
7 also here to tell you it doesn't have to be this
8 complicated. Not that I don't understand these
9 complicated issues, but these fossil fuel groups
10 have to make it super complicated and it shouldn't
11 have to be this demanding to divest from a fuel
12 source that is destroying our climate.

13 The biggest fossil fuel companies have
14 known about climate change and have admitted to
15 denying the science. Shouldn't that be enough to
16 stop allowing these companies to keep asking for
17 upgrades to these failing fuel sources, especially
18 when it means increasing prices? The people who
19 will be impacted most by these rates will be
20 youth, BIPOC, elderly, low-income, and many other
21 frontline communities already facing the harshest
22 reality of our climate crisis. If Avista's 7

1 percent increase is permitted, customers will be
2 paying higher bills.

3 A majority of folks in Oregon are aware
4 of the harm methane gas and other fossil fuels
5 have on their health and community. For example,
6 Ashland and many other cities have strong climate
7 policies, passing first of a kind policies, trying
8 to move away from investing in more gas
9 infrastructure to help meet those goals. It is
10 clear that community members, not just in action,
11 but everywhere, want to transition away from
12 fossil fuels and towards safer and healthier
13 energy systems like electric.

14 Avista has the opportunity to be part of
15 this transition, but they aren't doing what
16 they're supposed to do. You know what they have
17 been doing? They've been calling and spreading
18 misinformation and blocking critical climate
19 policy around the area with this group -- this
20 front group called Northwest Coalition for Energy
21 Choice. People don't want gas and they know that.
22 It's not just Ashland, it's the majority.

1 Every day we continue to see these
2 institutions move away from people and this is
3 continuing to drive our climate crisis. But most
4 of the conversations I have when people want to
5 transition away they always ask why the cost has
6 to go on to them. I it doesn't have to. These
7 companies keep asking for rates to increase and
8 putting the costs on people. We can keep other
9 alternative sources, like electric, cheaper and
10 not make gas more expensive. Why are we still
11 allowing more destruction of our future and start
12 finding more solutions to keep us moving forward.

13 I strongly encourage you all to deny the
14 7 percent increase rate by Avista. I am done
15 speaking.

16 JUDGE ALLWEIN: All right. Thank you,
17 Maroon Aguerro. We appreciate you joining us
18 tonight and we appreciate those comments.

19 I don't have anybody with their hand
20 raised at the moment, and I know there were at
21 least one or two folks that had their hands raised
22 and put them down. So while we're waiting for --

1 if you would like to make a comment tonight here
2 at this, this is what this public comment hearing
3 is for, please go ahead and use the Raise Your
4 Hand feature. If you're on a computer, it's in
5 the middle of the bottom of the screen, or if
6 you're on a telephone, you can press Star 9 and
7 that will raise your hand.

8 And while we're giving folks a chance to
9 do that, I just want to remind everybody that
10 there is a lot of process here left to go. And
11 there are no less than three ways to get comments
12 into us in writing. You can do that via U.S. Mail
13 or via email or through our comment portal. And
14 again, those addresses are -- you can find those
15 at our website or you can look at the presentation
16 that either Curtis or I made this evening and find
17 the information there. You can also call us on
18 the phone. You can call our Consumer Services
19 Division and we will take your comment over the
20 telephone.

21 Your comments will be taken by staff and
22 they will be summarized and they will be part of

1 staff's opening testimony if we receive them by
2 February 18th. And they'll be a part of staff's
3 rebuttal testimony if we receive it -- receive
4 your comments by April 22. So just a reminder
5 that you can either make comments in writing, you
6 can call us on the phone, but we also have an
7 opportunity here tonight. We've got two
8 commissioners and several folks from Avista and
9 several folks from the PUC here this evening. So
10 if you'd like to make a comment, please go ahead
11 and raise your hand and we'd be glad to hear from
12 you tonight.

13 Well, I'm not seeing any hands. And so
14 what we're going to do is we're going to keep this
15 hearing open until 7 p.m. The commissioners and I
16 and some commission staff will remain in the
17 hearing until then.

18 We're going to turn off our cameras and
19 we're going to return on camera should another
20 member of the public wishing to comment join the
21 Zoom hearing.

22 So with that, Commissioners, if you want

1 to turn off your cameras, please go ahead. And
2 again, I just want to encourage anyone that's here
3 tonight, if you'd like to make a comment, we would
4 like to have it.

5 All right. Good evening, everybody.
6 We're still trying to figure out the problem with
7 the channel in this particular version of Zoom,
8 but if you want to hear things in English, please
9 use the Interpretation button one more time and
10 pick English or Spanish, whichever language you
11 would prefer to hear the proceeding in.

12 And I just want to encourage folks, if
13 you would like to make a comment this evening,
14 raise your hand. If you're on a computer, it's a
15 Raise Your Hand little icon there at the bottom
16 center of the screen. If you want to make your
17 comment via phone, you can press Star 9 to raise
18 your hand that way.

19 And I just want to go over one more
20 time, there were two presentations this evening.
21 One from PUC staff person Curtis Dlouhy, and he
22 explained towards the end of his presentation how

1 you could make a comment on the website through
2 our portal. And if you look at the presentation
3 that I made earlier this evening, you can provide
4 your comments in writing, either by mailing them
5 in via U.S. Mail or by email or, as Curtis
6 demonstrated, you can use the web portal.

7 For anyone that did make a comment
8 tonight, I would encourage you to submit those
9 comments in writing as well. We did get comments
10 already from a couple of groups today. I know one
11 of them had a speaker here tonight that gave us
12 comments, so we appreciate that.

13 The other option that you have is you
14 can call our Consumer Services Division. They
15 have a 1-800 number. Again, that's available on
16 our website, and you may call Consumer Services
17 and provide your comment over the phone.

18 And if you prefer or use a different
19 language, the Consumer Services Division will work
20 to get an interpreter so that we can take your
21 comment in the language that you use to provide
22 it.

1 And so I do want to thank everybody
2 tonight for attending this public comment hearing.
3 Again, I'll throw it out there one last time. If
4 you would like to make a comment this evening, two
5 of our commissioners are with us this evening and
6 several staff members and there are folks from
7 Avista here this evening.

8 So if you would like to make a comment,
9 please go ahead and raise your hand and we would
10 love to hear from you. We'll give it just a
11 couple more minutes here.

12 All right, everyone, I just want to
13 thank everybody one more time for joining us
14 tonight. And I appreciate the folks that provided
15 comments this evening.

16 Commissioner Tawney, do you want to say
17 a couple of words before I adjourn?

18 COMMISSIONER TAWNEY: Yeah. Thank you.
19 I appreciate everyone spending some time with us
20 this evening and sharing comments that you've
21 drafted so thoughtfully and carefully. Staff will
22 take those comments into account and you heard the

1 long process of analysis they'll undertake.

2 We really appreciate you taking the time
3 to talk to us directly. It's really meaningful and
4 helps us as we grapple with the really tough
5 decisions that go into our rate case. So thanks so
6 much.

7 JUDGE ALLWEIN: All right. Thank you
8 Commissioner Tawney. Commissioner Perkins?

9 COMMISSIONER PERKINS: I would just echo
10 Commissioner Tawney. Appreciate everybody's time
11 tonight and hope that you all stay engaged as we
12 move through this process.

13 JUDGE ALLWEIN: All right. Thank you,
14 Commissioner Tawney and Commissioner Perkins. And
15 just one last reminder that we will take written
16 comments via various means that are available
17 through the website and information available at
18 the website or via phone. And we do encourage you
19 to provide comments as we move through the process
20 of this rate case.

21 Again, thanks everybody who was here
22 tonight. And with that this concludes the public

1 comment hearing in UG 519 and we are adjourned.

2 Thanks, everybody.

3 (Whereupon, the HEARING was
4 adjourned.)

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

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