BEFORE THE

ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

PUBLIC UTILITY REGULAR OPEN MEETING

Thursday, October 19, 2023

Chicago, Illinois

Met pursuant to notice at 11:30 a.m. at 160 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois.

PRESENT:

MR. DOUGLAS P. SCOTT, Chairman

MICHAEL T. CARRIGAN, Commissioner

CONRAD REDDICK, Commissioner

STACEY PARADIS, Commissioner

ANN McCABE, Commissioner

MAGNA LEGAL SERVICES

BY: Michael Marciniak, CER

NOTARY PUBLIC



- 1 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Under the Open Meetings Act,
- any person may record an open meeting held by the
- 3 Commission. However, if any of the public commenters
- 4 today do not wish to be recorded, please say so before
- 5 you begin your comments and we'll ask all of the cameras
- 6 to turn off their cameras at that point. The Open
- 7 Meetings Act prescribes the Commission this authority,
- 8 and we'll ask those individuals recording to please
- 9 refrain from doing so while the person who has requested
- 10 to not be recorded is speaking.
- I would also like to make a quick comment to
- 12 those in the room and the public generally about the
- 13 timelines for the gas and electric rate cases before us.
- 14 Commission expects to vote, pending changes which can
- happen, but we expect to vote on Nicor Gas rate case on
- 16 November 2nd, and on Peoples, North Shore, and Ameren,
- 17 Illinois Gas on November 16th, and on ComEd and Ameren,
- 18 Illinois Electric on December 14th.
- 19 We have 10 requests to speak today from Mr.
- 20 Arnell Newman, Mr. Larry Ivory, Mr. Michael Siewal, Mr.
- 21 Brian Cohen, Mr. Bob Nowak, Mr. JC Kibbey, Ms. Courtney
- 22 Hanson, Ms. Veronica Michelle Johnson, Ms. Regina Simms





- 1 MR. IVORY: To the Distinguished Commission,
 2 My name is Larry Ivory, I'm president and CEO of the
- 3 Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce. And we
- 4 believe in affordable, reliable, and efficient energy as
- 5 an organization, we know that energy drives our economy,
- drives our businesses, but it also helps to power our
- 7 communities and our families. And one of the things
- 8 that we've been challenged by, all across the globe,
- 9 because I serve at the national level with the National
- 10 Black Chamber of Commerce as Chairman of the board in
- 11 the US Chamber of Commerce. And one of the things that
- we've been grappling with is this whole issue of energy,
- in terms of energy efficiency, in terms of climate
- 14 control issues that impacts our environment and things
- 15 that can have a very negative impact upon our
- 16 communities.
- 17 But affordability is a critical issue also,
- 18 but reliability is equally as important. And when we
- 19 take a look at the investments that utility companies
- 20 and others have made in the infrastructure for
- 21 reliability, one of the things that we're concerned with
- 22 is that reliability is important from a number of



And so we have to make sure that until we find a different solution in terms of the four ways, I mean, the number of ways that we get energy. In reference to solar energy whether that be wind energy, whether it be nuclear energy, but fossil fuel fossil fuel is 75% of how we derive -- quite frankly, our energy that drives our economy. For some, who would want us to get rid of fossil fuel tomorrow, it's unrealistic. It would not be sustainable, it would cause an enormous impact upon our economy.

So what we ask is that, as from a business point of view and a community point of view, is that we find balance in our approach. In terms of not only being able to invest in infrastructure to create liability -- reliability, but also to invest with understanding that there's other forms of energies that



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       can be used; that can be beneficial, but that's going to
       take some time.
                 It's going to take a little bit more time to
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       make that happen in more investments in the grid and
       everything else. So from a chamber perspective, we
 5
       believe that affordable, reliable, efficient energy is
       important, and we think also at the same time that we
       have to allow companies to invest and get a return on
8
       investment within the timeframe that they have to
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       invest. Thank you.
                                 Thank you, Mr. Ivory.
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                 CHAIRMAN SCOTT:
       Mr. Michael Siewal, are you in the room, Mr. Siewal?
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13
                       (No verbal response.)
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                 CHAIRMAN SCOTT:
                                 How about Mr. Brian Cohen?
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                       (No verbal response.)
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                 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Okay. Mr. Bob Nowak, and
       again, you'll have -- you'll have three minutes.
17
                                                          I'm --
       I'm -- I won't repeat it for every speaker, but again,
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       if anybody doesn't want to be filmed, just let us know.
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20
       And again, you'll have three minutes but first before
21
       the clock starts, please spell your name for the court
22
       reporter.
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- 1 that we're using throughout the city on this program.
- 2 So, I feel that's a big benefit as to some of the work
- 3 that has taken place throughout this city by Peoples
- 4 Gas. Another huge opportunity that we've been able to
- 5 work on is our workforce development. A lot of the
- 6 people that we work with working with our local union
- 7 labor forces, local 02, local 150, 597. They all do a
- 8 very good job of trying to hire within the communities
- 9 that we're working. 80 percent of our workforce lives
- 10 in the communities that we are currently working in.
- 11 So again, this is a big economic opportunity
- 12 to keep the monies that's funded to a lot of these
- 13 programs, getting funneled right into these
- 14 neighborhoods. Helping to feed the diverse suppliers,
- 15 subcontractors that are out there and giving the
- opportunity to keep going. And updating this
- 17 infrastructure that we're working with. Some of these
- 18 organizations that we've been able to support and
- 19 participate with is N-O-E-I, C-M-S-D-C, F-W-C, Girls in
- the Game, and on and on.
- 21 There's many of these different organizations
- 22 that are a part of our day-to-day business that we've



- 1 incorporated in and been supporting throughout this
- 2 whole program. So again, I do appreciate the time that
- 3 we've been given to get up here and just give a, a
- 4 little bit of a contractor's perspective on what Peoples
- 5 Gas is trying to accomplish by keeping this
- 6 infrastructure updated, safe, and out there for the
- 7 customer. So, appreciate it.
- 8 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you. Mr. Nowak. JC
- 9 Kibbey, off to a good start there. If you could spell
- 10 your name first for the court reporter, and then go
- 11 right ahead.
- 12 MR. KIBBEY: My name is JC Kibbey, that's
- 13 K-I-B-B-E-Y. Good morning Commissioners, Staff and
- 14 fellow Chicagoans. Thank you for taking the time to be
- 15 here and for giving me the opportunity to speak. As I
- 16 said, my name is JC Kibbey. I'm the senior Illinois
- 17 Energy Advocate with NRDC, the Natural Resources Defense
- 18 Council. Methane gas utilities are cooking our planet,
- 19 hurting our health, and draining our wallets. We can't
- 20 afford to double down on a gas system that is
- 21 unsustainable in every sense of the word, and we should
- 22 start planning for the transition to clean heat and



- 1 clean buildings now.
- 2 Methane gas burned in buildings, as you may
- 3 know, is one of the biggest causes of climate of the
- 4 climate crisis. It makes up more than a fifth of our
- 5 state's total emissions behind only electricity and
- 6 transportation. The good news is that in 2023, we can
- 7 cook our food and keep our buildings comfortable with
- 8 all electric appliances like induction stoves and heat
- 9 pumps; heat pumps are efficient, they cost less to
- 10 operate than gas appliances, and they're affordable.
- 11 Even more so thanks to new federal rebates and they work
- 12 even in the coldest climates in places like Maine,
- 13 Canada, and Norway.
- 14 The ongoing shift towards clean energy and
- buildings or clean heat should change how we think about
- 16 the gas system and its future. Put this in context, Net
- 17 Zero America project at Princeton University looked at
- 18 several pathways to hit net zero emissions by 2050.
- 19 This is what we must achieve to meet our commitments
- 20 under the Paris Climate Agreement and avoid the worst
- 21 impacts of climate change. In every case, The Princeton
- 22 analysis found that meeting our climate goals will



- 1 require a massive shift towards electric appliances for
- 2 water heating, space heating, and cooking, using
- 3 electricity for 80 percent of these uses on the low end,
- 4 and nearly 100 percent on the high end.
- 5 These findings suggest that the gas system, as
- 6 we know it, is incompatible with a livable climate.
- 7 That said, as others have said, the transition to clean
- 8 heat will not happen overnight. It will take many, many
- 9 years. To paraphrase president Obama, if you like your
- 10 stove, you can keep it. But the planning for this
- 11 transition must begin now. And many states have already
- 12 started under names like building decarbonization and
- 13 future of gas. I hope Illinois will join them. Our
- 14 state is committed to the Paris climate targets. The
- market share is up for clean electric appliances and
- 16 sales of heat pumps surpassed gas furnaces for the first
- 17 time last year in the United States.
- 18 That was before the new federal incentives
- 19 kicked in, and they are likely to shift the market even
- 20 more. Taking all this together, we're watching a
- 21 seismic shift in the politics and economics of heating
- 22 and gas.



- 1 In that context, what is a reasonable and prudent
- 2 investment in the gas system? What are the risks that
- 3 assets proposed today will not be useful for as long as
- 4 imagined and that they will become stranded? Spending
- 5 rates and planning for our gas system must consider
- 6 these questions.
- 7 So I urge you to factor the urgency of the
- 8 climate crisis and the risk of stranded assets into your
- 9 decision making; using every tool at your disposal.
- 10 Like ordering transparent gas system planning, examining
- 11 non-pipeline alternatives, and eliminating line
- 12 extensions. The world is changing and our understanding
- about the gas system should change with it. If it
- 14 doesn't, Illinoisans will pay the price. Thank you for
- 15 your time.
- 16 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you Mr. Kibbey. Ms.
- 17 Hanson; Courtney Hanson, Hi.
- 18 MS. HANSON: Hi. Courtney Hanson,
- 19 C-O-U-R-T-N-E-Y H-A-N-S-O-N. Good morning, like I said
- 20 my name is Courtney Hanson, I'm a Peoples Gas customer
- 21 and I'm also Deputy director of People for Community
- 22 Recovery, a legacy environmental justice organization



what's driving it. The Peoples Gas fixed charge paired with a qualified infrastructure charge means that customers are paying almost \$50 a month before they even turn on their stove or furnace. These fixed charges harm and place a disproportionate burden on low usage customers who tend to be low income, and they also don't allow customers to utilize available energy efficiency incentives and conservation tactics to manage their bills. So families are left with very few choices as they're trying to make ends meet. Right now about one in five Peoples Gas customers are behind on their bills.

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And unfortunately, this crisis in our





Veronica Michelle Johnson. If you could please spell

your name and then you're welcome to start. Thank you.

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MS. JOHNSON: V-E-R-O-N-I-C-A J-O-H-N-S-O-N, 1 2 Thank you Commissioners for the opportunity to Johnson. speak this morning. I am Reverend Veronica Johnson, 3 outreach director for Faith in Place, part of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, a resident, and a pastor 5 on the south side of Chicago; I'm a customer of Peoples Peoples Gas rates are unaffordable already for so many on the south and west sides of Chicago. 8 9 proposed rate hike will hit many families, even whole 10 communities hard, and these communities are already suffering from generations of environmental and economic 11 injustices. While the proposed order lowers the 12 proposed rate hike from roughly \$400M to \$350M, that 13 14 would still break the record gas utility rate hike by over \$100M. 15 16 On behalf of the significant portion of Chicagoans already in debt to Peoples Gas, I am 17 asking you to do more to lower the magnitude of this 18 rate hike. Consider the data from Peoples Gas September 19 20 report to your Commission. Between 33 and 46 percent of 21 households in the following neighborhoods are in arrears 22 with Peoples Gas: Inglewood, West Garfield Park, South





- 1 for this opportunity.
- CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you Reverend Johnson.
- 3 Regina Simms -- Regina Simms. Please spell your name
- 4 first and then your welcome to start.
- 5 MS. SIMMS: R-E-G-I-N-A S-I-M-M-S. My name is
- 6 Regina Simms and I'm a parent leader with Power Pack
- 7 Illinois, currently living in Justice, Illinois, but
- 8 when I lived in Chicago, I was a People Gas customer for
- 9 years. The cost of living in the city, including the
- 10 gas bill, got so high that I moved to the suburbs to
- 11 better afford housing; gas bills are too high all across
- 12 the state. I have two sons and two sisters who live in
- 13 Chicago and -- and are current Peoples Gas customers.
- 14 One of my sons just had twin babies, the cost of daycare
- is too high, so I do what I can to help with childcare
- 16 so that my son can work to be able to pay this gas bill;
- 17 but it is so hard to get by.
- 18 Also, most of the CEJA offices have
- 19 closed their -- were closed to me and my family, which
- 20 has made it even harder to get help. I can't -- I can
- 21 speak to -- I can speak for my family and families and
- 22 in my community to say that gas prices is already to



- 1 high. Not only should gas bills not be raised, there
- also needs to be discount rates that applies to the
- 3 whole bill for low income families. This can happen
- 4 across -- this can help address the need that already
- 5 exists in our communities. Thank you.
- 6 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you, Ms. Simms. Jordan
- Hamrick, please spell your name and then you're welcome
- 8 to start. Thank you.
- 9 MS. HAMRICK: Jordan Hamrick, Jordan;
- 10 J-O-R-D-A-N, Hamrick; H-A-M-R-I-C-K. Good morning. My
- 11 name is Jordan Hamrick. I'm utility watchdog organizer
- with Illinois PERG and I'm a Peoples Gas customer. I
- 13 want to thank the Commission today for the opportunity
- 14 to make a public comment. More than a decade, Peoples
- Gas has mismanaged its pipe replacement program. The
- 16 program is failing to effectively mitigate safety risks
- 17 and is causing widespread affordability problems.
- 18 Rather than pushing it down the road once
- 19 again, the Commission should take immediate action in
- 20 this Docket to reform this failing program and hold
- 21 Peoples Gas accountable. Since quarterly reporting
- 22 began in 2018, the pipe replacement program has been



- behind schedule every single quarter; that's 22
- 2 consecutive quarters. Also, the cost per mile of pipe
- 3 retired has been over budget every year. The estimated
- 4 cost of the program has grown from \$2B up to \$11B.
- 5 All the while, the program is a primary driver
- of the record rate hike request in six consecutive years
- 7 of record profits for Peoples Gas. Multiple outside
- 8 reviews of the program, including expert testimony in
- 9 this Docket, I found that the pipe replacement program
- 10 is failing to reduce safety risk in any proportion to
- 11 the billions of dollars spent. This is important, old
- iron pipes in the Peoples Gas system do pose a safety
- 13 risk. But Peoples Gas is a failing to effectively
- 14 address that risk. The program must be reformed to more
- 15 effectively prioritize risk reduction.
- 16 When the Commission last investigated the pipe
- 17 replacement program in 2018, it took no action on the
- 18 theory that the QIP law tied its hands. But the -- but
- 19 then Chairman commented at the time that quote,
- 20 "long-term annual costs that they have proposed will
- 21 cause too great a burden for too many households in
- 22 Chicago". He also commented that the QIP locks buyers,



- 1 "this program will revert to traditional rate cases
- where the ICC will have greater leverage". But rather
- 3 than using this leverage, the proposed order takes no
- 4 immediate action and instead directs Staff to produce a
- 5 report within six months.
- 6 Multiple parties have proposed immediate
- 7 actions that the Commission could take to start
- 8 restoring oversight and accountability of this program.
- 9 If the Commission does not like any of those options, it
- 10 can and should use its own authority to enact immediate
- 11 reforms. If left unchecked, Peoples Gas will continue
- 12 to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on this program
- 13 annually. Further driving up bills and making the
- 14 transition to clean energy much more challenging. The
- 15 executive chairman of WEC Energy Group, Peoples Gas
- 16 parent company stated on a call with Wall Street
- 17 investors that after the QIP law expires, quote, we
- 18 would revert to basically annual rate cases".
- 19 At long last, the Commission has the
- 20 opportunity to reform the failing pipe replacement
- 21 program. And rather than pushing it down the road as
- 22 the proposed order does, the Commission should restore



Page 21 some level of oversight and accountability, now. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment today. CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you Ms. Hamrick. 3 I'm going to do a last call for the three folks that we called before. Darnell Newman, Darnell Newman in the 5 room? (No audible response.) CHAIRMAN SCOTT: How about Michael Siewal? 8 9 (No audible response.) CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Brian Cohen? 10 (No audible response.) 11 12 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Going once. Going twice. 13 (No audible response.) CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Okay. Thank you to all of 14 15 our presenters today, I appreciate it. This concludes 16 our request to speak. 17 We will now move through our agenda. Moving on to the Public Utilities agenda. 18 Starting with electric items. 19 20 Item E1 concerns a proceeding to 21 terminate a Certificate of Service Authority to operate 22 as a retail electric supplier, agent, broker, and



Page 22 consultant in Illinois. The order suspends the respondent's license for 90 days. 2 Are there any objections to approving the 3 order? (No verbal response.) 5 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Hearing none, the proceeding is dismissed. Excuse me. Hearing none, the order is approved. 8 Items E2-E4 concern applications for 10 licenses to operate as retail electric agents, brokers and consultants in Illinois. The orders grant the 11 licenses finding that the applicants meet the 12 13 requirements. Are there any objections to considering these 14 15 items together and approving the orders? (No verbal response.) 16 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Hearing none, the orders are 17 approved. 18 Items E5-E8 concern applications for 19 20 certifications to install energy efficiency measures in Illinois. The orders grant their certificates finding 21 22 that the applicants meet the requirements.











Are there any objections to approving the

22

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       comments?
                       (No verbal response.)
                 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Hearing none, the comments
3
       are approved.
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                 This concludes our agenda. Judge Teague
       Kingsley, do we have any other matters to come before
       the Commission today?
                 JUDGE KINGSLEY: No, Mr. Chairman.
8
                 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Do the Commissioners have any
9
       other business to discuss?
10
                       (No verbal response.)
11
                 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: If there are no further
12
13
       comments and without objection, this meeting is
       adjourned. Thank you.
14
15
                       (Which were all the proceedings had in
16
                       the above-entitled cause on this date.)
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       STATE OF ILLINOIS.)
                            ) SS.
       COUNTY OF COOK
                         )
                 I, Michael Marciniak, CER, Notary Public, an
 3
       electronic reporter doing business in the State of
       Illinois; reported the proceedings that were held on the
       date, time and place set out on the title page hereof;
5
       and that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript
       of report of proceedings so taken aforesaid.
                  I further certify that I am not related to any
6
       of the parties, and I have no financial interest in the
       outcome of this matter.
7
                 Michael R Marcinak
8
                 MICHAEL R. MARCINIAK.
9
                 Certified Electronic Reporter, CER-2316
10
                 Notary Public
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