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BEFORE THE
ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION
PUBLIC UTILITY REGULAR OPEN MEETING
Wednesday, August 16, 2023
Springfield, Illinois

Met, pursuant to notice, at 11:30 a.m.

BEFORE:

- DOUG SCOTT, Chairperson
- MICHAEL T. CARRIGAN, Commissioner
- ANN McCABE, Commissioner
- CONRAD REDDICK, Commissioner
- STACEY PARADIS, Commissioner

Reported by:
Carla J. Boehl, Reporter
CSR #084-002710

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PROCEEDINGS

CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Good morning, everyone. Under the Open Meetings Act, I call the August 16, 2023, Regular Open Meeting to order. Commissioners Carrigan, McCabe, Reddick and Paradis are with me in Springfield. We have a quorum.

We have three requests to speak today from Mr. Brandin Hurley, Ms. Alice Englebretsen, and Mr. Stuart Levy. We will hear the speakers in that order beginning with Mr. Hurley.

Under 2 Illinois Administrative Code Section 1700.10, any person desiring to address the Commission shall be allowed up to three minutes. Only one person may speak on behalf of any organization. Please note that the Commission will not respond directly to your comments.

Mr. Hurley, are you there?

Mr. Hurley?

(No response.)

All right. Let's move on to Ms. Englebretsen. Ms. Englebretsen, are you there?

MS. ENGLEBRETSEN: I am.

1 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Very good. You will have
2 three minutes. Please note that my adviser will run
3 a timer and I will let you know when your time is up.
4 You may begin, but first, please, spell your name for
5 the court reporter.

6 MS. ENGLEBRETSSEN: Okay. First name is Alice,
7 A-L-I-C-E, last name Englebretsen,
8 E-N-G-L-E-B-R-E-T-S-E-N.

9 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you. Please go ahead.

10 MS. ENGLEBRETSSEN: Okay. My name is Alice
11 Englebretsen, and I have been active in the Sierra
12 Club for many years and serve on the executive
13 committee of the Prairie Group of East Central
14 Illinois, and I want to thank the Commission for this
15 opportunity to speak to you in person.

16 I have lived in Urbana for over 40
17 years, own a small, older home which has been
18 winterized and insulated as much as possible. I am
19 retired from the University of Illinois and live on a
20 fixed income which allows me to live on a small but
21 adequate budget with little flexibility.

22 Currently, I am signed up for two

1 other sources for renewable electric energy, Nexamp
2 and Arcadia, which help me reduce my overall bills
3 and allow me to use energy in my house on clean
4 power. These sources are very helpful when it comes
5 to the electric energy I use. They do not provide me
6 with a way to reduce the gas energy to heat my home.

7 As resources allow, I will be
8 converting to all electric appliances and home
9 heating, and would feel more incentive to do so if
10 the gas continues to increase. Ameren already has
11 big profits and is again proposing a large increase
12 in rates, which will become more unaffordable for
13 those on a small or fixed income.

14 We need to move beyond the use of
15 fossil fuels, as our planet is already showing severe
16 indications of global warning and climate change with
17 the highest temperatures this summer in recorded
18 history. The recent fires in Maui are the most
19 evident example of the warming planet, and we need to
20 be beyond fossil fuels as soon as possible. It does
21 not make sense for us to support Ameren's source of
22 dirty and polluting energy.

1 If Ameren increases their rate even
2 more, they will be giving more incentives for me to
3 extend my limited resources and move into more
4 affordable and clean sources of energy. The
5 increased rates are only a discouragement to
6 investing any more resources in dirty energy, and
7 they will eventually be phased out. And I encourage
8 you to not grant Ameren the opportunity to raise
9 their rates.

10 Thanks again for the opportunity to
11 comment on the unnecessary rate increase requested by
12 Ameren. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you, Ms. Englebretsen.

14 Next we have Mr. Levy. Mr. Levy, you
15 will have three minutes. Are you there?

16 MR. LEVY: Yep.

17 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: All right. So, please, first
18 spell your name for the court reporter, and then you
19 will have three minutes. Go right ahead, sir.

20 MR. LEVY: Okay. S-T-U-A-R-T, then L-E-V, as
21 in Victor, Y. That's me.

22 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Very good. Go right ahead,

1 sir.

2 MR. LEVY: Okay. Thank you. I am Stuart Levy.
3 I am an Ameren customer living in Champaign. My home
4 is heated with natural gas, and I appreciate the
5 chance to speak at this hearing. I am also a
6 volunteer with, but not speaking for, Sierra Club.

7 I hope that the Commission will decide
8 to limit or reject the Ameren gas rate increase on
9 the grounds that investing in gas infrastructure is a
10 dead end and that it shouldn't be the highest
11 priority for allocating limited ratepayer dollars.

12 Natural gas regularly gets presented,
13 and I know it has been to this Commission before, as
14 a clean, cheap, reliably available energy source.
15 That seemed especially believable during the last 15
16 years or so with fracking producing abundant domestic
17 gas, and that kept the price low and tempted both
18 retail customers and also electric power utilities
19 and industrial users to switch to it.

20 So much gas became available that the
21 price went below a lot of people's cost of production
22 and a lot of drilling companies went bankrupt. That

1 gas boom is gone, and we have seen the price of gas
2 leap upward in the last couple of years even before
3 sanctions against Russia raised it still further, and
4 investors in gas production don't want to see another
5 unprofitable boom. In short, cheap gas is not coming
6 back.

7 Further, as export by LNG ramps up,
8 gas suppliers are tempted to sell into higher priced
9 markets elsewhere, as in Europe. So, gas that seems
10 abundant now may not remain so as exports increase.

11 Gas isn't even relatively clean.
12 Although it is claimed to have a smaller climate
13 impact than burning coal, that much is true only if
14 leaks are kept to an extremely low percentage, which
15 they probably aren't.

16 Natural gas is still necessary for
17 now. Replacement of consumer heating and appliances
18 won't happen overnight -- I mean, I haven't replaced
19 mine yet -- although there is a lot that can be done
20 to promote the transition to using electric
21 appliances and other alternatives.

22 But this gas-specific rate increase is

1 proposed at a time when there is great need for other
2 energy investments in this state, in developing
3 electric transmission capacity, in wrapping up
4 renewable supplies in storage, which are demonstrably
5 cheaper as well as cleaner, and promoting energy
6 efficiency. But Illinois ratepayers can only afford
7 so much. It's up to you on the ICC to consider the
8 long view and to recognize where priorities should
9 lie.

10 What I hope the ICC will not encourage
11 is Ameren investing in gas as if it has a long-term
12 future. Large, new investments in gas capacity which
13 this rate increase might well fund, they are a dead
14 end -- we should see them that way -- and a poor use
15 of ratepayers' money. I hope you will look closely
16 at how Ameren says they will use this rate increase
17 and be prepared to limit or reject it in favor of
18 leaving room for other energy investments.

19 Thank you for considering this issue.

20 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you very much, Mr. Levy.

21 I will do a last call for Mr. Hurley.

22 Have you joined us? Are you on the call?

1 MS. HURLEY: Hi. Yeah, that's me.

2 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Oh, okay. You will have three
3 minutes. Spell your -- is this Brandin Hurley?

4 MS. HURLEY: Yeah, it is.

5 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Okay. Spell your -- if you
6 would spell your name for the court reporter, and
7 then you will have three minutes. Go right ahead.

8 MS. HURLEY: Okay, great. My name is Brandin,
9 B-R-A-N-D-I-N, Hurley, H-U-R-L-E-Y.

10 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you. Go right ahead.

11 MS. HURLEY: So, I am -- great. Thank you so
12 much.

13 So, I am a Peoples Gas customer and I
14 am also a volunteer with the Illinois Sierra Club. I
15 just think that it's extremely vital that we seek out
16 possible fuel infrastructure and transition to
17 renewable energy sources instead of wasting money on
18 expensive energy that pollutes the air we breathe and
19 reduces the chance of a livable future. The
20 Commission should start planning for the transition
21 to electric homes.

22 The Peoples Gas Pipe Replacement

1 Program is wasting billions of dollars on soon-to-be
2 obsolete fossil fuel infrastructure. The ICC must
3 reject the proposed Peoples Gas hike rates in light
4 that it is a utility that is operating under the
5 premise that we are not in a planet crisis.

6 As a consumer and a climate advocate,
7 I am deeply unhappy with the \$402 million rate hike
8 request from a company that is bankrupting customers
9 while continuing to stumble and mismanage their
10 troubled pipeline replacement program. Chicago must
11 lower costs for energy prices, invest in clean air to
12 protect our health, act on climate by transitioning
13 to clean and efficient homes that will create
14 thousands of good paying jobs in the process. The
15 ICC must reject the proposed highest rate hike in our
16 state's history.

17 Thank you so much for allowing me to
18 contribute to this and considering our comments.

19 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you very much,
20 Ms. Hurley. That concludes our requests to speak for
21 today.

22 Moving on to the Public Utilities

1 Agenda, there are edits to the July 13 Regular Open
2 Meeting minutes and the May 8 Special Open Meeting
3 minutes.

4 Are there any objections to considering
5 these items together and approving the minutes as
6 edited?

7 (No response.)

8 Hearing none, the minutes are approved
9 as edited.

10 Item E-1 concerns an application for
11 certification to install distributed generation
12 facilities in Illinois. The Order denies the
13 certificate, finding that the applicant did not
14 demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the
15 Public Utilities Act and Part 468 of the Commission's
16 rules.

17 Are there any objections to approving
18 the Order?

19 (No response.)

20 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

21 Items E-2 through E-4 concern
22 applications for certification to install distributed

1 generation facilities in Illinois. The Orders grant
2 the certificates, finding that the applicants meet
3 the licensing requirements.

4 Are there any objections to considering
5 these items together and approving the Orders?

6 (No response.)

7 Hearing none, the Orders are approved.

8 Item E-5 concerns a petition by Prairie
9 Power for authority to exercise the right of eminent
10 domain. Prairie Power has filed a Motion to
11 Withdraw, indicating that the parties have resolved
12 this matter by agreement.

13 Are there any objections to granting the
14 Motion to Withdraw?

15 (No response.)

16 Hearing none, the motion is granted.

17 Item E-6 concerns a petition to cancel a
18 Certificate of Service Authority to operate as an
19 alternative retail electric supplier in Illinois.
20 The petitioner no longer wishes to conduct business
21 in Illinois and currently has no customers in
22 Illinois. The Order grants the petition to cancel

1 the certificate.

2 Are there any objections to approving
3 the Order?

4 (No response.)

5 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

6 Items E-7 and E-8 concern citations
7 against alternative electric suppliers for failure to
8 comply with filing requirements. The Order suspends
9 the certificates.

10 Are there any objections to considering
11 these items together and approving the Orders?

12 (No response.)

13 Hearing none, the Orders are approved.

14 Item E-9 concerns an application for
15 certification to install, maintain or repair electric
16 vehicle charging station facilities in Illinois. The
17 Order grants the certificate, finding that the
18 applicant meets the requirements.

19 Are there any objections to approving
20 the Order?

21 (No response.)

22 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

1 Item E-10 concerns a petition by Ameren
2 for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity
3 to construct, operate and maintain a new high voltage
4 electric service line and related facilities in
5 Peoria County, Illinois. The Order grants the
6 petition, finding the project to be in the public
7 interest.

8 Are there any objections to approving
9 the Order?

10 (No response.)

11 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

12 Item E-11 concerns a petition from
13 Ameren to reconcile uncollectible costs related to
14 the Utility Consolidated Billing and Purchase of
15 Receivables Program. Staff has reviewed the
16 reconciliation proposed by Ameren and found no cause
17 to propose any adjustments. The Order approves the
18 reconciliation.

19 Are there any objections to approving
20 the Order?

21 (No response.)

22 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

1 Item E-12 concerns a petition by
2 MidAmerican requesting consent and approval to engage
3 in a transaction with an affiliated interest. The
4 Order grants the petition, finding that the financing
5 proposal set forth in the petition is in the public
6 interest and supported by evidence in the docket.

7 Are there any objections to approving
8 the Order?

9 (No response.)

10 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

11 Item E-13 concerns a petition to cancel
12 a Certificate of Service Authority to install energy
13 efficiency measures. The Order grants the petition
14 and cancels the certificate.

15 Are there any objections to approving
16 the Order?

17 (No response.)

18 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

19 Items E-14 through E-22 concern
20 applications for certification to install energy
21 efficiency measures in Illinois. The Orders grant
22 the certificates, finding that the applicants meet

1 the requirements.

2 Are there any objections to considering
3 these items together and approving the Orders?

4 (No response.)

5 Hearing none, the Orders are approved.

6 Moving on to our Gas Items, Item G-1
7 concerns a petition for confidential treatment of the
8 petitioner's annual rate report. The Order denies
9 the petition, finding that information in the report
10 must be made available to the public.

11 Are there any objections to approving
12 the Order?

13 (No response.)

14 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

15 Item G-2 concerns a petition for
16 confidential treatment of the petitioner's annual
17 recertification report. The Order grants the
18 protection, finding that the information is highly
19 proprietary and confidential.

20 Are there any objections to approving
21 the Order?

22 (No response.)

1 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

2 Item G-3 concerns a petition for a
3 declaratory ruling. The petitioner filed a motion to
4 withdraw, stating that it does not intend to pursue
5 the petition. The ALJ recommends granting the motion
6 and dismissing the petition without prejudice.

7 Are there any objections to granting the
8 motion and dismissing the petition without prejudice?

9 (No response.)

10 Hearing none, the motion is granted and
11 the petition is dismissed without prejudice.

12 Moving on to Telecommunication Items,
13 Items T-1 through T-5 concern requests for
14 proprietary treatment of information in petitioners'
15 reports. The Orders grant the protections, finding
16 that the information is highly proprietary and
17 confidential.

18 Are there any objections to considering
19 these items together and approving the Orders?

20 (No response.)

21 Hearing none, the Orders are approved.

22 Item T-6 concerns a petition to

1 surrender a Certificate of Public Convenience and
2 Necessity and to withdraw tariffs. The Order grants
3 the petition and cancels the certificate.

4 Are there any objections to approving
5 the Order?

6 (No response.)

7 Hearing none, the Order is approved.

8 Moving on to Other Business, Items O-1
9 and O-2 concern approval of batches, contracts and
10 confirmations under the Illinois Adjustable Block
11 Program and the Illinois Solar For All Program. Are
12 there any objections to considering these items
13 together and approving the program administrator's
14 submissions?

15 (No response.)

16 Hearing none, the submissions are
17 approved.

18 This concludes our Public Utilities
19 Agenda. Judge Teague-Kingsley, do we have other
20 matters to come before the Commission today?

21 JUDGE TEAGUE-KINGSLEY: No, Mr. Chairman.

22 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you. Any Commissioners

1 have any other business to discuss? Commissioner
2 McCabe.

3 COMMISSIONER McCABE: I want to recognize our
4 summer intern, Felix Okumu. He has assisted us with
5 reviewing agendas and analyzing data from the
6 Dashboard on credit collections and arrearages.
7 That's about a little over a year old. Felix returns
8 to ISU where he will get his Master's in Applied
9 Economics next May. Thank you, Felix.

10 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Thank you, Felix. Good luck
11 to you.

12 MR. OKUMU: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: If there are no further
14 comments and without objection, this meeting is
15 adjourned. Thank you.

16 MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:51 A.M.

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