

1 STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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3 In the Matter of
CASE 12-E-0201

4
5 A Proceeding on Motion of the Commission as to
6 the Rates, Charges, Rules and Regulations of
Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation d/b/a National
Grid for Electric Service.

7
8 CASE 12-G-0202

9 A Proceeding on Motion of the Commission as to
10 the Rates, Charges, Rules and Regulations of
Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation d/b/a National
Grid Gas Services.

11 =====

12 January 8, 2013
3:30 p.m.

13 Schenectady Public Library
14 McChesney Conference Hall
15 95 Clinton Street
Schenectady, New York 12303

16 STENOGRAPHIC RECORD of a Public Statement
17 Hearing in the above-entitled matters
pursuant to notice dated December 17, 2012.

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20 BEFORE: PAUL AGRESTA, ESQ.
21 Administrative Law Judge

22

23

24 REPORTED BY:
Beth S. Goldman, RPR
25 Certified Shorthand Reporter

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

2 ALJ AGRESTA: It is 3:30; if people will
3 take their seats. We are on the record. I call
4 case 12-E-0201 and 12-G-0202.

5 These cases are before the New York
6 State Public Service Commission to consider
7 proposed changes in the electric and gas rates and
8 services of Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation doing
9 business as National Grid.

10 My name is Paul Agresta. I am an
11 Administrative Law Judge, and I have been
12 designated to preside at today's hearing.

13 First, I would like to thank the
14 Schenectady County Public Library for hosting this
15 event.

16 The purpose of today's hearing is to
17 receive comments from the public. Every comment
18 made will be recorded in a written transcript on
19 the record and will be presented to the Commission
20 for its consideration prior to any decisions being
21 made in these cases.

22 Today's hearing will remain open from
23 3:30 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. and will be reopened
24 from 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

25 I ask that anyone wishing to speak

1 please fill out a card provided at the entrance so
2 that we can record your appearance and put you in
3 line to speak; okay?

4 Are there any process before we begin
5 with the speakers from anybody?

6 (No response from attendees)

7 ALJ AGRESTA: Okay. Hearing none, we so
8 far have four speakers on the queue, and I will
9 ask the speakers to come forward. I think this
10 microphone is working. Hopefully, it is. And,
11 the first speaker is Arthur Everett.

12 MR. EVERETT: Good morning, and bear
13 with me. I have only half a throat, so sometimes
14 it's difficult. But, anyway, as Mark Twain said,
15 "All I know is what I read in the paper." And I
16 read in the paper that National Grid wants an
17 increase on delivery services. I'm sure they have
18 a litany of reasons why they need it to sustain
19 the service end of it. But, speaking for myself
20 and maybe on behalf of many in this city --
21 probably a third -- who are on fixed incomes such
22 as Social Security, we as individuals cannot
23 sustain an increase in delivery services. And,
24 I'm sure that National Grid could dispute that,
25 but as individuals we cannot. And, very often,

1 the cost of delivery service, at least in my
2 instance, exceeds the cost of the product. So, I
3 adamantly protest an increase in such service.

4 Thank you.

5 ALJ AGRESTA: Thank you very much, Mr.
6 Everett.

7 The next speaker is Carol Wilbur.

8 MS. WILBUR: Hello. I'm here, number
9 one, to question how they can justify an already
10 three times the supply bill. Every month when I
11 look at my National Grid, whatever you use in
12 supply the delivery is already three times that
13 much. But, more importantly, I'm here more on
14 behalf of my mother who is 87 and on a fixed
15 income. And she's lowering her thermostat every
16 month because she is so fearful of opening her
17 National Grid bill. She's wearing triple layers,
18 okay. And, how they can justify raising these
19 rates when they are already three times what you
20 use is incomprehensible. With all of the people
21 on fixed incomes, they got a 1.7 raise, all of the
22 people that are unemployed, which is close to nine
23 percent in this state. And, with inflation only
24 going up -- U. S. Inflation is one percent. I
25 really have no idea how they can justify this for

1 people. So, as I said, I'm here more on behalf of
2 my mother who I am concerned about, and for all of
3 the other senior citizens that are trying to live
4 from month to month.

5 ALJ AGRESTA: Thank you very much.

6 The next speaker is Chuck Steiner.

7 MR. STEINER: Good afternoon. My name
8 is Charles Steiner. I am President of the Chamber
9 of Schenectady County. I am here today to comment
10 on the Joint Proposal filed on December 7, 2012 by
11 Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation d/b/a National
12 Grid, New York State Department of Public Service
13 and Multiple Intervenors for the Case 12-E-0201
14 and Case 12-G-0102 to approve an increase in
15 revenues for electric and gas delivery service.

16 Schenectady businesses employ more than
17 52,000 workers in Schenectady County and the
18 capital region in diverse industries ranging from
19 energy and research to manufacturing to retail
20 distribution. The Chamber of Commerce of
21 Schenectady County represents more than 1,000 of
22 these businesses. We advocate for businesses and
23 strive to drive member profitability and
24 sustainability.

25 The Chamber of Schenectady County

1 recommends that the New York State Public Service
2 Commission approve this proposal. We believe that
3 the measure of rate stability proposed will have a
4 positive effect on our members over the next three
5 years and we are pleased that it provides for a
6 slightly lower rate in 2013 for gas customers.

7 We are also pleased that the proposed
8 agreement contains quantifiable performance
9 measures for National Grid. It includes
10 measurable safety and customer service standards
11 which should tighten performance and reliability
12 while improving equipment maintenance at National
13 Grid, all of which benefit businesses in the
14 capital region. National Grid has been a good
15 partner to the Chamber and to the Schenectady
16 community. We are looking forward to continue
17 working with them in 2013 and beyond.

18 We thank you for the opportunity to
19 speak.

20 ALJ AGRESTA: Thank you very much for
21 your time.

22 The next speaker is Ray Gillen.

23 MR. GILLEN: Thank you. I am Ray
24 Gillen. I am the Chairman of the Schenectady
25 County Metroplex Development Authority. I am also

1 the Commissioner of Metropolitan Development and
2 Planning for Schenectady County.

3 This rate proposal marks the second
4 electricity price reduction by National Grid in
5 the last 15 months. This proposal will reduce
6 both gas and electric delivery costs in 2013,
7 which is very positive. As the commodity price
8 has also been dropping, especially the price of
9 natural gas, the result of a lower commodity price
10 and a lower deliver rate will save both
11 residential and business customers substantial
12 amounts of money in 2013 and beyond.

13 This proposal calls for electric rates
14 going down ten percent in 2013, gas going down
15 nine percent in 2013. And, we think that is going
16 to help the economy as it comes out of recession.
17 In addition, the proposal costs for \$1.6 billion
18 in spending on the capital side, which will help
19 in boosting the economy.

20 I want to thank National Grid for their
21 vigorous support of economic development in the
22 County. They have worked with us to renew over
23 1,400 new jobs in General Electric and helping to
24 renovate the former Big N Plaza which is now home
25 to the Price Chopper headquarters. They have

1 helped us to renovate Center City, which is a \$30
2 million project downtown. They have helped us to
3 renovate the former AlCo site. They are a good
4 partner in our effort to grow the economy in
5 Schenectady County and the economy of Upstate New
6 York.

7 So, we look at this proposal as one that
8 reduces rates at a critical time for our economy
9 and drives rates lower in the short term, and
10 provides for price stability through 2016. So, we
11 applaud and encourage your proposal.

12 Thank you very much.

13 ALJ AGRESTA: Thank you.

14 The next speaker is Carmel Patrick.

15 MS. PATRICK: Hi. I'm Carmel Patrick.

16 I'm the Executive Director for Economic
17 Development for Schenectady County Community
18 College here in Schenectady.

19 National Grid is an important community
20 partner of many organizations in our community,
21 including the SCCC Foundation. Their
22 philanthropic support of our organization assists
23 us in supporting the continued growth and success
24 of our college, its students, and its role in the
25 economic development of our community.

1 Additionally, National Grid recently has assisted
2 the college in its recovery efforts from the
3 damages sustained from Hurricane Irene with a
4 \$100,000 grant. We value their support and
5 investment. We look forward to National Grid's
6 continued support and investment in our community.
7 And, we support the proposal.

8 Thank you.

9 ALJ AGRESTA: Thank you very much.

10 That's the last card I have. Does
11 anybody else want to speak at this time?

12 Okay. Hearing none, we are going to go
13 off the record until either the time expires or
14 someone comes forward and wants to make a comment.

15 Thank you very much to everyone who made
16 comments today.

17 (Recess: 3:50 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.)

18 ALJ AGRESTA: We'll go back on the
19 record. We have Joe F. Plante from Schenectady,
20 New York. Would you please come forward and make
21 your statement.

22 MS. I'm Joe Plante from Schenectady,
23 New York. I'm a homeowner. The problem that I
24 have, basically, with National Grid is their
25 delivery charge. I am looking at my electric

1 service bill from the recent billing statement.
2 And, for example, electric service was \$71.66 and
3 the supply service was \$73.61. So, they charged
4 me almost as much as what I use just for the
5 delivery charge. I always wondered why they
6 haven't come up with a flat fee, say \$25 or \$50 to
7 offset what they may be losing out since they have
8 been in service for so long. And, also, why
9 during the summer months they charged almost three
10 times more than my supply usage on the delivery
11 charge. I don't use air conditioning and, of
12 course, less heat. The delivery charge is
13 sometimes three times more than what I use. It's
14 higher than what it should be for the summer since
15 we are not using air conditioning in my home.

16 On my bill here locally in Schenectady,
17 I see four sales taxes, and here we go again being
18 gouged by the sales tax. Maybe one flat fee would
19 be perfect. And I believe that any utility
20 company in the 21st century should be pushing the
21 usage of solar. We hear a lot about solar and
22 developing it and all that. But, I really don't
23 see them -- I have been hearing about it since the
24 first Cuomo come on board, and my parents were
25 involved with that since the so-called oil

1 embargo. My dad used to always say, "Shut those
2 lights out when you leave the room," and we had
3 stickers that Niagara Mohawk at that time gave out
4 and they still give out. And, that's good,
5 because everything that's plugged in that you
6 don't use when it is plugged in should be turned
7 off. That's just basic common sense. Yet,
8 National Grid has called my home a couple of times
9 throughout the last couple of years, and I don't
10 see the figures of three dollars that they are
11 charging go us to teach consumers how to conserve.
12 It's just another three dollars to gouge out of
13 the overtax and overspending.

14 Not long ago, I was speaking with a
15 commodities expert, and he had told me that no
16 gallon of gasoline is worth more than two dollars.
17 It's just liquid; it's not worth more than two
18 dollars a gallon. Yet, we see -- and I know this
19 hasn't got much to do with National Grid -- but
20 were they go out and buy gas -- and I know it's a
21 worldwide issue. Yet, here in New York State,
22 consumers and the Public Service Commission as
23 well as now Governor Cuomo have been pushing more
24 and more for utilities to get off our back and I
25 don't see where they are.

1 The Legislature also are to blame. They
2 allow these sales taxes; again, four sales taxes
3 -- four -- in one billing, four separate ones.
4 So, added up, that's another 16 dollars that
5 should taken off my bill. Again, I'm concerned
6 that the delivery charges, you know, kind of take
7 over my kind of conservation expertise and we are
8 not really winning out at all.

9 Again, thank you for your time and this
10 discussion.

11 ALJ AGRESTA: Thank you very much. Is
12 there anybody else who would like to make a
13 comment at this time? Anybody? Peter Looker?

14 MR. LOOKER: Right.

15 ALJ AGRESTA: Please make your
16 statement.

17 MR. LOOKER: Hello, and thank you. I'm
18 one of those people that think the scientists who
19 say we are changing the climate are true.

20 ALJ AGRESTA: You're not alone in that.

21 MR. LOGAN: Okay, good. My concern is
22 with the rate structure. And I'm not familiar
23 with the actual details of this. But, when I last
24 looked at it, if we use more than a certain amount
25 we would actually get a lower rate, you know. And

1 it's kind of like going to the store to buy five
2 things and get it cheaper. It seems to add a
3 disincentive to people particularly using a lot of
4 fuel, a lot of electricity. I would much prefer
5 it was, at minimum, a flat line rate. So, if we
6 turn off a light switch, whether you are using a
7 whole lot or a little, you are going to save the
8 same amount and it would encourage people to use a
9 little bit less. So, my plug is to put a
10 financial incentive to it to save. Similar to
11 when I was up in Saratoga, the first half of
12 people would never have to pay any more for water
13 than basic structure if they got so-much for free.
14 At the top end, the racetrack would pay one-tenth
15 the rate that the average person would pay. And,
16 rather than use their own wells to water the
17 track, they would actually pay the city to pump
18 the water and filter it, chlorinate it, pump it,
19 and deliver it to them because it's cheaper than
20 it was to just do that.

21 So, would encourage you to put some
22 incentive into everyone's rates to save it. Thank
23 you.

24 ALJ AGRESTA: Thank you very much.

25 Is there anyone else who would like to

1 make a statement at this time? Otherwise, we can
2 go back off the record again. And we will resume
3 on the record if any more speakers come by.

4 Thank you.

5 (Time noted 4:06 p.m.)

6 ALJ AGRESTA: Let's go back on the
7 record for a second. It is 5:00 p.m. and we have
8 no pending speakers, so we are going to close this
9 session. And, we will reconvene at 6:30.

10 (The public statement session was
11 concluded at approximately 5:00 p.m.)

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