

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

4 CASE 23-E-0418 - Proceeding on motion of the
5 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
6 Regulations of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
7 Corporation for electric service.

8
9 CASE 23-G-0419 - Proceeding on motion of the
10 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
11 Regulations of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
12 Corporation for gas service.

13
14 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

15 DATE: October 17, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

16 LOCATION: ROBERT ANTOELLO SENIOR CENTER
17 15 Academy Street
18 Catskill, New York 12414

19 BEFORE: ALJ ASHLEY MORENO
20 ALJ JAMES COSTELLO
21

22
23 Reported by Monique Hines
24
25

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 (The hearing commenced at 1:30 p.m.)

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Can we go on the
4 record? Okay.

5 I call cases 23-E-0418 and 23-G-0419.
6 Proceedings on motions of the Commission as to the
7 Rates, Charges, Rules and Regulations of Central
8 Hudson Gas and Electric Corporation for electric and
9 gas service. Good afternoon.

10 We're here today for a public
11 statement hearing that was noticed by the Secretary
12 of the Commission on September 26th, 2023. The
13 public statement hearing concerns the proposed
14 changes in the electric and gas delivery rates and
15 practices of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
16 Corporation, which I will refer just -- to just as
17 Central Hudson, from now on.

18 Central Hudson filed amendments to its
19 electric and gas tariff schedules on July 31st, 2023,
20 proposing to increase its annual electric and gas
21 delivery revenues effective July 1st, 2024. It
22 proposes to increase its electric delivery revenues
23 by approximately \$139.5 million, which would be a
24 31.9 percent increase in base delivery revenues, or a
25 16.4 percent increase in total revenues. And it

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 proposes to increase its natural gas delivery
3 revenues by approximately \$41.5 million, which would
4 be a 29.2 percent increase in base delivery revenues
5 or a 19 percent increase in total revenues. The
6 actual impacts on bills from those proposed changes
7 on any particular customers will vary based upon
8 revenue allocation and rate design.

9 My name is James Costello, I'm an
10 Administrative Law Judge with the Department of
11 Public Service. With me here today is Ashley Moreno,
12 who is also an Administrative Law Judge with the
13 Department of Public Service, and together we're
14 responsible for presiding over the hearings in this
15 case and the development of a complete record. Under
16 New York State Law, the Public Service Commission is
17 the final decision maker in this case, and it must
18 consider a utility's proposal and may adopt or reject
19 it in whole or in part, or it may modify it.

20 The Public Service Commission will
21 decide what Central Hudson's terms and conditions of
22 service -- service will be. The Commission has
23 seven members, the Chairperson, Rory Christian and
24 six commissioners; Diane Burman, who's seated to my
25 left. Rory Christian, I'm sorry, Diane Burman, James

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 Alesi, Tracey Edwards, John Howard, David Valesky,
3 and John Maggiore. As I said, we're fortunate today
4 to have Commissioner Burman here with us, and I'd
5 like to ask Commissioner Burman if she'd like to
6 address you.

7 MS. BURMAN: Thanks. I just wanted to
8 say thank you all for coming out. My role here is
9 really to be a listener. I came down here and I will
10 go back to my fellow Commissioners and share with
11 them what I learned. So I appreciate the opportunity
12 to be here and for all of you. Thanks.

13 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you,
14 Commissioner. So what I'm going to do now is just
15 briefly explain -- explain what the process is that
16 we're going to follow today. As I said, the purpose
17 of your statements today your -- or the hearing
18 today, is to allow you to give your statements and
19 tell the Commission your thoughts on Central Hudson's
20 rate filings. The statements that you make today
21 will become part of the case record. We have a court
22 reporter with us today who will prepare a transcript
23 of the proceeding which will be included in the
24 official record, so that your comments can be
25 considered by all members of the Commission. When it

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 is ready, the transcript will be available for view
3 on the Department of Public Services website. This
4 hearing's not an evidentiary hearing, and it's not a
5 question-and-answer session. It's a forum to hear
6 comments from you, and it's not the only opportunity
7 to comment. If you're here and you don't wish to
8 make a comment, but you still want to make a comment
9 -- public comment, at the hearings today, and you
10 still want to submit something so that it's
11 considered by the Commission, there are other ways to
12 do that. And the way that you can do that is by
13 submitting comments on the Department's website by
14 regular mail or by telephone. And the notice of
15 public statement hearings has detailed information
16 about how you would do any of those things.

17 Regardless of how you provide your
18 comments, they are given equal weight and comments
19 will be considered throughout the pendency of these
20 proceedings. So if you've already taken a seat and
21 you've decided that you would like to make a
22 statement and you haven't already filled out a card,
23 you can feel free to go up and fill out a card at the
24 desk to -- to my left, and you can fill out a card
25 and make a statement, as long as the this hearing --

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 these hearings are going on.

3 I'm going to call the speakers up one
4 by one using cards that we have, and I want you to
5 please when I call your name, please go to the
6 podium, which is up at the right and speak into the
7 microphone. You may have to move the microphone so
8 that we can hear your comments. We also ask that you
9 speak slowly and clearly so that the court reporter
10 can capture your comments for the record. To the
11 extent you may have a lengthy statement that's in
12 writing, you can summarize the statement orally and
13 present us with the complete statement in writing,
14 and we will have that posted on the case file.

15 And before we begin, I just want to
16 remind everyone to please be respectful today of
17 today's speakers and do not interrupt the speakers or
18 these proceedings, and please make sure to silence if
19 you have your telephones, silence the phones now.
20 And with that, we're going to start with our first
21 speaker, who is Michael Pirrone.

22 MR. PIRRONE: Good afternoon, Judges,
23 Commissioner. I'm Michael Pirrone. I am the Town
24 Supervisor of the Town of Athens, and I have prepared
25 a written statement, but I will give a summary of my

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 issues and so forth. I'm here to represent the
3 citizens of the Town of Athens that have endured
4 several years of high rates, problems with their
5 service and so forth. Okay? And not all issues have
6 been resolved from my communications with my citizens
7 and meeting them and so forth. Our biggest problem
8 that I'm aware of, that many customers are unable to
9 keep up with these high rates that keep coming
10 forward. We are a small town. Many of our people
11 are on a fixed income or single income families.

12 These rates will have a significant
13 impact on our low- and moderate-income families, and
14 I take that from having firsthand knowledge. My wife
15 is a substitute teacher in the local grammar school,
16 and she comes across many of these children that come
17 from low-income families that are struggling to meet
18 both their nutritional needs and the needs that make
19 a happy family and a comfortable home, all right?
20 These high rates will force the families to choose
21 between feeding their children or heating the house
22 and turning on the lights. I think Central Hudson
23 needs to understand this in their rate increase and
24 look at the population of the people that they are
25 serving.

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 And in closing, again, as having
3 firsthand knowledge and so forth, we have a community
4 food pantry. In 2022, this food pantry was serving
5 52 families a month. In 2023, we are up to 64
6 families being serviced a month, and if that isn't an
7 indication of the need and the financial condition of
8 the Town of Athens, I don't know what else to say,
9 okay? Thank you for your time and I appreciate it
10 very much.

11 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you.

12 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

13 MR. PIRRONE: You're welcome.

14 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Our next speaker is
15 Sigrid Coons.

16 MS. COONS: Hello, my name is Sigrid
17 Coons. I do have one comment about the meeting
18 times. It's in the afternoon and a lot of working
19 people are not available to come. I see that there
20 is another meeting in another location that is
21 Newburgh at six p.m., but I don't know if all
22 families would be able to make it at six p.m., if
23 they are ending their work time at five p.m. That's
24 one comment and I think that everyone should have an
25 opportunity to comment, not just the folks who can

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 make it here in the afternoon. I'd like to know when
3 citizens have the opportunity to receive 31.9 percent
4 increase in their personal income, to compensate for
5 the exorbitant increase that Central Hudson is asking
6 for in their proposal. Because the banks are only
7 paying 5 percent on a C.D. currently, and up until
8 recently, it was a very nominal amount that they were
9 paying for interest. So people don't have this type
10 of increase available in their own personal budgets.

11 There were also billing issues that I
12 know that you're very well familiar with. I don't
13 know if they have all been resolved. Fortunately, we
14 didn't have one of those, but I've heard where people
15 had a thousand dollar bill when they were
16 traditionally averaging like a 100 or \$200 bill. The
17 explanation here, the actual bill impact of those
18 proposed changes on any particular customer class,
19 will vary based upon revenue allocation and rate
20 design is extremely vague. We should have more
21 details on what that is entailing.

22 There's a statement here that the
23 increase will be used for replacing aging
24 infrastructure; that should have been done all along.
25 What happened in previous years, why weren't they

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 replacing that aging infrastructure and replacing it.
3 Additionally, the increase labor costs, which would
4 be covered by this increase, again, that's vague.
5 Are they talking about giving increases to management
6 and exponentially higher rates to the management? Is
7 it going to be equivalent for all classes of
8 employees for Central Hudson? Again, very vague.
9 There's a statement here that Central Hudson states
10 that the rate increase are attributable to --
11 attributable to continued and enhanced low income and
12 energy efficiency programs. Not everyone takes
13 advantage of those. One of the programs that they
14 had was for solar panels, so people were paying in
15 the rates for this particular proposal. We don't
16 feel that solar panels are completely safe at this
17 time. My father -- my husband is in the fire company
18 and he's heard of situations where fires have started
19 because of these solar panels, and also with the
20 solar panels, and this may be off topic, they're good
21 for what, 20 years? So now we have a landfill
22 problem. What are we doing with those items that
23 have to be replaced? There's like a built-in
24 obsolescence on that and we need to have some
25 consideration for that. And I believe I covered the

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 topics that I intended to cover. Thank you.

3 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.

4 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
5 speaker is Pam O'Reilly.

6 MS. O'REILLY: Thank you. Hi, my name
7 is Pam O' Riley. I live out in Cairo. Several
8 years ago, when I would get the Central Hud -- Hudson
9 bill, it would be for two months. Now I get the
10 Central Hudson bill, it's for one month and it's more
11 than the two months that I used to pay. Recently, I
12 got a -- well, all my -- my bills go onto my charge
13 card, so I'm not paying them by check. And one of my
14 statements for my -- my bill, showed that they
15 charged me -- on August 18th, they charged me
16 \$316.71. Now I have a big house, but I'm not in
17 every room and I don't have the lights on in every
18 room. The house is -- only the kitchen is used and
19 maybe the living room, and that doesn't get on until
20 nighttime, so why I am being charged \$316.71? I have
21 a gas stove, so that's not electric. And I -- I just
22 don't understand why it's so high.

23 Not only that, but 16-days later, they
24 charged me again on 9/4, they charged me \$152.32.
25 Are they reading my meter every two weeks now? I

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 thought it was once a month. They used to be once
3 every other month, now we're going to every two
4 weeks? And that's oh -- about \$500. I'm a single
5 parent, retired. I don't have this money. You --
6 you expect me -- I have a garden; am I supposed to
7 plant money and make it come from a tree? There's --
8 there's no other way. I'm in my late 60s, am I going
9 to get a job? I don't want to go back to work. I
10 worked over 40 years. I worked down in Manhattan. I
11 took a train every day. It took me an hour and a
12 half to get to work, two hours to come home. And
13 then I worked up here. I worked in schools, I worked
14 for social services, I worked with the elderly, I
15 worked with children. I don't want to go back to
16 work. It's time for me to sit back and enjoy my
17 life, and getting a \$500 bill is insane.

18 I don't know where you expect me to
19 come up with this money. I only get my pension and
20 Social Security. It -- it's ridiculous that besides
21 the fact that all my other bills have gone up, not as
22 much as your bills have gone up, but my bills have
23 all gone up every year.

24 A.L.J. COSTELLO: I -- I just want to
25 -- we're -- we're on behalf of the Department of

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 Public Service and we have a Commissioner here.
3 We're not on behalf of the company. So this is --
4 you're talking about the Company's bills, but we're
5 not representing the Company. We're not on behalf of
6 the Company. I just want to clarify that.

7 MS. COONS: Oh, okay. Well, it's just
8 -- like I said, it's just bills are outrageous and
9 you know, you can bring that back to the Company.
10 Thank you.

11 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.

12 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. And just
13 generally if what Mr. White just handed us a
14 pamphlet. If you do have billing issues or other
15 issues that you have with the utility, stop out at
16 the desk at some point or on your way out, and pick
17 up a pamphlet because it gives you contact
18 information for the Department of Public Service and
19 they can help you with these issues. Our next
20 speaker is Sharon Riley.

21 MS. RILEY: I'm Sharon Riley. First
22 of all, I would like to thank you for helping me
23 straighten out my bills with Central Hudson. It took
24 over a year to get my credit that they owed me. It
25 took me a year to get to talk to somebody. They --

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 every month I called about my bills; they told me
3 they would have somebody call me. No one ever
4 returned my calls. I was keeping track of my credits
5 and what they were charging me. Then they put me on
6 a budget plan that I didn't ask for, that was coming
7 out of my -- my bill and I could -- I couldn't keep
8 up with the totals that they had and what I was
9 thinking that I had. So after I wrote to you guys
10 and made the complaint, all of a sudden somebody
11 called from management to speak with me and it took
12 about a month, maybe two, and we finally came to the
13 same agreement. I'm single, I am living on Social
14 Security because I had a brain aneurysm, and I can't
15 work. Before, when my kids lived home, my bills were
16 less than they are now. We used to get billed every
17 two months, now we get billed every one month; they
18 estimate, they estimate high, they estimate low. You
19 can't keep up with the totals. We need to pay what
20 we owe when we owe it, not what they think. They
21 double charged me in October, they double charged me
22 in November. In January I got a bill with my
23 beginning reading that I gave them October 1st, so I
24 was not only double billed but then triple billed.
25 In January, I got a bill for \$550 that said I used

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 508 kilowatt hours. I've never used that in my
3 entire life with a family in the house. I asked them
4 to come up and check my meter, maybe I need a new
5 meter. They can't do that unless it happens twice.

6 So you're forced to pay it so you
7 don't get turned off. My bills have tripled. What I
8 used to pay for two months, I am now paying almost
9 two and a half times more. Delivery fees; we never
10 had a delivery fee before. Once they started doing
11 delivery fees, the bills just kept going up. Our
12 delivery fees are more than what our actual usage is,
13 and that's ridiculous. What are they giving us? All
14 our stuff runs underground, they haven't fixed a
15 thing. It took me two years to get a light pole on
16 my front yard, fixed. It was falling down. I called
17 several times, they'll put a work order in, nobody
18 came. Finally, there was so much water laying out
19 there that I was afraid a car was going to get hit if
20 it went over, and I had to say something on Facebook
21 on their site, to get somebody to respond to me.
22 When they came to fix the light, two men could just
23 push -- push the pole back up to stand straight. And
24 I kept saying, what does it take to get you people to
25 come to fix something? You're collecting all this

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 money and you don't do anything. Two years to get a
3 light pole straightened up that was ready to come
4 down on somebody. What if a child is out there
5 playing and it falls on top of them? I'm just very
6 disgusted with Central Hudson. I think they're
7 billing us to death. Our -- our Social Security is
8 not going up. Three percent, what is that? Our
9 water went up, our electric goes up, our fuel goes
10 up, gas in the car goes up, car insurance, house
11 insurance, everything. Social Security does not
12 cover what we have to pay anymore. And I think it's
13 unfair that they're even asking for this much money.
14 Thank you.

15 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

16 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
17 speaker is Mary Anne Witt.

18 MS. WITT: Thank you. Mary Anne Witt.
19 I think what you're hearing is a crisis of confidence
20 in Central Hudson, and I can share our own experience
21 with that as well. So as with many people, we
22 weren't billed for several months and then we had
23 several bills within a period of a few weeks. No way
24 to really know if they're correct. How do you trust
25 or follow it? We had a final accounting bill that

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 said, okay, you have about a \$1400 credit, so don't
3 pay your bill every month, just keep working down
4 that credit. So, we've been on a budget plan for
5 over 40-years at our home, and in October our bill is
6 always our adjustment bill. It's usually a \$100 or
7 more. Well, our bill in October is almost \$1,000.
8 So it was a little bit. And why then did I have a
9 credit? So how do we even know that Central Hudson
10 is managing their program effectively? How do we
11 know that the amount they're asking for is accurate
12 and what they really need? I'm just trying to have a
13 few things --

14 We also use more power according to
15 them, than we did the year before, but our two adult
16 children moved out. So we have half the people
17 living in our house, but we use more power, which
18 makes absolutely no sense. I call them about our
19 meter readings, and they said, oh, we don't read your
20 meter. Someone drives by every couple of months and
21 reads it from a Bluetooth, so they're not actually
22 reading the meter. And how do you know? We live in
23 a very rural area. I'm not a tech person, I don't
24 know how that would work, but somehow, they're able
25 to get signals that we're not able to get, to read

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 our meter every other month. I attempted -- I
3 attempted to put in estimated readings because every
4 other month is estimated, except it doesn't work.
5 You have a 48-hour window on the website to put it in
6 and I've never been able to get it to work in those
7 48-hours.

8 So I have no idea if they're charging
9 us appropriately or not. I did call and they said
10 that they were sure my accounts were correct but they
11 would have it reviewed and get back to me within a
12 few days. That's been almost four weeks ago and I
13 still haven't heard back from them. So -- and I also
14 was told that now my budget payments will be going up
15 a \$100 a month, and that's before the proposed 16
16 percent increase. So I realize things cost more. I
17 realize it costs more to produce goods and services,
18 but I don't have any confidence that the amount
19 they're asking for or the amount they're charging is
20 accurate, or they really could back it up with any
21 figures, because what you've heard so far and what
22 I've heard from the community is, no one has any
23 confidence in Central Hudson and no one believes that
24 the figures that they're putting forth are accurate.
25 Thank you.

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
4 speaker is Jill Costanzo.

5 MS. COSTANZO: Hi, my name is Jill
6 Costanzo. I have to say, I don't have an issue with
7 customer service when I call; they're very pleasant.
8 I think they do the best they can because they're
9 reading what's on their computer screen. The linemen
10 are fantastic. When you have an issue, they're
11 there, repair is there. I guess my issue comes with
12 consistency and transparency. When you get your bill
13 from month to month, it's like a guessing game, and
14 to me it's not rocket science. I've taught math for
15 35 years. My math is pretty good. I should be able
16 to take the numbers on my bill and figure out how you
17 got the amount you got. The problem I have is, I
18 never can do that and I can't do that because my
19 meter is never read and it's never estimated. It's
20 been completely blank for a year and there's no
21 Bluetooth where we are, because the meters on the
22 back of the house. So there's a consistency issue
23 and a transparency issue.

24 The problem seemed to have started
25 when they switched over to a new computer system,

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 when we -- when we went from bimonthly to monthly and
3 we all got new account numbers. That seems to be
4 where the issue is. What I don't understand is,
5 there are people -- very smart people to fix computer
6 programs and computer systems. We've been at this
7 for years now, it's not fixed. The billing is still
8 an issue, it's still inconsistent. It's a roller
9 coaster. We get hit -- personally at home, we have a
10 small business, we get hit with a small business. So
11 our bills in the small business, they run 5, \$600 a
12 month. Some bills are 1200, some bills are 1400.

13 At home, I had four months of zero.
14 Now I know I use electricity; you can't tell me it's
15 zero. And then the next bill, they're going to make
16 up for it, you're going to get walloped.
17 Fortunately, my husband and I are able to afford our
18 Central Hudson -- our electric, but there are many
19 people who cannot. So I just feel like there's an
20 unwillingness to fix the issue. The issue is an
21 upper management administrative issue, it's not your
22 day-to-day workers. It's not that hard to fix a
23 computer program. If it doesn't work, go back to the
24 one before, because we didn't have issues with the
25 one before. And when I call, if I question a bill or

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 something, the first thing that the customer service
3 representative says to me is, which account are you
4 talking about? I only have one account, but
5 unfortunately the old account numbers are still on
6 file, and somehow that's playing into all of this.
7 So is my bill correct? I have no way of knowing. I
8 can't do the math. I'd like to be able to do the
9 math. Thank you.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.

11 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. The next
12 speaker is Christine Rappleye or Rappleyu, sorry.

13 MS. RAPPLEYE: I'm tripping over
14 myself here. Hi, I'm Christine Rappleye, I've been a
15 Central Hudson customer since 1976. But first I'd
16 like to say I concur with what almost everybody has
17 said so far, including the confidence in their
18 billing operations, which for myself is a major
19 personal issue and the vagueness of this proposal. I
20 think more particulars would be in order, maybe the
21 public would be able to ascertain where they're going
22 to allocate this increase. It may -- we mentioned
23 this, that, and the other thing, but how much is
24 going to each area? So being more spot on might be
25 appreciated. In January of 2024 -- not 2024, excuse

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 me, 2023, we moved to a new house and I have
3 struggled with their billing since then, including
4 receiving absolutely no bills for three months. So
5 we just kept throwing money on the account because we
6 weren't, you know -- we didn't want to be cut off.
7 It only became an issue when I finally had to bring
8 it to the Public Service Commission that somebody
9 from Central Hudson actually reached out to us. We
10 were blown off, totally disrespected by rude customer
11 service, and I find it very ironic that now they're
12 on this PR campaign of, we're stepping up our
13 customer service, we're going to help you guys. Why?
14 Because you want the rate increase. I mean,
15 customers aren't that silly.

16 So what I'd like to say that -- two
17 things more is, I find it curious that the parent
18 company Fortis, which is based in Canada, has a
19 subsidiary known as U.S. Energy, which basically
20 serves the west area of the -- they're also facing a
21 proposed rate increase out there. But they cited
22 that their rates part -- their rate increase was
23 based on a shortfall of uncollected amounts entered
24 in -- of uncollected amounts of monies, which they
25 have already spent. So they spent it and now they're

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 trying to regain it back. So there was a shortfall.
3 I question whether or not this is actually going on
4 with Central Hudson and they're not being transparent
5 about it. Have they already spent the monies and are
6 now trying to get it back from us, or is this, we're
7 going to put this in the pot and we're going to do
8 this moving forward. So I question that.

9 The last thing I'd like to also
10 address, which is going to affect everybody in this
11 room, is the trickle-down effect, okay? Our -- we're
12 going to go up, everybody here is going to go up, but
13 if you have a business, your rate increase is going
14 to go up and you're going to pass it on to a
15 consumer, whether it's a cup of coffee, a renter
16 who's now going to be facing more money, which in
17 this area rents are a big problem in Greene County,
18 or anybody, you -- you're going to do anything and
19 it's going to cost you more money to do your laundry
20 at the laundromat or whatever you're going to do. So
21 there will definitely be a trickle-down effect, and
22 I'm very unnerved by that because I -- we are all
23 struggling now anyway in this economy, and this rate
24 increase to me, is absolutely obscene. It's just way
25 too much given the -- how the public is already

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 struggling financially. Well, that's it, I guess. I
3 don't think I had anything else. No, but again, I --
4 I just would like to see a little bit more meat on
5 the bones instead of, we want this rate increase and
6 we're going to do this, that, and the other thing.
7 Break it down for us. Give us an analysis of how
8 much is going to be allocated to what areas. Thank
9 you.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

11 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
12 speaker is Karen Dudley.

13 MS. DUDLEY: Hello, I'm Karen Dudley
14 and I'm from Athens. The other day going out, I had
15 learned about -- I don't remember the acronym, but
16 the power cable that will be coming down from Canada,
17 right through our area. We're Area 10, Gloversville
18 to Catskill. And that power is going straight to New
19 York City. Where I live on Potic Mountain, they're
20 trying to put a solar field across the street from me
21 in a rural residential area. Now, the substation for
22 Central Hudson is why they want to put it there.
23 Substation has not been upgraded since the '70s. I -
24 - what is the timeframe on all the other upgrades
25 that haven't been done in the area, and why are we

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 having to pay when all of these solar companies are
3 coming in? Why are we not giving them the burden?
4 They're the ones who need it, and most of the power
5 that's going from these solar farms are going to New
6 York City. Where is our benefit in this? And New
7 York is looking into possibly stopping people cutting
8 down wood on their own property. Now I supplement my
9 electric by running a wood stove. Well -- they're --
10 they're looking at trying to stop you from having a
11 wood stove. On the bills, I know they asked for
12 help. How would you like to help your neighbor? Can
13 you donate this? So you -- you want to up my bill,
14 but you still want me to help my neighbor, which now
15 there's going to be more people that are not going to
16 be able to afford this. And, you know, with the
17 economy the way it is, we can cut back on our travel,
18 we can cut back on groceries, but when winter rolls
19 around, it's kind of hard to cut back on the
20 electric.

21 So I just -- I am totally opposed to
22 this. Again, like they said, I want to know where
23 the money's going. Is it going to go to rebuild the
24 infrastructure or is it going to -- to management,
25 you know? And these solar companies need to play a

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 bigger part in taking part of the effectiveness.
3 They're the ones who are trying to tap into the line,
4 which they say they can't because it hasn't been
5 upgraded, so we're going to pay to upgrade the line
6 so they can tap in to make money off of us again. So
7 something's got to give and we should not be the ones
8 that have to pay for it. Thank you.

9 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

10 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
11 speaker is Rose Brooks.

12 MS. BROOKS: My name is Rose Brooks.
13 I agree with everyone that has been up here speaking
14 for the issues. My issue is also the bills. I have
15 just moved from a house to a modular, and my bills
16 are ridiculous. From one month to the next, I cannot
17 understand it. I look at how they do their estimate
18 and then how they come up with the actual cost. I
19 agree with everyone that was up here speaking and
20 that is what I'm here for, to say that I am against
21 the increase that Central Hudson has for us. Thank
22 you.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

24 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
25 speaker is Donna Rightmyer -- Donna Rightmyer. I'm

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 sorry if I mispronounced.

3 MS. RIGHTMYER: Good afternoon. I'm
4 Donna Rightmyer. I live in a mobile home park in
5 South Cairo. And when Central Hudson first switched
6 over to their new system, I didn't get a bill the
7 first month, the second month. And I went on a
8 budget. So I said, this is weird. So I called and
9 they said, oh, we're trying to fix our accounts and
10 we'll get back to you. Well, needless to say, they
11 didn't get back to me, and eventually, about four
12 months later, I kept sending money in because I
13 didn't want a large bill coming in. So I kept
14 sending my money, my budget money, and then around
15 the first of the year after that adjustment, I
16 finally got somebody in Florida. And when she said
17 to me, I'm in Florida, I go -- well, you're not for
18 Central Hudson. She says, oh yes, I take care of
19 overflow for Central Hudson. So she said -- I said,
20 well, what's it doing down there? She says, it's
21 beautiful, 75. I said, well, here, it's about 32 and
22 snowing, so she said, well, let me check into this.
23 Took her about 10 minutes and she came back and she
24 says, oh, she said, you're only four years old.

25 The account, when they switched it

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 over, Central Hudson, they did not switch my birth
3 date, the right date. So they weren't sending me a
4 bill. They thought it was some -- the account was
5 all -- the new account was like phony, right? So I
6 go, well, this is very odd. She says, I'll get back
7 to you. Well, she got back to me, she straightened
8 it out and they were really good about it, but in the
9 meantime, the bill soared, because my money that I
10 was sending in for budget did not cover, okay? So
11 anyway, that was settled. It was pretty good. Now
12 I'm receiving bills, I'm still on a budget, but I get
13 a bill that I'm credited. I'm fine, I have a credit
14 of 75, credit of 62, whatever. This month, October,
15 I get a bill that I owe \$150. And I'm going, why,
16 because I kept checking. I was always minus, minus,
17 minus. And now all of a sudden, I have this huge
18 bill and I read my one that they read normally, and
19 then the guess it one, and it was like this different
20 on wattage, nothing changed.

21 So I just feel that we need more
22 interest from Central Hudson. We shouldn't get this
23 increase until they straighten out themselves and
24 really start billing us right, once a month, and read
25 meters. Thank you.

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Laura
4 Cahill.

5 MS. CAHIL: Hi, my name is Laura
6 Cahill. I've been a Catskill resident most of my
7 life. My husband and I raised our family here, and
8 now we're both retired. I would like to go on record
9 that this proposed increase is not acceptable. I
10 also agree with everyone else that's spoken here
11 today about the lack of confidence in the bills, the
12 mismanagement. It's been very distressing. To share
13 my story quickly or our story quickly, we are on the
14 budget plan. Last October, October 22, we received
15 our reconciliation bill and it was \$1100 more than we
16 expected it to be. I have a over a 30-year history
17 in this house. My children are now grown and out, so
18 it's just my husband and I. We keep the heat on very
19 low, I'm always in sweaters and blankets, and what
20 was most interesting during this time is that we were
21 away for several months, we went down to Florida, so
22 the heat was basically turned off. So how could we
23 get an \$1,100 bill when we were only -- weren't even
24 there? So we brought these billing issues to Central
25 Hudson's attention. I called; I wrote. I got a form

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 letter back saying that we looked into it, everything
3 was correct. I get the people saying on the phone,
4 oh yeah, we'll look into it, we'll call you back, and
5 I never get a phone call back. So needless to say,
6 this is still not resolved.

7 As a retired couple, it's distressing
8 that the costs are going up everywhere; food, gas,
9 this increase will cause hardship. So please vote no
10 for the proposed increase. Thank you for your time
11 and consideration.

12 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

13 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
14 speaker is Kaaren Kiernan.

15 MS. KIERNAN: I don't have anything to
16 say because everybody here -- I pass.

17 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay, thank you.

18 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

19 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Gil Bagnell, and I
20 apologize if I mispronounce it.

21 MR. BAGNELL: No, you got it right.
22 I'm Gil Bagnell, I'm a local resident, Catskill. For
23 what it's worth, I'm -- I'm Chair of the Planning
24 Board and the Public Library here. I want to address
25 Central Hudson's basis for its rate increase, but

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 before I do that, I can't help but share my own
3 problems that are similar to everyone else's
4 problems. Central Hudson cost my family over \$10,000
5 because of its billing problems, and the reason for
6 that is we have some tenants, and we accommodate
7 tenants who can't get their own accounts by passing
8 on the billing. Well, when a tenant doesn't get a
9 bill for five months and then leaves, we're left with
10 that bill.

11 A year went by, more than a year, and
12 we had called the public -- we filed a written
13 complaint with the Public Service Commission and
14 still took at least half a year after that, before
15 Central Hudson finally admitted that they weren't
16 reading the meter at all. They'd estimated readings
17 for a whole year, and when they estimated, they
18 estimated them higher than they'd ever been in the
19 past, which serves them well. Anyway, that's my
20 complaint with them. I tried to understand the
21 filings Central Hudson made. I read this affidavit
22 by their accountants, and it seems there are two
23 bases for the rate increase; one is lower collections
24 and they blame it on mainly Covid. I think you've
25 heard enough to imagine that a lot of the non-

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 collections are not due to Covid, but due to them not
3 billing properly. So that's one reason; they're
4 short on money because they didn't bill properly --
5 properly. The other reason someone already mentioned
6 is that they need to invest in infrastructure. A
7 properly run company, plans ahead, allocates funds
8 for infrastructure along and along. So obviously
9 there's been mismanagement.

10 Now let's talk about an unregulated
11 private business. Now, I understand Central Hudson
12 is regulated, the reasons it has to be regulated, but
13 a private company in the same circumstances would go
14 out of business or the owners would have to put money
15 in. If my business loses money one year, I go to the
16 bank and either I pull out my own funds or I borrow
17 money, in order to subsidize my business until it
18 gets on the right footing. I might even have to cut
19 my prices to bring my customers back. Central Hudson
20 isn't here saying, oh, you have a bunch of
21 disgruntled people, we better cut our prices.
22 They're saying, oh, we screwed up so badly, we need
23 to ask for more money. Now what are they asking for?
24 They're asking for raising their equity ratio, and I
25 don't know exactly how that accounting is done, but I

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 believe the equity ratio means the amount of money
3 they've got in it versus what they borrow.

4 And they want to raise their equity
5 ratio, and they want to raise that by collecting more
6 money from customers. I don't see them saying, oh,
7 we can raise our equity ratio by actually putting
8 equity in. If my business needs equity, it comes out
9 of my pocket. And if Central Hudson needs to raise
10 its equity ratio, it needs to come out of Fortis'
11 pocket, not our pockets. So that's how they can
12 raise their equity ratio. Then, well, I guess that
13 pretty much summarizes the accounting part. The --
14 the other thing they say the capital cost is too
15 high. It's costing them a lot of money to borrow
16 money because of their low equity ratio. Well, the
17 two go together; if they put the money in, that will
18 increase the equity ratio, and at that point, they
19 will have what they need to get capital at a lower
20 rate.

21 Now the other thing that concerns me,
22 obviously everyone's upset at this 16 percent rate
23 increase for electric and even more for gas, but I
24 want you to think about negotiation technique. You
25 know, if you want to get more money from someone, you

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 ask for twice as much as you actually want, and then
3 you compromise halfway down. And I'm wondering, did
4 they ask for 16 percent because they want to be
5 quote, defeated and walk out of here with 8 percent?
6 If they don't deserve any rate increase at all, they
7 shouldn't be rewarded with an 8 percent increase as a
8 compromise down from 16 percent. They should only
9 get nothing. Thank you.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

11 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
12 speaker is Alexis, I'm sorry, Alexis Danzig.

13 MS. DANZIG: Thank you very much for
14 holding this forum. I'm going to pull up my remarks.
15 I actually don't really trust myself to speak because
16 I'm so frustrated, so it's better that I just talk
17 from my notes. As other people have mentioned, the
18 rate hikes are a disgraceful ask to a community with
19 many modest and poor residents. I myself am
20 frustrated with my one month \$1,500 bill that I
21 received during the winter of 2023. That's a \$1,500
22 bill sandwiched between a \$160 -- \$160 bill, and a
23 \$116 bill. My August bill was for \$19. But I'm
24 equally frustrated by the bureaucratic obfuscation
25 and foot dragging, not only of Central Hudson, but

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 also by the Public Service Commission.

3 I have little confidence in the Public
4 Service Commission's, public facing administration.
5 I entered the complaint process back in June. My
6 request was for an understanding, a rationale and
7 explanation of my extraordinarily high bill. The
8 letter that I received from PSC, I've brought it
9 here, back in -- dated September 8th, indicates that
10 an auditor from PSC confirmed with Central Hudson
11 that my billing is accurate. Really, born yesterday.

12 There is no analysis. There is no
13 proof. There is no review, there is no explanation.
14 There is no audit, no spreadsheet breakdown. What I
15 got is not what I requested. The PSC letter refers
16 me back to Central Hudson to resume payment, besides
17 containing no explanation for why I'm being billed,
18 what I'm being billed, nowhere in the letter is there
19 any information about what I have been told are my
20 rights; my right to a hearing, I've been told that
21 twice, and as of today, I've been told that I have a
22 right to an informal hearing. Maybe they're the same
23 thing. The letter contains one sentence that really
24 threw me for a loop. That National Grid reached out
25 to me for a payment agreement, but I'm not a National

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 Grid customer. I'm a Central Hudson customer. Who
3 is proofreading these letters? Who is authorizing
4 letters to be sent out with cut and paste errors?
5 The letter from the Public Service Commission is an
6 embarrassment filled with incoherent sentences,
7 typos, and bad logic.

8 Again, as I stated to the intake
9 supervisor today, what I want is an audit of my
10 electric usage. I want to understand what I am
11 paying for. I want clearly written bills written in
12 plain language, in all the languages that we speak
13 here in the Hudson Valley, English, Spanish, Afghani,
14 whatever people speak, we need to hear it in that
15 language. In addition to asking that Central Hudson
16 operate in good faith, which is a bit of a stretch, I
17 want the Public Service Commission to do the right
18 thing. PSC needs to rationalize its intake process.
19 I want to understand my rights at any point in the
20 process. I don't want to have to explain the process
21 as I understand it, to new additional intake people.
22 I need non contradictory information. I want
23 communication; letters and phone calls from PSC, that
24 don't insult my intelligence or cut out vital
25 information that affects my ability to advocate for

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 myself and my neighbors. I'm from Saugerties, and
3 I'm putting together a petition. This is for our
4 elected officials, as well as for the PSC. This is
5 for asking how do we pay utility bills that we don't
6 understand and how can we trust the Public Service
7 Commission's process, if its own auditors don't
8 follow the process?

9 I'm putting together a group for
10 people who are interested in raising our voices, who
11 have the time and energy. If necessary, we'll be
12 doing public protests. If you don't have the time,
13 if you don't have the energy, don't sign up. This is
14 for people who want to do a little bit more than come
15 to these meetings. I know that I want to be trained
16 to go to hearings with my neighbors so that my
17 neighbors are not railroaded. I want to know what my
18 rights are and then I want to share that information.
19 If you're interested in signing up, you'll be
20 included in this level of information and I would
21 very much appreciate it, because we all know that
22 there are people who can't be at these meetings
23 because they're working hard to make money to pay
24 their bills. Thank you.

25 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Do you

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 have a copy of that letter or can we take --

3 MS. DANZIG: I have it.

4 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Can we have a copy
5 of it? If you --

6 MS. DANZIG: You can have a copy.

7 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Yeah.

8 MS. DANZIG: You can't have my letter,
9 oh, no.

10 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Yeah, we can -- we
11 can take a --

12 MR. WHITE: Judge, we have it.

13 A.L.J. COSTELLO: You have it, okay.
14 Okay. Thank you.

15 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.

16 MR. WHITE: We'll -- we'll give you a
17 copy of it.

18 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay, thank you.
19 Okay, the next speaker is Kathleen O'Keefe.

20 MS. O'KEEFE: I'm going to be speaking
21 about this. I wanted you to have a copy. My name is
22 Kathleen O'Keefe, I'm an attorney. I live in the
23 town of Catskill. This requested increase is so
24 outrageous and so unnecessary given the service that
25 Central Hudson has provided. Central Hudson is a

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 public utility monopoly. Everybody needs electric
3 and they are holding us hostage. What is upper
4 management making at -- at Central Hudson, or should
5 I say Fortis? Because most of these problems, at
6 least my experience has happened since Fortis, a non-
7 American company bought Central Hudson. Let me
8 explain my problem with Central Hudson. And I am
9 basically a classic example of why there's a class
10 action lawsuit pending by a law firm in Yonkers. And
11 if anyone here wants to know their contact
12 information, I'd be happy to share that.

13 In June of 2021, I noticed that I had
14 four months of estimated bills. So I started paying
15 attention. Now, as a lawyer, I keep very good
16 records. I have a very extensive file. I called
17 Central Hudson because now I'm -- I'm on notice
18 something's going on. My June, 2021 bill showed that
19 I had no actual readings between January, 2021 and
20 June, 2021. Central Hudson said my meter was fine,
21 but they were not doing actual readings, which by the
22 law in New York, must be done every other month. I
23 looked up the Public Service Commission in September,
24 2021 and I filed a complaint. Subsequently, I did
25 not hear from the Public Service Commission, so I

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 called and spoke to Kyle, and Kyle said, well, we
3 sent you an email and you didn't respond, so we
4 closed your complaint. And I said, no, you didn't
5 send me an email, I just looked it up and I have no
6 email. I refiled my complaint in May of 2022.

7 So my original complaint was filed
8 more than two years ago. I was receiving bills where
9 the bill would say it was an actual reading, and then
10 the next month I'd get a bill, and that actual
11 reading now is changed to say it was an estimate,
12 completely inconsistent. Again, I have a very
13 extensive file. Every single bill that I received, I
14 updated my complaint. I received no bill at all
15 between October 21st and December 21st. Then I
16 received a bill for a period of August 21st to
17 January 20 -- 2022 -- I'm sorry, August, 2021 to
18 January, 2022, and I called Central Hudson, what is
19 going on? Then the bills started making no sense at
20 all. The -- the readings would change, the amounts
21 would change. It -- you cannot decipher what they're
22 trying to say on these bills. I updated my complaint
23 a year ago, August, and I got a call, and an email
24 from Central Hudson, and in that email was the
25 spreadsheet that I just gave you. And I have a whole

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 bunch of other copies if anyone's interested. And
3 this spreadsheet basically shows that I re -- I
4 received no actual readings other than zero, between
5 June, 2021 and June, 2022; no actual readings.

6 And if you look at my -- I'm -- I'm
7 going to summarize it because I have a long thing
8 here that analyzed that spreadsheet, but I'm just
9 going to summarize it in a couple of sentences.
10 There were no actual readings other than zero,
11 between June, 2021 and June, 2022. And in the
12 interim, my meter stopped working sometime before
13 June, 2021, and it was eventually replaced. And when
14 I called Central Hudson, they said, we don't have any
15 record of your new meter in our system. Nine months
16 later, they had no record of my meter in their
17 system. If you look at my spreadsheet, it shows that
18 I had four inconsistent estimated readings on August
19 14th, 2021; four estimated inconsistent readings on
20 one day in the summer of 2021. How is that even
21 possible that something like that could happen? I
22 have not paid my Central Hudson bill in over a year,
23 since -- actually close to two years because I have
24 my complaint pending and I intend to bring this to my
25 hearing. I was finally granted an informal hearing,

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 and I'm waiting for my date.

3 At one point they said, this is
4 recently, it's all been resolved. Now you don't need
5 your hearing. I called immediately back, updated my
6 complaint, yes, I need an informal hearing. I went
7 in Albany, and so I'm waiting for a date, because
8 they said it would take longer. I have absolutely no
9 confidence in Central Hudson's billing, and I have
10 very strong evidence that they don't know what
11 they're doing. And that spreadsheet, which is their
12 own evidence, an admission against their own self-
13 interest, is what I'm going to be bringing to my
14 hearing along with all the other data that I have.
15 Now, I have to concede, because I researched the law
16 with respect to the Public Service Commission, and
17 the public utilities, that the law is very weak. The
18 -- the remedies that are available to the Public
19 Service Commission are completely --

20 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Inadequate.

21 MS. O'KEEFE: -- inadequate, that's
22 the word. Just completely inadequate. I don't fault
23 you, that's not your fault. I worked in the state
24 legislature for many years, I know how laws get made.
25 There's a big groundswell right now, and many members

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 in the legislature in both houses are looking to see
3 what they can do to deal with this. Because Central
4 Hudson is a monopoly, it's a really crucial issue.
5 And I anticipate that we are going to see something
6 happen in the legislature. This -- one other person
7 mentioned this negotiation strategy of asking for so
8 much with the idea of getting less. It's a very
9 typical approach, and I hope the Public Service
10 Commission is going to look at what has happened and
11 how they have completely mismanaged the turnover to
12 this new billing system, and -- and not reward them
13 for this. People cannot afford these kinds of hikes,
14 and what kind of money are these upper management
15 people at Fortis and Central Hudson making? They're
16 making plenty of money. They're not the ones that
17 are being treated as if they -- they just don't
18 matter.

19 My own daughter was on a budget plan
20 and as many people have said, her -- her reconciling
21 bill was very large. They took it out of her bank
22 account without any notice to her and -- and she was
23 over drafted. No notice whatsoever. The only other
24 thing I want to mention is that the billing, like one
25 -- after I didn't have bills for many -- many -- many

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 months, one day I got four envelopes with 10 Central
3 Hudson bills in those four envelopes, on one day. So
4 I have suffered in many ways all of the complaints
5 that you read about in the paper, and I've already
6 shared that spreadsheet and some other information
7 with the lawyers that are bringing the class action.
8 And I think Central Hudson really needs to be held
9 accountable for what they have done to people
10 throughout their entire service area and not be
11 rewarded for what has happened. Thank you.

12 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
13 speaker is Christine Arleo

14 MS. ARLEO: Well, I have to say that
15 I'm happy to hear your stories because I know it's
16 not just me. I live in Haines Falls, and typically
17 we have a summer house up there. We pull the meter
18 in October because we leave and we don't come back
19 until maybe May or June. 2021, I couldn't do that.
20 I was, I had to be out of town. My dad was very ill.
21 I have to say I blamed my husband for the bills that
22 we got, I apologize, it's not your fault. We got a
23 bill for \$600 for October. We have a summer house.
24 We were gone. We shut off all the baseboard
25 electric. We unplug everything because we couldn't

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 pull the meter, I wasn't in town. Everything was
3 technically shut off. We got a bill for \$600. We
4 were still out of town. We got a bill in November
5 for \$800. When I got the bill like four months
6 later, I called Central Hudson and the woman said to
7 me, well, it costs more money to heat a house that's
8 empty because the body heat doesn't help maintain --
9 I swear. I said, ma'am, it's a summer house. We
10 have baseboard heating, everything is shut off. We
11 don't have a boiler or central heat. We don't have
12 heat in the house.

13 Well, I know, but it still costs more
14 to heat an empty house. I said, okay. That call was
15 done. I called several times, unfortunately, I was
16 dealing with my father's illness, I was not on top of
17 it as much as I should have been, but I had other
18 things that took my time. I'm back now and I've
19 asked for hearings, I've asked for bills. The same
20 story that everyone says; I get bills that say it's
21 estimated, say it's real. In March of this last
22 year, my husband and I had to be up here for an
23 appointment, so we drove by the house. It was right
24 after the three-foot snowfall, and we could see there
25 was no footprints around the house.

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 Supposedly the day before, someone
3 came and read my meter. I don't know how, because
4 it's not on the street side, and like somebody else
5 talked about the -- the being able to read through
6 the house, its plaster, it's metal. You cannot read.
7 We had to move modems because you cannot get signal
8 from one side of the house to the other. I don't
9 know how they read that meter because, again, there
10 was three feet of snow and it was not disturbed. So
11 that was not true.

12 Bills that everyone's talking about,
13 reading an actual reading, an estimated reading. I
14 kind of gave up for a while because I didn't have the
15 time or energy to deal with it, but now that I'm
16 back, I will. We usually pull -- we pulled the meter
17 this year, so we didn't have that issue, but we're
18 getting these crazy bills. We've had this house for
19 16-years. It was actually in our family for about 90
20 years, but there was a 20-year period that was out of
21 the family. We've never had bills like this; it's a
22 summer house, there's not that much. We don't have
23 central air. We don't have a heating system, but we
24 have a \$4,000 bill. I'm not paying it. We don't owe
25 that money. And this just reinforces what I've come

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 to see.

3 Now, we go out on the 12th of the
4 month and we take a picture of the meter, because now
5 I want to compare it to what they're telling me. You
6 can't see these meters. They don't have the dials;
7 they don't have anything that spins. Is it working?
8 They told me to hire an electrician to do a study to
9 figure out what's going on. My neighbor next door in
10 the house that we used to own, added a charging
11 station. I said, Jack, what's going on with your
12 bill? It's kind of the same. Am I paying for his
13 charging statement -- station because my bill is
14 crazy. I'm not paying for an electrician to come.
15 First of all, try to get an electrician in these
16 times to do that, because it's your burden to show
17 me. This clearly backs up what I'm saying, your
18 billing is wrong. And if you were a normal business,
19 we would all be leaving in droves, but we can't
20 because we have no other choice unless we go to gas
21 lanterns, of how to heat our houses and get electric.
22 But you have the nerve to want a rate increase when
23 you aren't even servicing the customers that you
24 have. So I think that it's appalling. I think that
25 the gentleman talked about let's ask for more and

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 hope we get half or a quarter, is probably right.
3 And no one gets back to you. The -- the people are
4 very nice when you call, but they're not effective.
5 I've -- I've been told I was going to get calls, I
6 was going to get spreadsheets. I've gotten none of
7 that. And so now this will be my mission to have
8 maybe a weekly or twice weekly call with Central
9 Hudson to get what we deserve before I pay my bills,
10 because you have not proven to me that you've earned
11 that money from us. So thank you all for making me
12 know that I'm not crazy, and together we'll fight.
13 Thank you.

14 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

15 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. The next
16 speaker is Gail Kargeh or Kargoe. I'm sorry if I'm
17 mispronouncing your name.

18 MS. KARGOE: Kargoe.

19 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay.

20 MS. KARGOE: If for no other reason,
21 I'm so happy to be here today, that I am not happy in
22 the same -- same respect that there's so many people
23 here that are experiencing the same thing, and it's
24 not just me. And how unfortunate that it's happening
25 to -- to any of us. My husband and I are both 79-

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 years-old. We live in -- in South Cairo in a house
3 that we purchased back in 1972. It's now called
4 Leeds. They changed where we live. We are not in
5 Leeds at all or nowhere near it. We're still in
6 South Cairo, in the same house and live in a
7 beautiful development. I have to say right off the
8 bat, the Central Hudson that we're talking about
9 today is not the Central Hudson that we experienced
10 way back in 1972, or up until the time that the new
11 Central Hudson took over, whoever they are.

12 Unfortunately, it's been a nightmare
13 since they took over and they know it. And the
14 representatives that I've spoken to know it. We have
15 an off peak on peak meter, probably the one of the
16 last in the -- in the country. We have had great
17 success with that because we have a time period when
18 we use our electric and when we don't, with doing
19 showers and -- and washing clothes and doing things
20 like that. We've had great success and they're still
21 continuing to show us how -- how great this is with
22 our -- with our paperwork. On the second sheet, the
23 first sheet you make no sense of, and I'll explain
24 that. My monthly budget, when we when we had all of
25 this transition from -- from the new regime from the

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 old regime, was \$475 a month on a total electric
3 house for 10 months. And that was wonderful. \$475 a
4 month for 10 months with an o -- off peak on peak
5 meter, and that's all we paid. They kept telling us
6 that all of our neighbors did -- did better. No,
7 they did not, because they had -- they had furnaces
8 and they paid a lot more between their fur -- their
9 oil and their electric than we did. And we were very
10 happy with the old Central Hudson.

11 We then -- we'd had them come once
12 before and we rejected it. The solar panels, I said,
13 no, we're not doing this. And finally, two different
14 neighbors talked us into the -- into the solar panels
15 with 69 panels on our -- on our roof, which we were
16 told by the solar people that we were going to be
17 paying \$89 a month, that would never change. Your
18 electric bill would -- would change and the rates
19 would go up, but we would pay \$89 a month. And we
20 did not get that -- that system put in at all. What
21 -- what we ended up paying was every month for the --
22 the use, the sun's use, you know, in these panels. I
23 don't know how you how to word it, but anyway, that's
24 what we were paying for. And all of that power was
25 directed through our meter. So the Central Hudson

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 was taking advantage of that, and this is since the
3 new regime came in. And 255, well, I shouldn't say
4 that, previous to that, we did this and we were
5 paying \$255 a month now to Central Hudson. But with
6 those 69 panels, it turned out in the summertime,
7 which is pretty much most of -- of the year here with
8 -- with the sun beating down on our -- on our roof on
9 all areas of the roof. We are paying more now during
10 all of those months for the combination of solar
11 panels, which is supposed to be such a wonderful
12 deal, and Central Hudson bill. I was paying \$475 and
13 now sometimes I'm paying close to \$600, a month on
14 fixed incomes from my husband and I. We have no
15 other income coming in, and -- and yet we have to pay
16 these exorbitant amounts between the combination.

17 So we've been literally screwed by
18 Central Hudson and what -- what Solar City did to us,
19 and now it's Tesla. And now the future might mean we
20 have to have a Tesla car that blows up as you go park
21 in the garage, yeah. And all of the -- and all of
22 the batteries that are going to be placed in
23 Catskill, outside of Catskill. Anyway, we are in an
24 energy efficient home. We have all energy efficient
25 appliances; a brand-new washer and dryer. I've --

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 I've had -- we do not have any heat on. Everybody
3 says we have such a warm home, how do we keep the
4 house so warm? We -- it's well insulated and we
5 don't have any heat on in our house. We don't really
6 need it. We do in the bitter cold winter, but not
7 now. Not -- not for a long time. And we've had
8 three meetings. I've had a meeting in I don't know
9 how long ago that was, it was several months ago, in
10 the acre community center. We had -- we had a
11 meeting that was with -- that was with a young lady
12 named Karen. We had another meeting with -- at Mark
13 Molinero's office with a Linda, both times, told we
14 were going to get right back to you. Big smiles on
15 their faces, happy -- happy -- happy. We're going to
16 be happy to help you. They saw my bills. I showed
17 them the bills, they said, you can't make any rhyme
18 or reason out of these. I said, exactly. There's no
19 way to explain what they're doing.

20 And the third person that I contacted
21 was one of the administrators at -- at -- at Central
22 Hudson, Theresa Leski -- Leski. And I have her phone
23 number, I called her; she hasn't gotten back to me.
24 None of them have gotten back to me, promising me the
25 sun, moon, and the stars, I will -- I promise you

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 we'll resolve this and I'll get back to you. Nobody
3 has called me back. Theresa called me back once to
4 ask me for information, which I got for her less than
5 24 hours after she called me. She called me in the
6 afternoon, the very next morning I had -- I -- I went
7 right away and got all my paperwork, like one of the
8 young ladies that spoke earlier, said she keeps
9 accurate record -- records. I had everything from
10 back to 19 -- 2021, and all the amounts that I had
11 paid out, the check numbers, everything, the dates,
12 she had them all in the computer. She says that all
13 checks out. She had it all there, but she asked me
14 to do that just to delay time, but it didn't delay
15 because I had it back to her in less than 24 hours.
16 And she says, oh, now I can get back to you and I can
17 -- I can get this resolved.

18 No, she had never called me back, and
19 so I called her back last Friday, answering machine.
20 Never called me back. I called her yesterday, no
21 answer. I was still very sweet on the phone. But I
22 said to her, I don't know why Central Hudson is doing
23 this to us, I don't -- I know part of it was because
24 of the solar panels. They tried to tell me -- Linda
25 tried to tell me it was because of the solar panels,

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 but we have a solar panel expert now, and we're going
3 to have her look into this. Well, I don't know where
4 that expert went -- went to, but never heard from
5 anyone on that. And she -- Theresa's never gotten
6 back to me. I left a message, it was still sweet,
7 but I told her, I said, my husband and I are 79, as
8 you know. I said, we're on fixed incomes. This is
9 never apparently going to be resolved, and I don't
10 know what to do about it because I said, I'm at wits
11 end. I'm -- I'm tired, and I'm at a point where I --
12 I just don't know what to do. And I said, you've
13 promised -- the other two representatives promised to
14 get back to me, no one has called me back. And I
15 said, I got you all the information that -- that you
16 requested in a timely manner. And I said, you have
17 never bothered to -- to call me or tell me where this
18 is going because nothing is resolved, and that's
19 proof and the bills that are still coming in, in
20 packets of them, like you said, four or five packets
21 filled with -- with bills in each one of the
22 envelopes for one day.

23 And they told me, Linda, the second
24 representative did ask me that day in Mark
25 Morinello's office, what would make me happy? What -

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 - what could we do to resolve this problem? I said,
3 I'll tell you exactly what you can do. I said, and
4 it wasn't what I was thinking. I told them a whole
5 different story. I asked -- she asked me what I --
6 what I -- what -- what can we do to resolve this
7 problem for you? What -- what will make you happy?
8 And I said -- and her boss was sitting there, and I
9 said, I'm not really an ogre, but I -- I would like
10 to be given a bill that represents my original bills,
11 when before this new company took over because I
12 said, this is where the problem is. And I said, you
13 can't even figure it out. You've seen my bills, you
14 can't figure it out.

15 But I said, if you could get me back
16 to my old account number, not this new one, but my
17 old account number, and the bill at the top of the
18 page, which I'm on a \$255 monthly budget, I said, now
19 that's going back a couple of years. So I said I'm -
20 - I'm willing to change that -- that amount. But I
21 said, I'm not -- I'm not being, you know,
22 unrealistic, but if you could do that, that would
23 make me very happy. And I would be more than happy
24 to pay my bill on a monthly basis, which I pay all my
25 bills. I have an 800 and -- a high 800 credit score,

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 so I'm pretty proud of that at 79. I've always paid
3 my bills on time or, or ahead of time and not so much
4 with Central Hudson. I paid them for a while with
5 the amount that they -- that they sent me, which was
6 the reasonable amount. But I want to just add one
7 quick thing before I -- before I leave, and that is
8 just to -- to describe to you what I'm talking about
9 with my bills.

10 My bills one, this is for one month;
11 one month period, okay? March to April, March to
12 April, March to April. I have three bills from them.
13 And each one of them says for that same time period,
14 something completely different. One says, minus, I
15 have a credit of \$983.16, the same month, same month
16 period, \$7,810.4. And the third one for the same
17 period, March to May of this year, minus \$372.16;
18 that's for the same time period. Here's another one.
19 I just bring in a couple of them here, I've got --
20 I've got a whole package full over there. Okay, this
21 again is for the same time period -- same time
22 period, \$4,672.86. And this one is for the same time
23 minus a credit of \$2,570.16. This is for a same time
24 period, \$255. That's my budget, praise God, they got
25 it right. Oh, here, March \$11,575.43. Have you ever

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 seen a bill from Central Hudson or any electrical for
3 one month, for this? And for the same time period,
4 \$765 and then \$9,393.43, and \$1,022.73. And same
5 time period, \$7,211.43. And this is again, the third
6 bill for the same time period, \$5,029.43. Three
7 bills for the same time period.

8 This is the same. And this is the
9 last one. I'm going to tell you, I've got a whole
10 bunch over there if you'd like to look at them.
11 They're all the same thing. One credit of \$1,516.57.
12 Now this was very close. This is the closest one
13 besides that \$255 one, the same month, \$1,513.85. So
14 it was a matter of just a few cents, pocket change
15 that was different for the same month billing period.
16 And Linda, when she sat down with me, she -- she
17 said, I can't even make heads to tails of the -- of -
18 - of this billing. It doesn't make any sense. I
19 said, tell me about it. What -- how am I supposed to
20 know what the actual bill is? The meter is never
21 changed, and all of the solar panel electric from the
22 sun, generated from the sun is going into their
23 meter. So --

24 MS. COONS: It sounds like Central
25 Hudson has to get their house in order before they

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 make the rating.

3 MS. O'KEEFE: Thank you.

4 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
5 speaker is Deborah Kamecke.

6 MS. KAMECKE: Hi. I'm not sure I can
7 add too much to what anybody was saying except to
8 point out that I live in a fully electric house.
9 Something that the governor's pushing for, right?
10 The reality of living in a fully electric house is
11 that I freeze all winter and hot all summers. I have
12 no air conditioning. My house like Gail's is well
13 insulated. Each room has its own thermostats, so I
14 can shut rooms off. Heat never goes over 50 in the
15 winter unless I'm sitting in a room for any length of
16 time, then it may go up to 58. My delivery charge
17 over the last few years has gone up 300 percent. In
18 August, I was not in the house --

19 THE REPORTER: Could you adjust the
20 mic so you can be heard?

21 MS. KAMECKE: How's that?

22 A.L.J. MORENO: Perfect.

23 MS. KAMECKE: In August, I was out of
24 the house for two and a half weeks, and I got a bill
25 for August that was higher than my bill for June.

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 When I left the house, everything was unplugged,
3 which I do every night, and there's no phantom
4 drawing energy in my house. Everything gets
5 unplugged. The only thing that was running was the
6 air conditioning, and when I called Central Hudson,
7 the first person I spoke to, and I will say,
8 everybody I've spoken to at Central Hudson is very
9 polite. The same with Public Service Commission.
10 And in fact, I met with the Public Service Commission
11 at Congressman Morinello's meeting in Leeds as well.
12 And the person who looked at my bill basically said,
13 it looks like you're living off the grid. And
14 basically, that's how I feel. That's how little
15 energy I use.

16 So I was gone for two and a half
17 weeks, right? Called Central Hudson Center, said,
18 why is my bill higher in a month when I was gone half
19 the month? I said, the only thing that was on was
20 the refrigerator, and he said, well, that's probably
21 it because it runs harder in the summer. So I really
22 have nothing more to add except that the reality of
23 living in a fully electric house is something that
24 the state should really think about, rather than just
25 encourage. I have Central Hudson put gas lines in

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 front of my house, and now we're being -- just a few
3 years ago and now we're being told to switch the
4 electric, well, I'm there. The other thing, and
5 maybe this is connected, maybe not; we have Athens
6 Generating Plant, right, who had a 30-year pilot, and
7 that pilot would just increase. Interesting how
8 these companies that are generating electricity are
9 getting a lot of benefits that the taxpayers are
10 paying for. Thank you.

11 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

12 MS. KAMECKE: And really, I appreciate
13 you guys having us. Thank you.

14 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

15 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Okay.

16 All right.

17 MR. WHITE: This is not a speaker,
18 this is a written comment.

19 A.L.J. MORENO: Okay, thank you.

20 A.L.J. COSTELLO: We've come to the
21 end of our speakers, we'd just like to remember --
22 remind you -- remind you that if you want to make a
23 comment, if you didn't speak and you still want to
24 make a comment, you are free to do so and you can do
25 it. Again, you can do it directly to the case file.

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419
2 You can do it by telephone. And the -- the different
3 ways that you can do that are listed on the notice of
4 public statement hearings that we have issued. Also
5 let you know that there are additional public
6 statement hearings scheduled for tonight at six
7 o'clock at the SUNY Orange Newburgh Campus. Tomorrow
8 at one p.m., at the Poughkeepsie Town Hall, and
9 tomorrow at six p.m. at the Restorative Justice and
10 Community Empowerment Center in Kingston. With that,
11 we'd like to thank everybody for your comments here
12 today. And we'd also like to thank Commissioner
13 Burman for being present with us, and also our office
14 of -- I'm going blank on it. Thank you -- thank you,
15 and our court reporter. And with that, we're
16 finished. And have a good rest of the day, everyone.

17 (The hearing concluded at 03:00 p.m.)
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

1 10/17/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 I, MONIQUE HINES, do hereby certify that the foregoing was
4 reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place, as
5 stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that the
6 foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of pages 1
7 through 61, is a true record of all proceedings had at the
8 hearing.

9 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
10 subscribed my name, this the 23rd day of October, 2023.

11

12 MONIQUE HINES, Reporter

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25