

1 1/24/2024 - National Fuel & Gas, Corp. - 23-G-0627

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 PUBIC SERVICE COMMISSION

4 CASE 23-G-0627 - Proceeding on Motion of the
5 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
6 Regulations of National Fuel Gas Distribution
7 Corporation for Gas Service.

8 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

9 DATE: January 24, 2024 at 1:05 p.m.

10 LOCATION: Buffalo & Erie County Public
11 Library

12 1 Lafayette Square

13 Buffalo, New York 14203

14 BEFORE: ALJ DAKIN LECAKES

15 ALJ TARA KERSEY

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19 Reported by Annette Lainson
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2 (The hearing commenced at 1:05 p.m.)

3 A.L.J. KERSEY: I call case 23-G-0627
4 proceeding on motion of the commission as to the
5 rates, charges, rules and regulations of National
6 Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation for gas service.
7 Good afternoon. My name is Tara Kersey. I'm an
8 Administrative Law Judge for the Department of Public
9 Service. With me today is Chief Administrative Law
10 Judge Dakin Lecakes, also from the Department of
11 Public Service. Together we are responsible for
12 presiding over the hearings in this case and the
13 development of a complete record in this proceeding.
14 Assisting us today are employees from the Department
15 Office of Consumer Services.

16 We're all here today for a public
17 statement hearing that was noticed on December 6th,
18 2023. National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation or
19 N.F.G. filed amendments to its gas tariff schedules
20 on October 31st, 2023, proposing to increase its
21 annual gas delivery revenues by approximately \$88.8
22 million, which would result in an estimated total
23 monthly bill increase of approximately \$11.31 for the
24 average residential heating customer and
25 approximately \$16.65 for the average small commercial

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2 customer. Under the New York State law, the Public
3 Service Commission must consider a utilities proposal
4 and may adopt or reject it in whole, or in part, or
5 modify it.

6 This hearing is being held so you can
7 provide your comments on N.F.G.'s proposal for the
8 commission's consideration. We are holding this
9 hearing so that you can provide your comments on this
10 proposal. The Commission has six members, the
11 Chairperson, Rory Christian and five Commissioners,
12 Diane Burman, James Alesi, John Howard, David
13 Valesky, and John Maggiore. Any statements made
14 today will become part of the case record. We have a
15 court reporter joining us who will be preparing a
16 transcript of the hearing, which will be included in
17 the official record of this proceeding. When it is
18 ready, the transcript will be available for view on
19 the Department of Public Services' website.

20 This hearing is not an evidentiary
21 hearing or a question-and-answer session, but a forum
22 to hear comments from you. This is also not the only
23 opportunity for comment. If you do not wish to speak
24 at today's hearing, but you would like your views
25 included in the record, there are a variety of other

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2 ways to comment that were listed in the public notice
3 for today's event. You can do so by submitting
4 comments on the department's website, by email,
5 regular mail, or by phone. Regardless of how the
6 comments are submitted, they will be given equal
7 consideration.

8 Comments may be submitted and will be
9 considered through the pendency of this proceeding.
10 If you would like to make a statement here today,
11 please fill out a registration card. They're
12 available at the back at the table with our
13 Department of Public Service outreach staff. I will
14 call speakers up one by one by using the cards.
15 Please speak slowly and clearly so that the court
16 reporter can accurately capture your statement for
17 the record. Finally, before we begin, I would like
18 to remind everyone there will be differing
19 viewpoints, but this event is being held so that we
20 can hear from everyone who would like to make a
21 statement on the record.

22 We appreciate your attention and your
23 understanding. Thank you. Our first speaker is
24 Ralph Galanti.

25 RALPH GALANTI: Thank you, Your Honors

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2 for this opportunity to speak today. My name is
3 Ralph Galanti. I work at National Fuel. I am a
4 member of I.B.E.W. Local 2199, where I'm the vice
5 president. I would like to make some personal
6 comments regarding the rate case today. I am against
7 the permanent closing of the three customer
8 assistance centers, also known as walk-in offices.
9 For many of the reasons already -- already stated by
10 members of Local 2199.

11 Customers are still going to these
12 offices trying to get in, even though they have been
13 closed since March of 2020 and there have been record
14 daily deposits in the drop boxes that are outside
15 these offices. I believe looking at the cost benefit
16 ratio that these offices provide a valuable service
17 to those in disadvantaged areas who do not have
18 vehicles, internet access, checking accounts, or
19 credit cards. I am also -- I am against expanding
20 the Emergency Heating Repair and Replacement program
21 or E.H.R.R. to renters. This is a valuable program
22 and I am all for increasing the availability to
23 qualified homeowners.

24 But as a rate payer, I do not want to
25 see my payments going to subsidize absentee

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2 landlords. Renters are covered by law for these
3 situations and have code enforcement and the court
4 system to remedy the situation. I am for the rate
5 increase that National Fuel is looking for. Even
6 with the wage increases in our collective bargain
7 agreement, most members of Local 2199 have seen a 10
8 percent cut in their buying power due to inflation
9 since the pandemic started. The rest of our members
10 have stayed even with inflation.

11 National Fuel members currently are
12 the lowest paid in New York State among utility
13 workers. National Fuel prides itself on being number
14 one in customer service-related metrics in New York
15 State, and this is because of Local 2199 members.
16 But I believe that National Fuel is having difficulty
17 attracting and keeping qualified candidates with the
18 current rate of pay. Thank you very much for this
19 opportunity to speak.

20 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you for your
21 comments. Our next speaker is Bridge Rauch.

22 BRIDGE RAUCH: Good afternoon. My
23 name is Bridge Rauch. I'm a west side resident in
24 the city of Buffalo. I'm personally opposed to the
25 rate increase but you have -- setting aside the rate

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2 increase, what I'd really like the P.S.C. to consider
3 is the -- National Fuel's long-term plan that
4 National Fuel, when they make these, you know, needs
5 -- when they say that they need to make these rate
6 increases to make invest -- investments in
7 infrastructure, I really encourage P.S.C. to be
8 looking at, you know, what -- what are their plans
9 for the long term?

10 Like, are they actually moving towards
11 decarbonization and a just transition to, you know,
12 like help, you know, union workers and like, you
13 know, low income folks make that transition or are
14 they working to perpetuate the current system as
15 built, you know, and that -- that as if they continue
16 to rely upon those, these rate increases and, you
17 know, building out the system further and further as
18 people shift away from the use of natural gas in
19 favor of, you know, things like you know -- in favor
20 of other systems like heat pumps and such, you know,
21 like that those -- those costs are going to come down
22 on the lowest pay, like the -- the folks who are like
23 the lowest paid and like, those are the folks with
24 the least resources. And you know, like, it's like
25 it's not going to be good for anybody except for the

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2 C.E.O.s at the top of National Fuel. So I would
3 strongly encourage the P.S.C. to, you know, what --
4 regardless of how you rule on this case, please like,
5 think of it within that context of this long-term
6 plan. And you know, like that National Fuel needs to
7 be working towards a decarbonizing economy and, you
8 know, towards that goal of reaching our climate
9 leadership and community protection net goals. So
10 thank you.

11 A.L.J. KERSEY: Thank you so much.

12 Thank you.

13 A.L.J. LECAKES: Let's go off the
14 record for a second.

15 A.L.J. KERSEY: I want to remind
16 members of the public that they may submit public
17 comments throughout these proceedings by the other
18 means described earlier and in the notice of public
19 statement hearing issued on September 20th, 2023. I
20 want to thank you for the comments received today.
21 There's also another public statement hearing
22 scheduled this evening for 6:00 p.m. Our thanks also
23 to the -- to the offices, Consumer Services Office
24 for administering this session and to our court
25 reporter. This hearing is concluded and we are off

1 1/24/2024 - National Fuel & Gas, Corp. - 23-G-0627
2 the record.

3 (The hearing concluded at 1:14 p.m.)
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3 I, ANNETTE LAINSON, do hereby certify that the foregoing
4 was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place,
5 as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that
6 the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of
7 pages 1 through 9, is a true record of all proceedings had
8 at the hearing.

9 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
10 subscribed my name, this the 30th day of January, 2024.

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12 ANNETTE LAINSON, Reporter

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