

1 11/14/2023 - Brooklyn Union & KeySpan Gas - 23-G-0225/0226

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

4 CASE 23-G-0225 - Proceeding on Motion of the
5 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
6 Regulations of The Brooklyn Union Gas Company
7 d/b/a National Grid NY for Gas Service.

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9 CASE 23-G-0226 - Proceeding on Motion of the
10 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
11 Regulations of KeySpan Gas East Corporation d/b/a
12 National Grid for Gas Service.

13 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

14 DATE: November 14, 2023 at 6:35 p.m.

15 LOCATION: Oneness Pentecostal Tabernacle
16 198-01 Linden Boulevard
17 Jamaica Queens, New York

18 BEFORE: ALJ JAMES COSTELLO
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22 Reported by Hannah Belair
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2 (The hearing commenced at 6:35 p.m.)

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

5 THE REPORTER: We're on the record.

6 A.L.J. COSTELLO: I call cases 23-G-
7 0225 and 23-G-0226. Proceeding on motion of the
8 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
9 Regulations of the Brooklyn Union Gas Company, doing
10 business as -- as National Grid, New York and KeySpan
11 Gas East Corporation, doing business as National Grid
12 for Gas Service.

13 My name is James Costello. We're here
14 for a public statement hearing that was noticed by
15 the Secretary of the Department of Public Service on
16 October 16th, 2023. The public statement hearing
17 concerns the proposed changes in the elect -- the gas
18 delivery rates and practices of Brooklyn Union Gas
19 Company and KeySpan Gas East Corporation, which I
20 will refer to as KEDNY or KEDLI or the companies.

21 On April 28th, 2023 the companies
22 proposed to increase their annual gas delivery
23 revenues effective March 31st, 2024. KEDNY proposed
24 to increase its revenues by \$414 million, which is a
25 28 percent increase in base delivery revenues, or a

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2 17 percent increase in total revenues. KEDLI
3 proposed to increase its revenues by \$228 million, a
4 24 percent increase in base delivery revenues, or a
5 14 percent increase in total revenues. The actual
6 bill impacts of those proposed changes on any
7 particular customers will vary based on the class
8 that the customers fall within, revenue allocation,
9 and rate design.

10 Again, my name is James Costello. I'm
11 assigned by the Department of Public Service as an
12 Administrative Law Judge to preside over this case,
13 and basically what we do is prepare a record for the
14 Commission's review. I'm also joined on the case -
15 the person's not here tonight - by Administrative
16 Law Judge Maureen Leary. She's holding public
17 statement hearings this evening in Brooklyn.

18 So what happens? The case basically
19 gets prepared and goes forward and is decided by the
20 New York State Public Service Commission and the
21 Public Service Commission must consider a utility --
22 must consider the utility's proposal and it may adopt
23 it -- adopt it, reject it in whole or in part, or it
24 may modify it. And the Public Service Commission
25 will decide what the company's terms and services --

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2 conditions of service will be. It has six members,
3 the Chairperson, Rory Christian and five
4 Commissioners; Diane Burman, James Alisi, John
5 Howard, David Valesky, and John Maggiore. So what
6 I'm going to do is briefly explain the process that
7 we're going to follow, which is basically we're here
8 to -- for you to give your comments to the Commission
9 about your thoughts on the company's proposals. The
10 statements you make will be captured and become part
11 of the case record. They'll be transcribed verbatim.
12 We have a court reporter with us who will prepare the
13 transcript and it will be included in the official
14 record of this proceeding so that your comments can
15 be considered by all members of the Commission.

16 The transcript, when it is ready, will
17 be available on the Department of Public Services
18 website for review. And you would do that by looking
19 under the case numbers that apply to these cases,
20 which is they're 23-G-0225 and 23-G-0226.

21 This hearing is not an evidentiary
22 hearing. It's not a -- a question and answer
23 session. It's a forum to hear your comments. And
24 it's also not the only opportunity for you to make a
25 comment, and if you do not wish to speak today, or if

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2 you'd prefer just to give your comments in another
3 way, if you want your views to be considered as part
4 of the record, there are various other ways you may
5 do so, and you can do that by submitting the comments
6 on the Department of Public Service's website. You
7 can do it by regular mail to the Department of Sub --
8 Public Services, Albany Office. You can do it by
9 phone.

10 And regardless of how your comments
11 are submitted, they are given equal consideration and
12 any comments you submit will be considered and you
13 may submit them until the case is decided. So we've
14 asked people as they've come in, if they want to give
15 a comment, to fill out a card, provide their names
16 and what I'm going to do is I'm going to call the
17 people as they registered. Right now we only have
18 three people that registered. I'm going to ask you
19 to please speak slowly and clearly so that the court
20 reporter can accurately capture your statement for
21 the record. If you have a very lengthy written
22 statement, you could summarize that and submit your
23 written statement. And I ask that everyone be
24 respectful of -- of the today's speakers even if they
25 have different views than what you might have. Also,

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2 I ask if you haven't done so already, if you have a
3 cell phone, please just put that on mute. So with
4 that, we'll go to our first speaker. And our first
5 speaker is Ms. Y. Strong-Banks. Just please come up
6 to the microphone and you can give your statement.

7 MS. STRONG-BANKS: Good evening
8 everyone, and thank you very much for the
9 presentation. Just one thing about the presentation,
10 there were a lot of acronyms in there and it didn't
11 spell out exactly what they meant. So in the future,
12 spell it out so we'll know what it -- exactly what it
13 means. So my comments had to do with a few things.
14 You mentioned that there were 20,000 or 22,000
15 customers served with a program. I sort of want to
16 know the -- with the thermostat program, where those
17 individuals are and you know, what area of New York
18 State they are if they're in New York. And then we
19 also spoke about the window program. I'm in
20 desperate need of windows and I've been looking for
21 programs for at least five years, so I'm not sure how
22 you're putting that information out. So I would like
23 that information to be included. And I wanted to
24 know something about profit and loss statements with
25 regards to National Grid, because you're asking for

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2 extremely large increase. And I know I work part-
3 time and I'm a senior. I can't afford the increase
4 of \$33 a month. I can't afford a two-dollar
5 increase.

6 So I think there needs to be some sort
7 of consideration on how this is coming about and how
8 people if - if it does pass, and hopefully it does
9 not, how they're supposed to pay this -- this amount
10 because a lot of people cannot afford it. And then
11 this may sound funny, but I'm being very serious
12 here. I think we should also think about the
13 executives and the bonuses that executives receive
14 and maybe reduce those down to help offset some of
15 the proposed costs and/or increases, because that's
16 always a lot with private companies. And -- and then
17 what we talk about the services that were listed,
18 what area or what members of Queens from this area
19 are actually participating in those? Because you're
20 here and hopefully, I know you said it's not a
21 question and answer, so I'm sort of putting this out
22 there so it can be explored and maybe feedback can
23 come back, because I know two years ago, National
24 Grid did some changes of the piping and for me, my
25 concrete was messed up to now it's a trip hazard and

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2 I've reached out to National Grid at least 10 times
3 and it has not been repaired.

4 So as a customer and a homeowner, I'm
5 concerned about that because it hasn't been
6 addressed. So, you know, I want to know what
7 National Grid's current profit and loss statements
8 are and this 30 percent, where do you think people
9 are going to be able to get the money if it -- if an
10 increase is granted, where the -- where's the money
11 coming from? Because we talked about serving people
12 who don't have it, but how are they going to get that
13 information? And I think more information needs to
14 come out to the public. The only reason why I heard
15 about this hearing, because I also belong to the
16 federation block of Laurelton, which is a block
17 association of all the block association for the
18 area. And if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't have
19 heard about the hearing. So again, thank you
20 National Grid for your presentation, and I would like
21 someone's contact and information to follow up.

22 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Just so let me tell
23 you if you ask them, they -- they're -- they
24 mentioned earlier there's somebody here or --

25 MS. STRONG-BANKS: Yes, I heard that

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2 --

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: -- from there. They
4 can -- they can help you with contact information.

5 MS. STRONG-BANKS: Okay, perfect.
6 Okay.

7 *A.L.J. COSTELLO: Also, if you're
8 having problem -- continuing problems or you have
9 problems that you feel that you're not getting
10 addressed by the companies, if you go to the
11 Department of Public Services table that we have set
12 up, they can give you information to contact the
13 Department of Public Service to -- to help you with
14 that.

15 MS. STRONG-BANKS: Excellent. Thank
16 you very much. Those are my comments.

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

18 MS. STRONG-BANKS: Thank you.

19 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Our next speaker is
20 Dr. Stacie N.C. Grant.

21 DR. GRANT: Good evening, Your Honor,
22 and give an honor to the clergy here in Oneness Pens
23 -- Pentecostal Cap -- Tabernacle. My name is Dr.
24 Stacie N.C. Grant and I'm the founder of Destiny
25 Designers University. It's a multimedia training and

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2 development platform for faith entrepreneurs, faith-
3 based entrepreneurs and faith-based professionals.

4 I'm working as a partner with National Grid to
5 amplify Project C, as a program that focuses on
6 workforce development, environmental justice,
7 neighborhood investment, and volunteerism, with the
8 Faith-based community. National Grid has committed
9 to be a true community partner with the faith-based
10 community, and we are working to share these
11 opportunities and amplify where they exist for our
12 faith-based community members and more broadly, our
13 global community here is -- particularly in New York.
14 Now, National Grid is supporting this black and brown
15 community through weatherization and energy
16 efficiency training through the Grid Collective, and
17 the first cohort has launched.

18 Project C grants make our communities
19 better through neighborhood beautifications, capacity
20 building programs, and they have committed to
21 protecting safe, reliable service, during New York's
22 energy transition and keeping it as affordable as
23 possible. The rate will be increased and they say
24 gradually, and will ensure that energy will be one
25 that we can all utilize here in our communities

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2 safely. And the extensive financial support that
3 they have committed, will hopefully offset some of
4 the challenge because coming out of Covid, everyone
5 is suffering and they have committed to make sure
6 that those in low income areas and customers, can
7 offset what these rate increases would provide. We
8 have to preserve our choice here in New York and
9 pursue a hybrid path to de-carbonization that
10 incorporates electrification and low carbon fuels
11 like RNG and hydrogen. As they work as a community
12 partner, we're going to hold them accountable to the
13 investment that needs to be made to ensure that we do
14 improve that workforce opportunity and for businesses
15 to participate in making our state a greener state.

16 Have things been perfect? No. Can we
17 learn from past mistakes? Yes. Has National Grid,
18 particularly through the Project C program,
19 demonstrated a viable plan for the future?
20 Absolutely. As true partners, we will work together
21 with them to hold accountable all of what they have
22 outlined as a plan forward, not just for this
23 generation but for future generations. Thank you for
24 your time.

25 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next

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2 speaker is Kevin Alexander.

3 MR. ALEANDER: Good evening, Judge
4 Costello. My name is Kevin Alexander and I'm the
5 President and CEO of Rockaway Development and
6 Revitalization Corporation, located in Far Rockaway,
7 Queens. RDRC is a 45 year old local development
8 corporation that provides workforce development,
9 youth development, small business assistance, housing
10 and home ownership counseling and commercial
11 revitalization services to over 3,000 participants
12 and clients per year. National Grid is a critical
13 partner to RDRC and the Rockaways in its efforts to
14 support the unique challenges Rockaway businesses and
15 homeowners face as a coastal community in a
16 geographically and economically challenged area of
17 the -- of Queens. Access to reliable and affordable
18 energy is essential for a robust, dynamic and vibrant
19 economy, and it could not be more critical to the
20 economic health of New York City.

21 National Grid's deep understanding of
22 commitment to the communities they serve enables them
23 to provide the energy and other support -- and other
24 supports businesses need to thrive, particularly
25 small businesses in all of our communities. In the

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2 business -- in the New York business landscape,
3 National Grid actively supports small business --
4 small business owners through initiatives such as
5 economic development grants and workforce development
6 grants through Project C. They offer assistance with
7 weatherization and energy efficiency programs that
8 allow businesses to lower their bills and their
9 admissions. They support large economic development
10 projects that brings jobs and taxes into our
11 communities and more foot traffic into our small
12 businesses.

13 National Grid's could -- community
14 investments extend far beyond providing the customers
15 with gas and electricity. From promoting energy
16 conservation to implementing eco-friendly initiatives
17 and supporting local organizations. Their commitment
18 to fostering a sustainable and thriving community and
19 economy in New York City and Long Island is clear.
20 When Superstorm Sandy devastated the Rockaways,
21 National Grid was there for the community, setting up
22 a mobile station in the heart of the Rockaways to
23 distribute clothing, supplies, generators, heaters,
24 and hope to thousands of locals that had no place to
25 go. For businesses and commercial property owners,

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2 establ -- establishing Sandy Leaf grants to assist
3 businesses -- assist our businesses reopen safely and
4 quickly. When the pandemic hit coming into the
5 Rockaways with pallets of -- of supplies; hand
6 sanitizer, masks, gloves and wipes, so businesses and
7 their employees could remain open and safe.

8 Let me conclude. Businesses cannot
9 succeed without stable, reliable, and affordable
10 energy system -- energy system. And we could not ask
11 for a better partner to power our operations and heat
12 our homes and businesses, than National Grid. From
13 their dedicated staff, what -- who think outside the
14 box to meet our needs, to their high impact
15 partnerships with local not-for-profits and
16 educational institutions and faith institutions,
17 National Grid is an excellent -- excellent example of
18 good corporate citizenship. Their work enables us to
19 succeed and makes the Rockways a more vibrant po --
20 place to live, work, and play. We are all operating
21 in a challenging environment when it comes to taxes,
22 inflation, and clean energy mandates. We are proud
23 to voice our support for National Grid as they seek
24 the resources they need to continue providing
25 critical, reliable service while building the clean

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2 energy infrastructure necessary to meet New York's
3 climate goals. Thank you.

4 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
5 speaker is Derrick Davis.

6 MR. DAVIS: Good evening everyone.
7 I'm Derrick Davis, Chief of Staffs of New York State
8 Senator Leroy Comrie from District 14 here in Queens.
9 And the Senator will be submitting written testimony
10 in regard to the rate case. But I wanted to take
11 this opportunity to thank the Department of Public
12 Service for coming out into Southeast Queens and for
13 holding this public statement hearing and allowing
14 our public -- members of the public to air their
15 concerns and to voice any types of issues that
16 they've been having. And I would also want to thank
17 our community partners National Grid, as well as Dr.
18 Stacie N.C. Grant and Kevin Alexander for appearing
19 this afternoon. We look forward to hosting many more
20 of these opportunities for the public to voice their
21 concerns. And once again, I just want to thank all
22 of you for being here. Thank you.

23 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
24 speaker, and I apologize if I mispronounce it because
25 I -- it looks like Marie Asher?

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2 MS. GRAHAM: Graham.

3 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Graham, okay, I'm
4 sorry

5 MS. GRAHAM: Yes. Good evening
6 everybody and thank you all for coming. I wasn't
7 going to speak because I wasn't prepared to, but you
8 know, just listening, I do want to go on the record
9 on behalf of people in the congregation and part of a
10 member of the church. You know, just looking at the
11 numbers, seeing \$400 and something million in
12 proposed increase and just, I understand their
13 corporate and all kind of people and I don't really
14 understand the rate, how it's determined and
15 distributed. But I did take a quick look on the
16 Social Security, the proposed and already approved,
17 like 3.2 percent for the seniors and a significant
18 portion of the people that attend our church and are
19 in the community, are in fixed income, whether it's
20 Social Security and limited amount may have pensions,
21 but those are pretty fixed. And as far as I know, no
22 one has been awarded any increase in that amount in
23 the double digits much as 20 something percent.

24 Secondly, I did a quick research and I
25 saw just, you know, listening in the last 10 minutes,

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2 that New York's -- the Rent Control Board approved a
3 five around five percent increase, and that's already
4 effective. And there are many other increases that
5 have happened. So when someone's on a fixed income,
6 there's no other way to pay, and I listened earlier,
7 I didn't understand all the acronyms either. You
8 know, and there are different programs that as the
9 representative from the utility said, not everybody's
10 taking advantage of it. So how could there be
11 something in whatever decision that would provide a
12 way that people that cannot pay, even now before the
13 rate, are notified and are given an opportunity. So
14 basically I'm asking for notice and opportunity to be
15 heard. So taking those two -- just two in the five
16 minutes or so that it took me to put together what I
17 -- you know, just doing that research you know,
18 you're getting three point something. So for the
19 average person it's like \$92 extra per month and
20 fixed, that's all they have. There's no other source
21 of income.

22 And so Medicaid will -- will get a
23 portion of it and Medicare will get a portion of
24 that, rent will get a portion of that \$92 average
25 increase. So if they're an average customer with 30

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2 percent increase, the utility loan based on the
3 proposal will get one third of that increase. If,
4 you know somebody who paid, made an extra amount of
5 money and are in one of the highest Social Security
6 categories, and they get an average of 154-month, 30
7 percent, \$30 of 154, we can do the math; what
8 percentage just paying for gas would be in their
9 monthly budget. So what I'm requesting is that when
10 we do it, it's not just a macro economic analysis, we
11 do the micro for the people that are doing it, that
12 it's going to be effective. Thank you. Have a good
13 evening everybody.

14 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Our next
15 speaker is Katherine Brezler.

16 MS. BREZLER: Good evening. My name's
17 Katherine Brezler. Tonight I'm representing Queens
18 Borough President Donovan Richards, Jr. We must
19 bring down the costs for families and help transition
20 our city to more resilient renewable forms of energy.
21 We do not think working families should have to
22 shoulder this responsibility. We hope that National
23 Grid will take a hard look at streamlining for
24 efficiencies and reassess the steep rate hikes
25 they're asking Queens residents to bear. While

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2 National Grid is raising rates because of the quote,
3 need to invest in critical infrastructure to comply
4 with Federal and State Pipeline safety mandates,
5 increased costs to deliver expanded energy efficiency
6 and other demanded reduction offerings and economic
7 factors such as rising costs of materials due to
8 inflation, increased contractor costs, and increases
9 to property taxes. Their CEO saw more than a million
10 salary increase while asking more -- while asking
11 those, not making six million pounds a year to dig
12 deeper into their pockets. We cannot continue to ask
13 our disadvantaged communities who've already bore the
14 brunt of our climate crisis, to give more and more.
15 We call on National Grid to implement its own cost
16 saving measures, reevaluate these heights and come
17 back to our community with a fair market rate. Thank
18 you.

19 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Thank you. Okay,
20 I've reached the end of the list, but generally we
21 try to stay -- keep the hearing open for at least a
22 half an hour. So we'd have, you know, another five
23 or 10 minutes. So what I'm going to do is go off the
24 record now, and in 10 minutes I'll come back. If
25 there's anyone else that has come forward that wants

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2 to speak, we'll hear them. If not, we'll just wrap
3 it up. Okay. So we're going to go off the record.

4 (Off the record at 6:58 p.m.)

5 (On the record at 7:07 p.m.)

6 THE REPORTER: Start the record.

7 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Okay, we're just
8 going to wrap things up. Nobody else has come
9 forward to indicate that they wanted to give a public
10 comment; no further people came forward. So I want
11 to thank everyone for their participation today. I'd
12 also like to thank Pastor Lincoln Graham Jr. for
13 allowing us to use this facility. We thank the --
14 our Consumer Services Office, Xenia Vega and Jill
15 Wasser for their assistance as well as our court
16 reporter and the Spanish interpreters that we had
17 here today. So with that, we're going to go off the
18 record and I hope everyone has a good evening.

19 (The hearing concluded at 7:08 p.m.)
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3 I, HANNAH BELAIR, 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 20, 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 17th day of November, 2023.

11

12 HANNAH BELAIR, Reporter

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