

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 PUBIC SERVICE COMMISSION

4 CASE 24-E-0060 - Proceeding on Motion of the  
5 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and  
6 Regulations of Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc.  
7 for Electric Service.

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9 CASE 24-G-0061 - Proceeding on Motion of the  
10 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and  
11 Regulations of Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc.  
12 for Gas Service.

13 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

14 DATE: June 18, 2024 at 1:05 p.m.

15 LOCATION: Allison & Parris Co.

16 Government Building

17 11 New Road

18 New City, New York

19 BEFORE: ALJ DAKIN LECAKES

20 ALJ ERIKA BERGEN

21  
22  
23  
24 Reported by Annette Lainson  
25

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061

2 (The hearing commenced at 1:05 p.m.)

3 A.L.J. LECAKES: I call case 24-E-  
4 0060. This is a proceeding on the Motion of the  
5 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules, and  
6 Regulations of Orange and Rockland Utilities,  
7 Incorporated for Electric Service, and case 24-G-  
8 0061, a proceeding on the Motion of the Commission as  
9 to the Rates, Charges, Rules, and Regulations of the  
10 Orange and Rockland Utilities, Incorporated for Gas  
11 Service.

12 Good afternoon and welcome. We are  
13 here today for a public statement hearing that was  
14 noticed on May 23rd, 2024.

15 This public statement hearing concerns  
16 the proposed increases to the electric and gas  
17 delivery rates of Orange and Rockland Utilities,  
18 Incorporated.

19 Orange and Rockland filed for new  
20 electric and gas rates on January 26th, 2024, to  
21 become effective January 1st, 2025. The Company seeks  
22 to increase its electric delivery revenues by  
23 approximately \$18 million, a 3.7% increase in total  
24 revenues, and its gas delivery revenues by  
25 approximately \$14.4 million, or a 6.3% increase in

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 total gas revenues.

3 If allowed, the increases would result  
4 in total monthly bill increases for an average  
5 residential customer of approximately \$8.81, or 6%,  
6 for electric bills, and \$12.73 for gas bills. The  
7 Company states that the proposed increases are  
8 necessary to allow for necessary investments in  
9 critical energy infrastructure and to adequately  
10 compensate its employees and develop and implement  
11 initiatives that advance the goals of New York  
12 State's Climate, Leadership, and Community Protection  
13 Act. Currently, the rate case parties have entered  
14 into summative discussions regarding the Company's  
15 filings.

16 My name is Dakin Lecakes, and I am the  
17 Chief Administrative Law Judge for the New York State  
18 Public Service Commission. Also with me today is  
19 Judge Erika Bergen. We are presiding over the  
20 hearings in this case and the development of a record  
21 on behalf of the Commission. At the conclusion of  
22 our process, we will make recommendations to the  
23 Commission based on the evidence collected in this  
24 case.

25 The Public Service Commission has

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 seven members, the Chairperson, Rory Christian, and  
3 Commissioners James Alesi, Dave Valesky, John  
4 Maggiore, Uchenna Bright, Denise Sheehan, and Radina  
5 Valova.

6 The purpose of today's hearing is to  
7 provide the public with an opportunity to tell the  
8 Commission their thoughts on the Company's proposed  
9 rate files. Statements made today will become part  
10 of the case record. We have a court reporter with us  
11 today who will prepare a transcript of the hearing  
12 that will be included in the official record so that  
13 your comments can be considered and read by all the  
14 members of the Commission. When ready, the  
15 transcript will be available for view on the  
16 Department of Public Service website.

17 Today's hearing is not a question and  
18 answer session, but a forum to hear comments from the  
19 public. If you do have any questions, however, there  
20 are representatives of Orange and Rockland here to  
21 discuss any matters with you about the rates of your  
22 utility service in the City, seated right over here.

23 Please note that if you do not wish to  
24 speak at today's hearing, but would like your views  
25 included in the record, there are a variety of other

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 ways to comment. More information is available from  
3 our Department's outreach staff that is just outside  
4 of this room. Comments may be submitted and will be  
5 considered through November 29, 2024.

6 When I call your name, please speak  
7 slowly and clearly so that the court reporter can  
8 accurately record your statement. And with that, we  
9 will start with our first speaker, Bruce Levine.

10 MR. LEVINE: Thank you. Thank you so  
11 much. Judges, I start by apologizing for the need to  
12 do what I'm doing, stuff on the record. And it is  
13 because, due to an illness, I failed to meet the  
14 deadline to file my own testimony, which I usually  
15 do. I am an active party to the case and -- and will  
16 participate in settlement negotiations and try to get  
17 things done from there.

18 What I want to talk to you about is  
19 the need to require significantly greater, I'll put  
20 it that way, incentives for both heat pumps and  
21 electric car chargers. These are not inexpensive  
22 items in some ways, but when you look at the car --  
23 my car charging idea and proposal, it's not to do it  
24 just home by home as electric cars do in their  
25 substance. That's small-scale thinking, no offense

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 to Orange and Rockland.

3 What I've proposed in the past, and  
4 I'm going to propose again, is that every municipal  
5 building in the territory of Orange and Rockland,  
6 over a period of years, being five years, it could be  
7 ten years, that they would each get banks of three to  
8 four car charging stations that would create an  
9 infrastructure to support car charging electric cars  
10 throughout the entire region on a decentralized  
11 basis. That's the basic idea, and we're still  
12 working on trying to understand the cost of it.  
13 There are obviously some subsidies available, but  
14 it's not going to be a small cost.

15 I'm asking you to add that to whatever  
16 they get me, if you will, right, as a rate increase  
17 to cover those costs. In the long run, it will be of  
18 huge environmental and, I believe, also economic  
19 value to the Company and -- and to the public.

20 The second thing is heat pumps. There  
21 are significant state and federal incentives for heat  
22 pumps. And while I asked the Company sort of for a  
23 breakdown of what they -- what they were  
24 incentivizing, it was not searchable. So I don't  
25 really have a clear picture of how many heat pumps

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 they're installing and whether they're geothermal or  
3 otherwise. And -- and I believe that what this  
4 Public Service Commission in this hearing should do  
5 is, basically, create what we're going to experiment.

6 Have the Company put in between five  
7 and ten in their territory, each year, for three to  
8 five years again, and then examine it to see whether  
9 it made a significant difference to have them do  
10 that. And again, utilizing all the existing  
11 incentives, I don't want to lay it on -- entirely lay  
12 it on -- lay it on the ratepayers, given the fact  
13 that there are these incentives out there. And they  
14 could be easily 20, \$30,000.

15 So those are really my requests and  
16 what I'm interested in in focusing in on this rate  
17 case. As always, there are people who understand the  
18 actual rates much better than I do. We live through  
19 PULP and municipal interveners. Those guys are  
20 great. So thank you so much. I appreciate your  
21 time.

22 A.L.J. LECAKES: Thank you very much  
23 for your comment. With that, we have no other  
24 speakers listed. What we're going to do is we're  
25 going to go off the record in a moment and we'll keep

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 the hearing open until at least 1:30 to see if anyone  
3 else comes in and depending on what happens then,  
4 we'll see if we need to keep it open longer. So with  
5 that, we're off the record.

6 (Off the record)

7 (On the record)

8 A.L.J. LECAKES: Okay, let's go back  
9 on the record. The time is now 1:40. We've had one  
10 speaker that signed up. We have not had any speakers  
11 since. Only one other person had entered the room  
12 indicating that they were going to provide a comment  
13 through other means. So I guess in conclusion, I'd  
14 like to thank everyone who participated today, for  
15 showing up. And thank you for the comments that we  
16 received today. With that, our hearing is concluded  
17 and we are off the record.

18 (Off the record 1:40 p.m.)

19 (On the record 1:49 p.m.)

20 A.L.J. BERGEN: We're back on the  
21 record at 1:49. We had gone off the record for lack  
22 of speakers and we now have another participant who  
23 would like to make a statement. You may begin.

24 MS. DRECHSLER: Do I only have  
25 three minutes or more than three minutes?



1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061

2 A.L.J. BERGEN: You can have more than  
3 three minutes.

4 MS. DRECHSLER: Okay. So my name is  
5 Jacqueline Drechsler. I live in Valley Cottage, New  
6 York. I'm also speaking for my twin sister, who  
7 lives with me, named Jocelyn DiPosenza (phonetic  
8 spelling).

9 So I was just informed that this was  
10 starting at one and I was told it was at two, and I  
11 understand we've only had one other person come to  
12 speak?

13 A.L.J. BERGEN: Yes.

14 MS. DRECHSLER: Okay. So I'd like to  
15 say a couple things about that. Going back in time a  
16 bit, on the morning of April 14, 2022, I went to a  
17 Zoom Public Service Commission session on the  
18 Champaign-Hudson Power Express. I made notes to me,  
19 before the (unintelligible) session, and all of a  
20 sudden, it was an O and R rate -- rate case  
21 discussion.

22 I wasn't allowed to be part of that  
23 discussion, it was their discussion. Five people,  
24 myself included, and our former Rockland County  
25 Legislator, Harriet Cornell, had put in comments.

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061

2 One of the Commissioners, and I won't mention the  
3 name, although maybe I should, but I'm not going to,  
4 had the unmitigated gall to say, and I quote, Well,  
5 only five people commented, so clearly, Rockland  
6 County residents don't care about this, end quote.  
7 The rate hike was approved. Maybe that fellow didn't  
8 know that people were listening.

9 I'm sure you can see the same thing  
10 here today, which clearly, if I'm only the second  
11 person coming forward to speak, there's a problem  
12 with communication. Because people don't know about  
13 this. The lady outside informed me that, oh, it's in  
14 the libraries, and here and there. But unless you're  
15 actually going to the library and you actually see a  
16 notice, you don't know about this.

17 If it's put into the papers, in the  
18 (unintelligible) General News under legal notices,  
19 who's going to be looking through, trolling through  
20 the Journal News, which most people can't afford  
21 anymore, looking for legal notices about a  
22 possibility of a rate hike? And if it's posted into  
23 the Rockland County Times, well, half the time, you  
24 can't find that paper anywhere. So I have an idea.

25 I have an idea, which is that O and R

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 should be inserting notices of rate hike cases and  
3 P.S.C. hearings into people's monthly bills, along  
4 with the correct email address for Secretary  
5 Phillips, or whomever one would be writing to on this  
6 at the P.S.C., a correct email address, and a case  
7 number. That would be engagement with public and  
8 customers, not what is currently happening and has  
9 been happening for years.

10 Two, O and R should be installing  
11 multiple E.V. charging stations in every town,  
12 multiple, and public parks. If we're going to be  
13 moving over to electric, which is what you should be  
14 doing, there needs to be the ability for people to  
15 charge their vehicles. I personally can't, because I  
16 live in a condo, and I'm not allowed to do that. I'm  
17 not allowed to run an electric cord out my window  
18 down two stories to my car.

19 And they're not going to invest in a  
20 charging station for where I live. So I have to go  
21 down into some town and hope that there's a charging  
22 station that's free.

23 O and R should be providing serious  
24 incentives, financial incentives for customers who  
25 want to invest in good heat pumps, not cruddy little

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 heat pumps and getting a 100 to \$200 rebate. And O  
3 and R must integrate solar. As of a year or two ago,  
4 only 6.43% of the energy supply was from in-state  
5 renewable energy, only 6.43%. The rest was mostly  
6 from gas and coal-fired power plants. And O and R  
7 should be including rebates, good ones, for  
8 appliances such as electric stoves and ovens and  
9 dishwashers. I know they do something in conjunction  
10 with Veolia, who also stinks. And I don't understand  
11 why dishwashers are not included in this.

12 I want this Commission to know that  
13 Rockland County residents do care very much about the  
14 exorbitant and constant rate hikes that are squeezing  
15 the lifeblood out of us. My costs have gone up \$300  
16 this year in electricity charges. Partly my fault,  
17 because I decided to move over to a group thing where  
18 all of my energy comes from in-state renewable  
19 energy. So I am paying the cost for that. That was  
20 my choice. I didn't realize it was going to be quite  
21 so high. Because you'll still have all of these  
22 delivery charges and charges from O and R.

23 And quite honestly, I have to say, the  
24 previous rate hike they had, which was for building  
25 underground wires for five miles, came to something

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 like 2 or \$3 million a mile. This is money that  
3 should be invested otherwise, although underground is  
4 pretty smart. But I have to say that this Company  
5 needs to move over to electric in a different way.

6 So we do care. We are still trying to  
7 recover from COVID and get back on track post-COVID.  
8 And I do believe that this kind of rate hike is  
9 unconscionable.

10 I think that's pretty much all I have  
11 to say, because this is very unprepared. I was  
12 sitting in the diner writing my comments before  
13 coming here, because I only heard about it through  
14 the grapevine, at the last minute, and you can see  
15 how many elected officials have come, how many of the  
16 public have come. None. One person. This is a  
17 shame.

18 It's a shame that you do not have  
19 engagement with the public. That the P.S.C. doesn't  
20 have engagement with the public. And that O and R  
21 doesn't have engagement with the public. And that  
22 any utility that comes through you doesn't have  
23 engagement with the public and that's allowed and it  
24 should not really matter. Thank you.

25 A.L.J. BERGEN: Thank you for your

1 6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061  
2 comment.

3 (The hearing concluded at 1:56 p.m.)  
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1           6/18/2024 - Orange & Rockland - 24-E-0060, 24-G-0061

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

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 14 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 25th day of June, 2024.

11  
12 ANNETTE LAINSON, Reporter

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