

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

June 25, 2020

IN RE:)	
)	
CHATTANOOGA GAS COMPANY PETITION FOR)	DOCKET NO.
APPROVAL OF ITS 2019 ANNUAL RATE REVIEW)	20-00049
FILING PURSUANT TO TENN. CODE ANN. § 65-5-)	
103 (d)(6))	

**ORDER GRANTING THE PETITION TO INTERVENE FILED BY THE
CONSUMER ADVOCATE**

This matter is before the Hearing Officer of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission (“Commission” or “TPUC”) to consider the *Petition to Intervene* filed by the Consumer Advocate Unit in the Financial Division of the Office of the Attorney General (“Consumer Advocate”) on June 17, 2020.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND

Chattanooga Gas Company (“CGC” or the “Company”) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Southern Company Gas and is incorporated under the laws of Tennessee. CGC is a public utility under the jurisdiction of the Commission and is in the business of transporting, distributing, and selling natural gas in the greater Chattanooga and Cleveland, Tennessee areas within Hamilton and Bradley Counties.¹ On May 29, 2020, CGC filed the *Chattanooga Gas Company Petition for Approval of Its 2019 Annual Rate Review Filing* (“CGC Petition”) pursuant to its Annual Review Mechanism approved in Docket No. 19-00047.

¹ *Chattanooga Gas Company Petition for Approval of Its 2019 Annual Rate Review Filing*, p. 1 (May 29, 2020).

CONSUMER ADVOCATE'S *PETITION TO INTERVENE*

On June 17, 2020, the Consumer Advocate filed a *Petition to Intervene* seeking to intervene in the docket pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-118, which qualifies the Consumer Advocate to represent the interests of Tennessee consumers of public utility services in proceedings before the Commission. The Consumer Advocate maintains that the:

interests of consumers, including without limitation the proposed increase in rates to be paid by CGC's customers, may be affected by determinations and orders made by the Commission with respect to (i) the interpretation, application, and implementation of Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-5-103(d)(6) and other relevant statutory and regulatory provisions and (ii) the review and analysis of the Supporting Schedules and other documentation, financial spreadsheets, and materials provided by CGC.²

Further, the Consumer Advocate asserts that only by participating in this docket can it adequately represent the interests of Tennessee consumers.³ CGC does not oppose the Consumer Advocate's *Petition to Intervene*.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-5-310 establishes the following criteria for granting petitions to intervene:

(a) The administrative judge or hearing officer shall grant one (1) or more petitions for intervention if:

(1) The petition is submitted in writing to the administrative judge or hearing officer, with copies mailed to all parties named in the notice of the hearing, at least seven (7) days before the hearing;

(2) The petition states facts demonstrating that the petitioner's legal rights, duties, privileges, immunities or other legal interest may be determined in the proceeding or that the petitioner qualifies as an intervenor under any provision of law; and

² *Petition to Intervene*, p. 3 (June 17, 2020).

³ *Id.*

(3) The administrative judge or hearing officer determines that the interests of justice and the orderly and prompt conduct of the proceedings shall not be impaired by allowing the intervention.

(b) The agency may grant one (1) or more petitions for intervention at any time, upon determining that the intervention sought is in the interests of justice and shall not impair the orderly and prompt conduct of the proceedings.⁴

Although it is not an automatic or absolute right to participate in proceedings before the Commission, Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-118(b)(1) provides a general basis for the qualification of the Consumer Advocate to be permitted to intervene as a party to represent the interests of Tennessee public utility consumers. It provides as follows:

The consumer advocate division has the duty and authority to represent the interests of Tennessee consumers of public utilities services. The division may, with the approval of the attorney general and reporter, participate or intervene as a party in any matter or proceeding before the commission or any other administrative, legislative or judicial body and initiate such proceeding, in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, compiled in title 4, chapter 5, and the rules of the commission.⁵

Because granting *CGC's Petition* will result in a rate increase for customers to recover a revenue deficiency for CGC. In addition, CGC seeks to offset this increase by expediting the return of Excess Accumulated Deferred Income Taxes ordered by the Commission in Docket No. 18-00035 from three years to one year.

THEREFORE, upon due consideration, the Hearing Officer concludes that the legal rights, duties, privileges, immunities or other legal interest of Tennessee consumers may be determined in this proceeding. Further, the Hearing Officer finds that the Consumer Advocate qualifies under law as an intervenor for the purpose of representing those consumer interests, there is no opposition to its intervention, and its *Petition to Intervene* was timely-filed and should not impair

⁴ Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-5-310.

⁵ Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-118(b)(1).

the interests of justice or the orderly and prompt conduct of the proceedings. For these reasons, the Hearing Officer concludes that the Consumer Advocate's *Petition to Intervene* should be granted.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

The *Petition to Intervene* filed by the Consumer Advocate Unit in the Financial Division of the Office of the Attorney General is granted. The Consumer Advocate Unit in the Financial Division of the Office of the Attorney General may intervene and participate as a party in this proceeding and, as such, shall receive copies of any notices, orders, or other documents filed herein.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica Smith-Ashford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Monica Smith-Ashford, Hearing Officer