

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

December 21, 2016

IN RE:)	
)	
PETITION OF TENNESSEE WASTEWATER)	DOCKET NO.
SYSTEMS, INC. FOR APPROVAL OF)	16-00139
ADJUSTMENT OF ITS RATES AND NEW TARIFF)	

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

This matter is before the Hearing Officer of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority (“Authority” or “TRA”) to consider the *Petition to Intervene* filed by the Consumer Protection and Advocate Division of the Office of the Attorney General (“Consumer Advocate”) on December 13, 2016.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND

Tennessee Wastewater Systems, Inc. (“TWSI”) is a public utility providing residential and commercial wastewater collection, treatment, and dispersal services to approximately 2800 customers in over 23 counties across Tennessee. TWSI filed a *Petition* on November 29, 2016 seeking an increase in its rates and charges because its “current and projected rates and charges are not sufficient for the Company to have a fair opportunity to recover its reasonable operating costs and to provide a fair and reasonable net operating income.”¹

CONSUMER ADVOCATE’S *PETITION TO INTERVENE*

On December 13, 2016, 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

¹ *Petition*, p. 2 (November 29, 2016).

before the Authority. The Consumer Advocate asserts that the interests of consumers “may be affected by determinations and orders made by the Authority in this matter.”² As such, it seeks to intervene in these proceedings to represent the interests of Tennessee consumers. TWSI did not oppose the Consumer Advocate’s intervention in these proceedings.

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
 - (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.³

Although it is not an automatic or absolute right to participate in proceedings before the Authority, 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 authority or any other administrative,

² *Petition to Intervene*, p. 3(December 13, 2016).

³ Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-5-310.

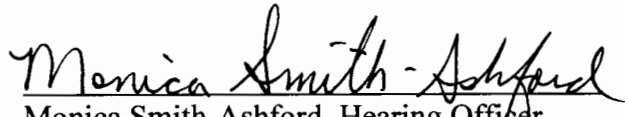
legislative or judicial body and initiate such proceeding, in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, compiled in title 4, chapter 5, and the rules of the authority.⁴

In the instant proceeding, TWSI seeks an increase in its rates and proposes to create a new rate category for cabins. Therefore, as TWSI's requests will directly impact the rates and charges paid by its customers, the Hearing Officer finds that there is a sufficient factual basis to find that legal rights or interests held by those consumers may be determined in this proceeding.

Upon due consideration, the Hearing Officer concludes that the legal rights, duties, privileges, immunities or other legal interest of TWSI's customers 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 objection to its intervention, and its *Petition to Intervene* was timely-filed and should not impair 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 Protection and Advocate Division of the Office of the Attorney General is granted. The Consumer Protection and Advocate 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.


Monica Smith-Ashford, Hearing Officer

⁴ Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-118(b)(1).