

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

**August 24, 2020**

**IN RE:**

**PETITION OF PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS  
COMPANY, INC. FOR APPROVAL OF AN  
ADJUSTMENT OF RATES, CHARGES, AND  
TARIFFS APPLICABLE TO SERVICE IN  
TENNESSEE**

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**DOCKET NO.  
20-00086**

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

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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 30, 2020.

**RELEVANT BACKGROUND**

Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. (“Piedmont” or the “Company”) is a subsidiary of Duke Energy Corporation and is incorporated under the laws of Tennessee. Piedmont is a public utility under the jurisdiction of the Commission and is in the business of transporting, distributing, and selling natural gas to approximately 191,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in the State of Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> On July 2, 2020, Piedmont filed the *Piedmont Natural Gas Company Inc. Petition for an Adjustment of Rates, Charges, and Tariffs Applicable to Service in Tennessee*

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<sup>1</sup> *Piedmont Natural Gas Company Inc. Petition for an Adjustment of Rates, Charges, and Tariffs Applicable to Service in Tennessee*, p. 2 (July 2, 2020).

(“*Piedmont Petition*”) seeking an increase in rates; revisions to rate and service schedules and service regulations, and revised depreciation rates; and amortization of certain deferred regulatory assets.

### CONSUMER ADVOCATE’S *PETITION TO INTERVENE*

On June 30, 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 may be affected by determinations and orders made by TPUC with respect to (A) the interpretation, application, and implementation of Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-5-103(a), Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-5-103(d), and other relevant statutory and regulatory provisions; and (B) the review and analysis of the Petitioners’ documentation, financial spreadsheets, and other materials.<sup>2</sup>

Further, the Consumer Advocate asserts that only by participating in this docket can it adequately represent the interests of Tennessee consumers.<sup>3</sup> *Piedmont* 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

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<sup>2</sup> *Petition to Intervene*, p. 3 (June 30, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

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.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup>

Granting *Piedmont's Petition* will, among other things, result in a rate increase for customers and establish methodologies that will later be used as a basis for Piedmont to petition for an Annual Review of Rates Mechanism. In addition, Piedmont seeks to make changes to its rate schedules and service Schedules and service regulations. If the Commission grants *Piedmont's Petition*, it will have a current and future impact on Piedmont's customers.

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

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<sup>4</sup> Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-5-310.

<sup>5</sup> Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-118(b)(1).

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 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