

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

June 18, 2024

IN RE:

**PETITION OF PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS
COMPANY, INC. FOR APPROVAL OF ITS 2024
ANNUAL REVIEW OF RATES MECHANISM
PURSUANT TO TENN. CODE ANN. § 65-5-103(d)(6)**

**DOCKET NO.
24-00036**

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

This matter is before the Administrative Judge of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission (“Commission” or “TPUC”) to consider the *Petition to Intervene* filed by the Consumer Advocate Division of the Office of the Tennessee Attorney General (“Consumer Advocate”) on June 5, 2024.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND

On May 20, 2024, Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. (“Piedmont” or the “Company”) filed its *2024 Annual Rate Review Mechanism Filing* (“*Petition*”) pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. §65-5-103(d)(6).

CONSUMER ADVOCATE’S *PETITION TO INTERVENE*

On June 5, 2024, 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 asserts that:

The interests of consumers, including without limitation the proposed increase in rates to be paid by Piedmont’s consumers, may be affected by determinations and orders made by the Commission with respect to: (1) the interpretation, application, and implementation of Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-5-103(d)(6), and other relevant statutory and regulatory provisions; (2) the review and analysis of the supporting schedules and other documentation,

financial spreadsheets, and materials provided by Piedmont; and (3) the sufficiency and propriety of the Company's request in its petition given its proposal to include a new depreciation study and new depreciation rates through the vehicle of its annual filing pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-5-103(d)(6).¹

As such, the Consumer Advocate seeks to intervene in these proceedings to represent the interests of Tennessee consumers. Piedmont 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.²

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

¹ *Petition to Intervene*, p. 3 (June 5, 2024).

² Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-5-310.

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.³

In this docket, Piedmont seeks to implement new depreciation rates. In addition, Piedmont seeks an increase in customer rates to recover its revenue deficiency. Therefore, as Piedmont's *Petition* will directly impact the rates and charges paid by its customers, the Administrative Judge 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 Administrative Judge concludes that the legal rights, duties, privileges, immunities, or other legal interest of Piedmont's customers may be determined in this proceeding. Further, the Administrative Judge 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 Administrative Judge 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 Division of the Office of the Tennessee Attorney General is granted. The Consumer Advocate Division of the Office of the Tennessee 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, Administrative Judge

³ Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-118(b)(1).