

ORIGINAL

STATE OF INDIANA

INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

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APPLICATION OF WESTFIELD GAS)
CORPORATION, D/B/A CITIZENS GAS OF) CAUSE NO. 37389 GCA 79
WESTFIELD FOR A CHANGE IN ITS GAS)
COST ADJUSTMENT CHARGE FOR THE)
PERIOD SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, AND) APPROVED:
NOVEMBER 2009) AUG 26 2009

BY THE COMMISSION:

James D. Atterholt, Commissioner
Aaron A. Schmoll, Administrative Law Judge

On July 2, 2009, in accordance with Indiana Code § 8-1-2-42, Westfield Gas Corporation d/b/a Citizens Gas of Westfield ("Applicant" or "Westfield Gas") filed its Petition for Gas Cost Adjustment ("GCA") with attached Schedules to be applicable during the months of September 2009 through November 2009 with the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission ("Commission"). Also on July 2, 2009, Applicant prefiled the direct testimony of Jill A. Phillips, Rates Manager. On July 31, 2009, Applicant submitted the prefiled supplemental direct testimony and updated exhibits of Jill A. Phillips. On August 6, 2009, in conformance with the statute, the Office of the Utility Consumer Counselor ("OUCC" or "Public") filed the direct testimony and exhibits of Sherry L. Beaumont, constituting its case-in-chief.

Pursuant to notice duly published as required by law, proof of which was incorporated into the record by reference and placed in the official files of the Commission, a public evidentiary hearing was held in this Cause on August 18, 2009, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 224, 101 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana. The Applicant and the OUCC were present and participated. The testimony and exhibits of both Applicant and OUCC were admitted into the record. No member of the rate paying public appeared or sought to testify at the hearing.

Based upon the applicable law and the evidence presented herein, the Commission now finds:

1. **Statutory Notice and Commission Jurisdiction.** Due, legal and timely notice of public hearing in this Cause was given and published by the Commission as required by law. Applicant operates a public gas utility and, as such, is subject to the jurisdiction of this Commission as provided in the Public Service Commission Act, as amended. The provisions of said Act authorize the Commission to act in this proceeding. The Commission, therefore, has jurisdiction over the parties and the subject matter of its application.

2. **Applicant's Characteristics.** Westfield Gas is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Indiana, and has its principal office at 2020 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana. It is engaged in rendering natural gas utility service to the public in Boone and Hamilton counties in the State of Indiana; and owns, operates, manages, and controls plant and equipment used for the distribution and furnishing of such services.

3. **Source of Natural Gas.** Indiana Code § 8-1-2-42(g)(3)(A) requires Applicant to make every reasonable effort to acquire long-term natural gas supplies in order to provide service to its customers at the lowest gas cost reasonably possible.

Jill A. Phillips provided evidence concerning the tariff sheet and supporting Schedules filed with Applicant's GCA to be effective during September 2009 through November 2009. The evidence showed Applicant's rates and charges reflect recovery of transportation and storage costs based upon filings with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. A portion of the commodity will be priced using NYMEX futures settlement prices at Henry Hub for the three-month period, adjusted for basis, fuel, and transportation for delivery to Applicant's city-gate. The remaining commodity will be priced according to fixed price agreements. Applicant also pays commodity reservation charges in return for performance guarantees, which are treated in the gas cost adjustment in the same manner as pipeline reservation charges. The evidence established that Petitioner has made physical hedge purchases and has secured storage gas as part of its supply portfolio.

The Commission has indicated that Indiana's gas utilities should make reasonable efforts to mitigate gas price volatility. This includes a program that works to mitigate gas price volatility and considers market conditions and the price of natural gas on a current and forward-looking basis. Based on the evidence offered, we find that Applicant has demonstrated that it has and continues to follow a policy of securing natural gas supply at the lowest gas cost reasonably possible in order to meet anticipated customer requirements. Therefore, the Commission finds that the requirement of this statutory provision has been fulfilled.

4. **Purchased Gas Cost Rates.** Indiana Code § 8-1-2-42(g)(3)(B) requires the pipeline supplier(s) of gas to Applicant to have requested or filed for a change of cost of gas pursuant to the jurisdiction and procedures of a duly constituted regulatory agency. The evidence of record indicates that gas costs in this Application include transport rates that have been filed by Westfield's pipeline suppliers in accordance with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission procedures. The Commission has reviewed the cost of gas included in the proposed gas cost adjustment charge and finds the costs to be reasonable. Therefore, the Commission finds that the requirement of this statutory provision has been fulfilled.

5. **Return Earned.** Indiana Code § 8-12-42(g)(3)(C), in effect, prohibits approval of a GCA which results in the Applicant earning a return in excess of the return authorized by the last Commission proceeding in which Applicant's basic rates and charges were approved. The most recent proceeding in which Applicant's basic rates and charges were approved is Cause No. 42095 U. The Commission's February 27, 2002 Order in that Cause authorized Applicant to earn a net operating income of \$180,450. Applicant's evidence herein indicates that for the twelve (12) months ending May 31, 2009, Applicant's actual net operating income was (\$78,937). Therefore, based upon the evidence of record, the Commission finds that Applicant is not earning in excess of the amount that was authorized in its last rate case.

6. **Estimation of Purchased Gas Costs.** Indiana Code § 8-1-2-42(g)(3)(D) requires that Applicant's estimate of its prospective average gas costs for each future recovery period be

reasonable. The Commission has determined that this requires, in part, a comparison of prior estimations with the eventual actual costs. The evidence indicates that the estimating techniques during the reconciliation period of March 2009 through May 2009 (the "Reconciliation Period") yielded an over-estimated weighted average error of 7.47 percent. The Commission finds that Applicant's prospective average estimate of gas cost is reasonable.

7. **Reconciliation.** Indiana Code § 8-1-2-42(g)(3)(D) also requires that the Commission find that a petitioning gas utility reconciled its estimation for a previous recovery period with the actual purchased gas cost for that period. Applicant's evidence concerning the Reconciliation Period variance established that Applicant over-collected \$34,460 from its customers. This amount should be included, based on estimated sales percentages, in this GCA and the next three GCAs as a decrease in the cost of gas. The amount of the Reconciliation Period variance is an over-collection of \$6,419, to be applied in this GCA as a decrease in the estimated net cost of gas.

The variance from prior recovery periods applicable to the current recovery period is an over-collection of \$61,126. Combining this amount with the Reconciliation Period variance results in a total over-collection of \$67,545 to be applied in this GCA as a decrease in the estimated net cost of gas.

Applicant received no new refunds and has no refunds from prior periods applicable to the current recovery period. Therefore, Applicant has no refunds to be returned in this Application. Based on the evidence presented, the Commission finds that Applicant's proposed GCA properly reconciles the difference between the actual costs for the Reconciliation Period and the gas costs recovered during that same period.

8. **Resulting Gas Cost Adjustment Factor.** The estimated net cost of gas to be recovered during the application period is \$541,235. Adjusting this total for the variance and refund amounts yields gas costs to be recovered through the GCA and Base Rates of \$473,690. After dividing that amount by estimated sales for the application period and adjusting for Indiana Utility Receipts Tax, Applicant's recommended GCA factor is \$1.6580/Dth.

9. **Effects on Residential Customers.** The GCA factor of \$1.6580/Dth represents an increase of \$0.4690/Dth from the current GCA factor of \$1.1890/Dth. The effects of this change for various consumption levels of residential customer bills are shown in the following table:

Table 1
Proposed GCA Factor (September, October and November 2009)
 vs.
Current Approved GCA Factor (June, July and August 2009)

Consumption Dth	Bill at Proposed GCA Factor	Bill at Current GCA Factor	Dollar Change	Percent Change
5	\$ 48.78	\$ 46.43	\$ 2.35	5.06%
10	92.30	87.61	4.69	5.35%
15	131.35	124.31	7.04	5.66%
20	167.41	158.03	9.38	5.94%
25	203.47	191.74	11.73	6.12%

The GCA factor of \$1.6580/Dth represents a decrease of \$5.3120/Dth from the GCA factor of \$6.9700/Dth billed one year ago. The effects of this change for various consumption levels of residential bills are shown in the following table:

Table 2
Proposed GCA Factor (September, October and November 2009)
 vs.
Prior Year GCA Factor (September, October and November 2008)

Consumption Dth	Bill At Proposed GCA Factor	Bill at GCA Factor One Year Ago	Dollar Change	Percent Change
5	\$ 48.78	\$ 75.34	(\$26.56)	(35.25)%
10	92.30	145.42	(53.12)	(36.53)%
15	131.35	211.03	(79.68)	(37.76)%
20	167.41	273.65	(106.24)	(38.82)%
25	203.47	336.27	(132.80)	(39.49)%

10. **Interim Rates.** The Commission is unable to determine whether Applicant will earn an excess return while this GCA is in effect. Accordingly, the Commission finds that the rates approved herein should be interim rates, subject to refund, pending reconciliation of the gas costs in a subsequent GCA and in the event an excess return is earned.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED BY THE INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION that:

1. The Application of Westfield Gas d/b/a Citizens Gas of Westfield for the gas cost adjustment for natural gas service, as set forth in Finding Paragraph No. 8, shall be and hereby is approved, subject to refund in accordance with Finding Paragraph No. 10.

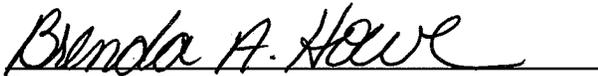
2. Applicant shall file with the Natural Gas Division of the Commission, prior to placing into effect the gas cost adjustments herein approved, a separate amendment to its rate schedule with reasonable reference therein reflecting that such charge is applicable to the rate schedules reflected on the amendment.

3. This Order shall be effective on and after the date of its approval.

HARDY, ATTERHOLT, GOLC, AND ZIEGNER CONCUR; LANDIS ABSENT:

APPROVED: AUG 26 2009

**I hereby certify that the above is a true
and correct copy of the Order as approved.**



**Brenda A. Howe
Secretary to the Commission**