



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

LINDSAY BERSCHAUER • KIT JOHNSTON • MARY STARRETT

535 NE Fifth Street • McMinnville, OR 97128-4523
(503) 434-7501 • Fax (503) 434-7553
TTY (800) 735-2900 • www.yamhillcounty.gov

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Mayor Hilary Malcomson
Lafayette City Council
486 3rd Street
Lafayette, OR 97127

Sent via email to: hmalcomson@ci.lafayette.or.us, brandend@ci.lafayette.or.us

RE: Public input on PGE rate increases

Mayor Malcomson, City Manager Dross:

It has come to our attention that the City of Lafayette, at the behest of Mayor Malcomson, City Manager Dross, and the Lafayette City Council, is engaging directly with PGE regarding rate increases on behalf of our shared constituents. We are not aware of other cities stepping up to advocate for ratepayers and we are indebted to you for leading this effort.

Please consider this letter as part of the package of testimony you plan to deliver to PGE. The Yamhill County Board of Commissioners shares your deep concern about the impact that significant PGE rate increases have had on tens of thousands of residents that live here.

PGE's rate increases over the past ten years have been shocking...with a 57% increase in residential rates, 47% increase in commercial rates, and 28% increase in industrial rates from 2014-2024. Residential rates have increased by more than 30% just since 2022. With PGE requesting another 7.4% for 2025, this would push rates to more than 40% higher than they were in 2022. Ratepayers feel that they have no recourse and are relying on the Oregon Citizens' Utility Board to reject proposed increases. Many of our residents are living on fixed incomes, and with food and gas costs rising with inflation, huge jumps in utility bills are simply unsustainable. There is very little transparency around why these drastic rate increases are necessary.

In the spirit of transparency, we would be remiss if we didn't highlight some of the reasons why PGE is asking for constant rate increases. Extreme price volatility was predicted when the Oregon Legislature passed the Renewable Portfolio Standards and banned coal in 2016 and natural gas in 2021. There was no clear plan to replace baseload power with renewable energy sources. In fact, wind and solar generation only produce power about 30% of the time. In order to avoid rolling blackouts, Oregon has had to rely on purchasing baseload power from other states. Unless Oregon prioritizes investment in carbon-neutral baseload power sources like nuclear energy, we will continue to have to rely on fossil fuel sources from other states.

Moving entirely to wind and solar power generation will never work as the grid needs reliable, non-intermittent power sources. The State of California is learning this the hard way as they've been forced to extend the lifespan of numerous natural gas plants in order to avoid devastating blackouts.

Legislating that Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions must be zero by 2040 is creating a forced push by PGE to invest in wind and solar "renewable" infrastructure. Yet as of 2021, over 84% of Oregon's energy was still produced by hydro, coal and natural gas coming in from other states. The carbon-neutral goals of the Oregon Legislature are illogical and impossible in the proposed timeframe and there is no plan for maintaining necessary baseload power. PGE knew this when they closed the Boardman coal plant.

We acknowledge that PGE is responding to the demands of a state legislature that has an unrealistic expectation of energy goals in the future. Politicians promised that their "emissions-free" laws would not saddle ratepayers...clearly that was false. However, PGE does have a moral obligation to be honest about what is necessary to meet renewable energy standards and what it will cost ratepayers in the short and long term.

We stand ready to assist PGE in advocating for common sense energy policies that don't force seniors on fixed incomes to choose between grocery money or unsafe temperatures inside their homes during freezing weather. It's time Governor Kotek and the Oregon Legislature step up to protect ratepayers as well.

Thank you for standing up for our families.

Sincerely,



Lindsay Berschauer
Chair



Kit Johnston
Vice-Chair



Mary Starrett
Commissioner

Approved by the Yamhill County Board of
Commissioners on 3/28/24
via Board Order 24-95