

Guide To Public Hearings . . .

Q. What is a public hearing all about?

A. A public hearing is one step in determining whether the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) will take action that will affect the rates or services offered by a utility or the facilities the utility operates. The PSC has a long tradition of encouraging public participation in the regulation of the state's utilities. The PSC public hearing process offers the opportunity for consumers, local government officials, industry representatives, and others to bring their thoughts and concerns about a utility planning, rate or construction case to the attention of the three Commissioners. Bringing these concerns and views to a public hearing is essential if the Commissioners are to reach the most fair and reasonable decision possible.

Q. How can I be a part of this process?

A. Just come to the hearing and express your views. Your participation at the public hearing is the most important part of the process. You need to attend the hearing and testify if you want input into the PSC decision. The three PSC Commissioners make their decisions based on the record made at the hearing. PSC staff who attend the hearing will assist you.

Q. I have never testified before the PSC. Is it difficult?

A. No, it is easy to testify. You do not need a lawyer. You do not need to stay until the hearing ends. Just raise your hand when the PSC Hearing Examiner asks who wants to testify and state that you wish to speak. The Hearing Examiner makes sure the hearing is conducted in an orderly and fair manner. Part of his/her job is to make sure you will have an opportunity to voice your opinions. If you have any questions about the hearing, please talk to the Hearing Examiner.

When you testify, the Hearing Examiner will ask you to repeat an oath, give your name and address, and begin your statement. You should speak clearly and at a steady rate so your statement can be accurately recorded by the court reporter.

You may be asked questions to help make your testimony more clear. If you do not know the answers, just say so. No one will grill you on your testimony. There is time for questions. If you wish to ask a question, just raise your hand to get the Hearing Examiner's attention. When questioning a witness, please do not make statements. The witness stand is the place to express your opinions. If

you are with an organized group whose members share the same opinions on a subject, it is often best to choose one or two persons to testify and ask questions for the group.

The Hearing Examiner will make special arrangements for the disabled or hearing impaired. Be sure to contact the Hearing Examiner as far ahead of the hearing time as possible to indicate your special needs.

Q. What should I say at the hearing?

A. The PSC is looking for facts, values, and ideas. Your comments must apply to the subject of the hearing, but may be about any aspect of the subject. For example, what environmental concerns do you have regarding the construction of new electric lines or power plants? Do you support the higher rates being proposed by the utility? What are your ideas about the use of conservation to reduce the consumption of natural gas and electricity? Do you believe the services offered by your local telephone company are adequate and reasonably priced? What impacts are you most concerned about that the PSC should be aware of?

Q. Are there other types of hearings I can attend?

A. Yes, the PSC holds *technical* public hearings. Unless the case involves construction, these hearings are held in Madison where utility, PSC staff members, and other parties provide testimony and use witnesses and exhibits to present information. Each witness has technical or professional expertise on the issues. The witnesses usually include engineers, planners, economists, environmental specialists, and accountants. Witnesses are cross-examined to help clarify testimony. Technical public hearings that involve construction are held in the area that may be affected by the proposed utility construction.

The PSC may also hold hearings in the utility service area for the express purpose of taking testimony from the public.

All hearings are open to the public; however, the most appropriate and effective hearing for your comments would be at a hearing held expressly, for the purpose of taking testimony from the public.

Q. If I decide I want to do more than participate in a hearing, what can I do?

A. Individuals or groups who want to get more deeply involved can request **full**

party status. You can write to the Hearing Examiner before a hearing to request full party status or discuss it with the Hearing Examiner at the hearing.

As a **full party**, you will receive copies of the hearing transcript and all documents that are exchanged between the parties; however, you must also supply all parties with copies of your documents. You will also have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses, write briefs, and receive post-hearing petitions. You do not need to be a full party to testify or ask questions.

If you have important rights that may be harmed by proposed construction, you will be given the benefits of **full party status**. However, you must notify the PSC in writing about your situation at least ten days before the hearing.

Q. **When will the PSC make a decision?**

A. After the hearing is completed, the PSC makes a decision based on the information contained in the record made during the hearing. When the hearings are finished, there is no longer any way to add information to the record. The PSC Commissioners can use only the testimony and exhibits presented at the hearing as a basis for their decision.

A briefing period may follow the hearing. Briefs are written arguments about issues the Commissioners need to decide. They are usually written by attorneys for the utilities, the PSC, and others.

The three PSC Commissioners read the transcripts, exhibits, and briefs. They schedule times to meet and talk about the issues raised in the hearing. These meetings are held in Madison and are open for the public to observe.

After the Commissioners reach a decision, an order is issued. The PSC will send you a copy of the order free of charge if you filled out an appearance slip with your address when you attended a hearing.

Q. **If I would like more information about PSC public hearings, whom should I contact?**

A. If you need more information about PSC public hearings, the PSC staff is glad to answer any questions or send you any available information. To receive notice of hearing times and locations or to answer your questions about hearings, write or call Hearing Examiner, Wisconsin Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 7854, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7854, telephone number (608) 266-1261.

Bilingual Service - Servicio Bilingüe

The PSC is also able to provide customer assistance in Spanish. When calling the PSC, please ask to speak to a Spanish speaking representative.

En la Comisión de Servicios Públicos del estado de Wisconsin (PSC) podemos asistirles en Español. Cuando llame a la PSC, pida hablar con un representante de habla hispana.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provision of programs, services, or employment. If you are speech, hearing, or visually impaired and need assistance, call (608) 266-5481 or TTY (608) 267-1479. We will try to find another way to get the information to you in a usable form.

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of Wisconsin**