



**Minutes – Friday, October 31, 2025**  
**Video Conference**  
**9 am to 11 am**

**Attending:** Hailley Delisle, Sheila Out, Brian Eden, Chuck Geisler, Joe Wilson, Paul Moore, Chris Skowski, Dan Lamb, Dave Bradley, David Gower, Evan Kurtz, Gerri Wiley, Guillermo Metz, Ingrid Zabel, Irene Weiser, Jerney Sauer, Leigh Miller, Margaret Johnson, Margaret McCasland, Marie McRae, Martha Roberson, Meredith Rutherford, Bob Howarth, Ray Burger, Roxanne Marino, Terry Carroll, Tom Hirasuna, Dawn Montanye, Christine O'Malley, Susan Riley, Scott Doyle, Peter Bardaglio

**The NYSEG Rate Case – Terry Carroll and Hailley Delisle**  
*Terry Carroll, chief sustainability officer for Tompkins County, and Hailley Delisle, the County's sustainability coordinator, discussed NYSEG's latest request for a rate increase, what the increase would be used for, the issues revealed by the recent Public Service Commission audit, and what the County seeks to accomplish by its participation in the case.*

**Overview**

Hailley DeLisle, Tompkins County's Sustainability Coordinator, discussed the county's participation in the NYSEG rate case, highlighting the inaccessibility of the process and the need for legislative collaboration. Key points included NYSEG's 34.7% electric rate increase and 48.1% gas rate increase, driven by major storm allowances, capital investments, and a 10% return on equity (ROE).

**Overview of County's Participation in Rate Case**

- Hailley DeLisle explained the county's participation in the rate case, highlighting the inaccessibility of the process and the need for the legislature's involvement.
- Hailley described the county's strategy of becoming parties to the case, reviewing files, communicating with the legislature, and drafting information requests to gather detailed information from the companies.
- Hailley outlined the primary drivers of the utilities' requests, including major storm allowances, capital investments, labor and benefits, and vegetation management.

**Details of NYSEG's Rate Increase Requests**

- Hailley provided a breakdown of NYSEG's rate increase requests for both electric and gas services, emphasizing the significant increases and the factors driving these requests.
- For electric services, NYSEG is requesting a 34.7% increase, with a total bill increase of 23.6%, including supply costs that NYSEG does not control.
- For gas services, NYSEG is requesting a 48.1% increase on the delivery side and a total bill increase of 33.5%, with labor and benefits and capital investments being major drivers.

- Hailley mentioned the county's strategy of keeping some advocacy points close to the chest and potential ideas for testimony, including affordability, vegetation management, customer service, and demand management.

### **Discussion on Rate Increases and Legislative Involvement**

- Martha Robertson asked if other counties are participating in the rate case and questions the high return on equity (ROE) of 10%.
- Hailley explained that Westchester County is also participating, and the county is working on creating a how-to guide for municipalities to participate in rate cases.
- Hailley discussed the historical context of the ROE, noting that it has been around 10% for a while and explaining the negotiation process between the Department of Public Service and the utilities.
- Dave Bradley suggested that the county should push for lower rates and question the high management salaries and stock options of the utilities.

### **Challenges and Strategies in Rate Case Negotiations**

- Irene Weiser highlighted the challenges of pushing back against the utilities' requests, noting the limited resources and expertise of public interest groups compared to the
- Guillermo Metz raised concerns about the PSC's oversight and the lack of follow-through on past promises for infrastructure upgrades
- Hailley and Irene discussed the limitations of the current rate case process, including the lack of transparency and the power imbalances between the utilities and public interest groups.
- Brian Eden shared personal experiences with vegetation management and the challenges of catching up with storm damage costs.

### **The Rate Case Process and the Issue of Confidentiality – Irene Weiser**

*Irene Weiser, coordinator of Fossil Free Tompkins, examined the overall process of ratemaking in New York, why the confidential settlement process favors utilities, and what changes should take place.*

#### **Overview**

Irene Weiser emphasized the issues with confidential settlement negotiations, which undermine transparency and accountability, leading to higher rates. Proposed solutions include establishing an independent office of utility public advocacy and updating settlement guidelines. The discussion also touched on the need for better vegetation management and demand management strategies. The meeting discussed the challenges and frustrations of the negotiation process, particularly in rate cases. Brian Eden highlighted the pressure to support drafts despite dissatisfaction, citing a case where a negotiator refused support, angering others. Irene shared her testimony to the Senate committee and ongoing efforts to reform the Public Service Commission (PSC) to address affordability issues. The discussion also covered the impact of aging infrastructure, climate change, and the rise in energy demand from data centers and crypto mining. Irene requested examples of billing issues related to smart meters to present in the rate case.

#### **Rate-Making Process and Confidential Settlements**

- Irene Weiser began her presentation by highlighting the issues with confidential settlement negotiations, which undermine transparency, accountability, and fairness.

- Irene explained the rate case process, including the discovery phase, testimony, rebuttal, and the decision to proceed with negotiations or an evidentiary hearing.
- Irene discussed the power imbalances between the utilities and public interest groups, the limitations of the current settlement guidelines, and the impact of confidentiality on the rate case process.
- Irene provided real-world examples of how confidential settlements have led to higher rate increases and decreased accountability.

### **Proposed Solutions and Legislative Actions**

- Irene outlined potential solutions to the issues with confidential settlements, including the establishment of an independent office of utility public advocacy and providing intervener funding for public interest groups.
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- Irene suggested removing return on equity from negotiations and updating the PSC settlement guidelines to ensure transparency and accountability.
- Irene discussed the potential benefits of performance-based rate making and return to prudence hearings to hold utilities more accountable for their costs.
- Irene emphasized the importance of public ownership of utilities as a long-term solution but acknowledged the challenges of achieving this in the near term.

### **Discussion and Questions from Participants**

- Participants discussed the challenges of the rate case process, the importance of public advocacy, and the need for legislative action to address the issues.
- Martha Robertson highlighted the importance of the office of utility public advocacy and the need for intervener funding.
- Irene and Haley discussed the limitations of the current rate case process and the need for more transparency and accountability.
- Participants expressed frustration with the current system and the need for systemic changes to ensure fairness and affordability for ratepayers.

### **Negotiation Challenges and Frustrations**

- Brian Eden discussed the frustration of negotiations, mentioning the pressure to support drafts despite dissatisfaction with the outcome.
- The process of negotiating for months and the final approval by the Commission is highlighted, with concerns about the Commission's understanding of the issues.
- Brian shared an example of a negotiator who refused to support a draft, angering the other parties, despite substantial changes.

### **Testimony and Feedback on Senate Committee Presentation**

- Martha Robertson asked Irene about her presentation to the Senate committee, and Irene explained it included testimony and solutions.
- Irene mentioned positive feedback and interest from the committee, and ongoing work with a group on performance-based rate-making.
- Margaret Johnson suggested drafting a bill on performance-based rate-making, and Irene expresses interest in reviewing the draft with experts.

- The PSC reform group's focus on affordability issues and the involvement of lawmakers is discussed.

### **Rate Case Issues and Infrastructure Challenges**

- Irene talked about the multifactorial reasons for high rates, including deferred maintenance, aging infrastructure, and increased costs due to the pandemic and supply chain issues.
- Brian criticized the deferral of maintenance decisions, leading to higher costs and aging infrastructure.
- Irene shared a personal experience of a utility pole snapping during a windstorm, highlighting the impact of climate change on infrastructure.
- The discussion touched on the challenges of balancing upgrades with rate case impacts.

### **Data Center Controversy and Energy Demand**

- Brian discussed the data center controversy in Lansing, the pressure on the town, and the potential impact on the CLCPA and energy demand guidelines.
- The rapid increase in energy demand due to data centers and crypto mining is highlighted as a significant concern.
- Peter emphasized the importance of not extrapolating past trends and recognizing discontinuities in energy demand due to new technologies.
- Irene asked for help in gathering evidence of billing issues related to smart meters to bring to the rate case.