

Kit Carson, PRC electric rate settlement under scrutiny

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The Taos News, 8/11/2016

A proposed settlement regarding higher electric rates for Kit Carson Electric Cooperative customers is under scrutiny. And hearings in the case originally set for this month have been pushed back until October.

The co-op announced at the end of 2015 that it would seek a rate increase to shore up declining electric sales. Enough co-op members protested to prompt an investigation and hearing before state regulators to determine if the higher rates were justified.

Hearings were scheduled to begin this month, but Kit Carson and staff for the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) agreed to a privately negotiated "stipulation" meant as a compromise. Co-op members who protested the rate increase argued against the agreement.

On Aug. 2, Elizabeth Hurst, the hearing examiner charged with overseeing the case, issued an order that, among other stipulations, asked PRC staff and the co-op to offer a legal explanation as to why regulators should be allowed to rule on rates agreed to in the stipulation, but that customers may have not received legal notice.

In addition, Hurst asked the co-op and PRC staff to come up with a matrix showing current rates, the original rate increase, rates that had been proposed by PRC staff and rates agreed to in the stipulation.

Hurst further postponed the hearing until Oct. 17.

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