



City of Saginaw

City of Saginaw

Meeting Date: 3/06/2018

Staff Contact: Gabe Reaume
City Manager

Agenda Item: 4c
(CC-0318-03)

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SUBJECT: Consideration and action regarding Ordinance No. 2018-02, approving a tariff authorizing an annual Rate Review Mechanism (“RRM”) as substitution for the annual Interim Rate Adjustment Process defined by Section 104.301 of the Texas Utilities Code, and as negotiated between Atmos Energy Corp., Mid-Tex Division and the Steering Committee of Cities Served by Atmos

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

Ordinance No. 2018-02 approves a tariff authorizing an annual Rate Review Mechanism (“RRM”) as substitution for the annual Interim Rate Adjustment Process defined by Section 104.301 of the Texas Utilities Code, and as negotiated between Atmos Energy Corp., Mid-Tex Division and the Steering Committee of served by Atmos (ACSC). The ACSC Attorney has advised that adoption of the ordinance with its attached tariff is a necessary action pursuant to the exercise of Cities’ original jurisdiction because the RRM process only exists pursuant to City action. The RRM process is not defined by statute. Without the specific regulatory action by Cities, Atmos would make annual GRIP filings with the Railroad Commission, and the Commission would conduct an administrative review of a piecemeal rate application and deny any participation by cities.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

The ACSC Executive Committee has recommended approval of the revised RRM Tariff as addressed in Ordinance No. 2018-02.

Attachments

Ordinance No. 2018-02
ACSC Staff Report

ORDINANCE NO. 2018-02

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAGINAW, TEXAS, APPROVING A TARIFF AUTHORIZING AN ANNUAL RATE REVIEW MECHANISM (“RRM”) AS A SUBSTITUTION FOR THE ANNUAL INTERIM RATE ADJUSTMENT PROCESS DEFINED BY SECTION 104.301 OF THE TEXAS UTILITIES CODE, AND AS NEGOTIATED BETWEEN ATMOS ENERGY CORP., MID-TEX DIVISION (“ATMOS MID-TEX” OR “COMPANY”) AND THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF CITIES SERVED BY ATMOS; REQUIRING THE COMPANY TO REIMBURSE CITIES’ REASONABLE RATEMAKING EXPENSES; ADOPTING A SAVINGS CLAUSE; DETERMINING THAT THIS ORDINANCE WAS PASSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT; DECLARING AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND REQUIRING DELIVERY OF THIS ORDINANCE TO THE COMPANY AND LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE STEERING COMMITTEE.

WHEREAS, the City of Saginaw, Texas (“City”) is a gas utility customer of Atmos Energy Corp., Mid-Tex Division (“Atmos Mid-Tex” or “Company”), and a regulatory authority with an interest in the rates and charges of Atmos Mid-Tex; and

WHEREAS, the City and similarly-situated Mid-Tex municipalities created the Steering Committee of Cities Served by Atmos to efficiently address all rate and service matters associated with delivery of natural gas; and

WHEREAS, the Steering Committee formed an Executive Committee to direct legal counsel and to recommend certain specific actions to all aligned Mid-Tex Cities through resolution or ordinance; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the terms of a November 2007 agreement between the Steering Committee and Atmos Mid-Tex that settled the Company’s interim rate filing under Section 104.301 of the Texas Utilities Code (a “GRIP” rate case), the Steering Committee and the Company collaboratively developed a Rate Review Mechanism (“RRM”) Tariff, ultimately

authorized by the City in 2008, that allows for an expedited rate review process as a substitute for the GRIP process; and

WHEREAS, the City has kept some form of a RRM Tariff in place until 2017 when it adopted an ordinance approving an RRM Tariff filing settlement and specifically calling for termination of the existing RRM Tariff and negotiation of a replacement RRM Tariff following the Railroad Commission's decision in a then-pending Atmos Texas Pipeline case (GUD No. 10580); and

WHEREAS, the Steering Committee's Executive Committee has recently approved a settlement with the Company on the attached RRM Tariff that contains certain notable improvements, from a consumer perspective, over the prior RRM Tariff, including a reduced rate of return on equity, acceptance of certain expense adjustments made by the Railroad Commission in the Order in GUD No. 10580, and the addition of two months to the time for processing a RRM Tariff application; and

WHEREAS, the RRM Tariff contemplates reimbursement of Cities' reasonable expenses associated with RRM Tariff applications; and

WHEREAS, the Steering Committee's Executive Committee recommends that all Steering Committee member cities adopt this ordinance and the attached RRM Tariff; and

WHEREAS, the attached RRM Tariff is just, reasonable and in the public interest,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAGINAW, TEXAS:

Section 1. That the findings set forth in this Ordinance are hereby in all things approved.

Section 2. That the attached RRM Tariff re-establishing a form of Rate Review Mechanism is just and reasonable and in the public interest, and is hereby adopted.

Section 3. That Atmos Mid-Tex shall reimburse the Cities' reasonable expenses associated with adoption of this Ordinance and the attached RRM Tariff and in processing future RRM Tariff applications filed pursuant to the attached tariff.

Section 4. That to the extent any resolution or ordinance previously adopted by the City is inconsistent with this Ordinance, it is hereby repealed.

Section 5. That the meeting at which this Ordinance was approved was in all things conducted in strict compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.

Section 6. That if any one or more sections or clauses of this Ordinance is adjudged to be unconstitutional or invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the remaining provisions of this Ordinance , and the remaining provisions of this Ordinance shall be interpreted as if the offending section or clause never existed.

Section 7. That this Ordinance shall become effective from and after its passage.

Section 8. That a copy of this Ordinance shall be sent to Atmos Mid-Tex, care of Chris Felan, Vice President of Rates and Regulatory Affairs, Atmos Energy Corporation, Mid-Tex Division, 5420 LBJ Freeway, Suite 1862, Dallas, Texas 75240, and to Geoffrey Gay, General Counsel to Mid-Tex Cities, at Lloyd Gosselink Rochelle & Townsend, P.C., 816 Congress Avenue, Suite 1900, Austin, Texas 78701.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 6th day of March, 2018.

Todd Flippo, Mayor

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Janice England, City Secretary

Bryn Meredith, City Attorney

February 13, 2018

MODEL STAFF REPORT

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The City, along with 171 other Mid-Texas Cities Served by Atmos Energy Corporation, Mid-Tex Division (“Atmos Mid-Tex” or “Company”), is a member of the Steering Committee of Cities Served by Atmos (“Cities”). In 2007, the Cities and Atmos Mid-Tex settled a rate application filed by the Company pursuant to Section 104.301 of the Texas Utilities Code for an interim rate adjustment commonly referred to as a GRIP filing (arising out of the Gas Reliability Infrastructure Program legislation). That settlement created a substitute rate review process, referred to as Rate Review Mechanism (“RRM”), as a substitute for future filings under the GRIP statute.

Since 2007, there have been several modifications to the original RRM Tariff. The Ordinance that resolved the Company’s application under the RRM Tariff in 2017 also terminated the existing RRM Tariff and required a renegotiation of the terms of that tariff. Negotiations have taken place over the past several months, and have resulted in a revised RRM Tariff that has been agreed to by the Company. The Cities’ Executive Committee has recommended acceptance of the revised RRM Tariff, which is attached to the Ordinance.

CITIES’ OBJECTION TO THE SECTION 104.301 GRIP PROCESS

Cities strongly opposed the GRIP process because it constitutes piecemeal ratemaking by ignoring declining expenses and increasing revenues and rewarding the Company for increasing capital investment. The GRIP process does not allow any review of the reasonableness of capital investment and does not allow cities to participate in the Railroad Commission’s review of annual GRIP filings or recover their rate case expenses. The Railroad Commission undertakes a mere administrative review of GRIP filings (instead of a full hearing) and rate increases go into effect

without any material adjustments. In the Steering Committee's view, the GRIP process unfairly raises customers' rates without any regulatory oversight. In contrast, the RRM process has allowed for a more comprehensive rate review and annual evaluation of expenses and revenues, as well as capital investment.

CHANGES TO THE RRM TARIFF

The RRM Tariff on which the 2017 rates were based allowed a rate of return on equity of 10.50%. The revised RRM Tariff reduces that to 9.8%. The revised RRM Tariff also captures the reduction in federal income tax rates from 35% to 21%, and should result in a rate reduction effective by mid-March, 2018. Prior RRM tariffs allowed Cities only three months to review the Company's filing. The new revised Tariff expands that time period by two months. New applications by the Company should be made on or about April 1 of each year, with new rates effective October 1. A rate order from the Railroad Commission in an Atmos Texas Pipeline rate case adopted the position of Cities with regard to incentive compensation related to Atmos' Shared Services Unit that reduced allowed expenses, and that reduced level of expenses will be applicable under the new RRM Tariff.

EXPLANATION OF "BE IT ORDAINED" PARAGRAPHS

1. This section approves all findings in the Ordinance.
2. This section adopts the attached RRM Tariff and finds the adoption of the Tariff to be just, reasonable, and in the public interest. The prior tariff expired by its own terms.
3. This section requires the Company to reimburse the City for expenses associated with adoption of the Ordinance and RRM Tariff and in processing future applications pursuant to the Ordinance.

4. This section repeals any resolution or ordinance that is inconsistent with this Ordinance.
5. This section finds that the meeting was conducted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.
6. This section is a savings clause, which provides that if any section is later found to be unconstitutional or invalid, that finding shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remaining provisions of this Ordinance. This section further directs that the remaining provisions of the Ordinance are to be interpreted as if the offending section or clause never existed.
7. This section provides for an effective date upon passage.
8. This section directs that a copy of the signed Ordinance be sent to a representative of the Company and legal counsel for the Steering Committee.

**ATMOS ENERGY CORPORATION
MID-TEX DIVISION**

RATE SCHEDULE:	RRM – Rate Review Mechanism	
APPLICABLE TO:	ALL CITIES IN THE MID-TEX DIVISION AS IDENTIFIED IN EXHIBIT A TO THIS RATE SCHEDULE	
EFFECTIVE DATE:	Bills Rendered on and after 04/01/2018	PAGE: 7

Exhibit A

ACSC Cities

Abilene	Cleburne	Frost	Lincoln Park
Addison	Clyde	Gainesville	Little Elm
Albany	College Station	Garland	Lorena
Allen	Colleyville	Garrett	Madisonville
Alvarado	Colorado City	Grand Prairie	Malakoff
Angus	Comanche	Grapevine	Mansfield
Anna	Commerce	Groesbeck	Mckinney
Argyle	Coolidge	Gunter	Melissa
Arlington	Coppell	Haltom City	Mesquite
Aubrey	Copperas Cove	Harker Heights	Midlothian
Azle	Corinth	Haskell	Murphy
Bedford	Crandall	Haslet	Newark
Bellmead	Crowley	Hewitt	Nocona
Benbrook	Dalworthington Gardens	Highland Park	North Richland Hills
Beverly Hills	Denison	Highland Village	Northlake
Blossom	Denton	Honey Grove	Oak Leaf
Blue Ridge	Desoto	Hurst	Ovilla
Bowie	Draper	Hutto	Palestine
Boyd	Duncanville	Iowa Park	Pantego
Bridgeport	Eastland	Irving	Paris
Brownwood	Edgecliff Village	Justin	Parker
Buffalo	Emory	Kaufman	Pecan Hill
Burkburnett	Ennis	Keene	Petrolia
Burleson	Eules	Keller	Plano
Caddo Mills	Everman	Kemp	Ponder
Canton	Fairview	Kennedale	Pottsboro
Carrollton	Farmers Branch	Kerens	Prosper
Cedar Hill	Farmersville	Kerrville	Quitman
Celeste	Fate	Killeen	Red Oak
Celina	Flower Mound	Krum	Reno (Parker County)
Centerville	Forest Hill	Lake Worth	Rhome
Cisco	Forney	Lakeside	Richardson
Clarksville	Fort Worth	Lancaster	Richland
	Frisco	Lewisville	Richland Hills

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River Oaks	Temple
Roanoke	Terrell
Robinson	The Colony
Rockwall	Trophy Club
Roscoe	Tyler
Rowlett	University Park
Royse City	Venus
Sachse	Vernon
Saginaw	Waco
Sansom Park	Watauga
Seagoville	Waxahachie
Sherman	Westlake
Snyder	Westover Hills
Southlake	Westworth Village
Springtown	White Settlement
Stamford	Whitesboro
Stephenville	Wichita Falls
Sulphur Springs	Woodway
Sweetwater	Wylie