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SEPTEMBER PUBLIC HEARINGS ALLOW RATEPAYERS TO COMMENT ON SUMMIT NATURAL GAS REQUEST FOR 200% RATE INCREASE

Office of the Public Advocate Urges Public to Attend and be Heard

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September 1, 2022 | HALLOWELL, ME – The Maine Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) is alerting customers of Summit Natural Gas of two important hearings happening later this month that will allow them to be heard.

Per the OPA's request, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is holding two public, in-person hearings regarding a 200% increase in distribution rates, requested by Summit Natural Gas. When the request was first raised by Summit last spring, the OPA immediately raised its objection, noting the increase is the largest ever proposed by a Maine public utility. "If approved, it will impose a terrible financial burden on Summit's customers," stated William Harwood, Maine's Public Advocate.

"I urged the PUC to hold multiple, evening hearings so that as many Summit customers as possible could attend and be heard," Harwood added.

The hearings are set for:

- Thursday, September 22, 2022, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Cumberland Town Hall, 290 Tuttle Road in Cumberland Center.
- Thursday, September 29, 2022, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Public Utilities Commission, 26 Katherine Drive in Hallowell.

Summit customers pay the highest natural gas rates in Maine. A typical residential Summit customer pays approximately \$170/month, while customers of the other three Maine natural gas utilities pay an average of approximately \$90-\$120/month, depending on which gas utility serves them. If the proposed increase were approved, the average Summit monthly bill would increase over seven years to approximately \$350/month, more than 300% above the current rates of the other three Maine natural gas utilities.

The proposed rate increase would affect not only residential consumers, but low- or fixed-income Mainers who live in institutional housing locations that are served by Summit. These entities, likely would have to pass the 200% increase on to their residents. Summit also serves local schools. A 200% increase would affect school budgets, and therefore, all citizens in the community.

“Attending and speaking at these upcoming hearings is crucial to aiding the PUC in its decision-making process,” said Harwood. “If any Summit customers have questions or concerns about how the hearings work, or what they need to know to participate, they can contact my office at 207-624-3687.”

Summit Natural Gas serves customers in the Kennebec Valley, as well as Falmouth, Cumberland, and Yarmouth.