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9	Liberty Response to DOE Data Request 1-1 <b>{CONFIDENTIAL &amp; PROPRIETARY}</b>	<i>premarked</i>
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1                                   **P R O C E E D I N G**

2                                   CHAIRMAN GOLDNER:   Okay.   Good  
3                                   afternoon.   I'm Chairman Goldner.   I'm joined  
4                                   today by Commissioner Chattopadhyay.

5                                   We're here today for a hearing in  
6                                   Docket Number DG 24-100, which the Commission  
7                                   convened to review Liberty-Keene's proposed cost  
8                                   of gas rates for Winter '24-'25.   The authority  
9                                   to convene a hearing in this matter is provided  
10                                  in RSA Chapter 541-A, 374:2, 378:5, and 378:7.

11                                  Let's start by taking appearances,  
12                                  beginning with the Company.

13                                  MR. SHEEHAN:   Good afternoon,  
14                                  Commissioners.   Mike Sheehan, for Liberty  
15                                  Utilities (EnergyNorth Natural Gas).

16                                  CHAIRMAN GOLDNER:   Thank you.   And the  
17                                  New Hampshire Department of Energy?

18                                  MS. LYNCH:   Good afternoon,  
19                                  Commissioners.   My name is Molly Lynch.   I'm  
20                                  representing the New Hampshire Department of  
21                                  Energy.   And I am joined today with Utility  
22                                  Analysts Bruce Blair and Ashraful Alam.

23                                  CHAIRMAN GOLDNER:   Thank you.   And the  
24                                  Office of the Consumer Advocate?

1 MR. CROUSE: Good afternoon,  
2 Commissioners. My name is Michael Crouse, Staff  
3 Attorney to the OCA, representing residential  
4 customers in this matter. Joining me today is  
5 our Director of Economics and Finance, Dr. Marc  
6 Vatter.

7 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you.

8 Okay. Before we take opening  
9 statements, I just want to note two things.

10 First, we have limited this docket to  
11 what cost of gas rates should be implemented on  
12 November 1st, 2024. We have carved out a number  
13 of issues related to cost of gas, so we will  
14 consider in the future. We hope that the parties  
15 will be able to file a procedural schedule to  
16 deal with the carved-out issues in this docket in  
17 the next few weeks.

18 Second, Liberty filed a Joint Proposed  
19 Exhibit and Witness List includes seven witnesses  
20 and Exhibits 1 through 11.

21 We can begin with brief opening  
22 statements, beginning with the Company.

23 MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you.

24 First, as to Mr. Garcia, he is out of

1 town, apparently he is having technical issues.  
2 And, frankly, he wasn't going to say much anyway.  
3 So, we're comfortable proceeding without him with  
4 the witnesses on the stand.

5 Second, the updated filing the Company  
6 made, which has been marked as "3" and "4",  
7 contains the rates that we're going to ask the  
8 Commission to approve. And that's really the  
9 only issue before you.

10 We see no wrinkles this morning that  
11 need to be addressed.

12 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: All right. Thank  
13 you. The New Hampshire Department of Energy.

14 MS. LYNCH: Thank you.

15 The Department reviewed the filing,  
16 conducted two sets of data requests with the  
17 Company, and also had -- which the Company  
18 responded to, and had two technical sessions with  
19 the Company. Based on the record, our  
20 investigation, and subject to the information  
21 that will be presented today at this hearing, the  
22 Department anticipates recommending the requested  
23 rates in the filing.

24 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. Thank you.  
2 And the Office of the Consumer Advocate.

3 MR. CROUSE: Thank you.

4 Similar to the Department, the OCA has  
5 reviewed the filing. All of the significant  
6 concerns we have have been carved out for a later  
7 time in this proceeding. And, so, the OCA is not  
8 intending to call Dr. Vatter as a witness today,  
9 unless any of the parties or the Commission had a  
10 question.

11 But, otherwise, based on what we hear  
12 today, the OCA is prepared to recommend approval  
13 of the rates.

14 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. Thank you.

15 Okay. Let's move to testimony,  
16 beginning with the Company. And Liberty is  
17 presenting three witnesses today.

18 One at a time, can you please state  
19 your name for the record?

20 MS. MASTON: My name is Alyssa Maston.

21 MR. YUSUF: My name is Adam Yusuf.

22 MS. GRANT: My name is Sarah Grant.

23 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you.

24 (*Whereupon* **ALYSSA E. MASTON, ADAM R.M.**



[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1                   **YUSUF**, and **SARAH B. GRANT** were duly  
2                   sworn by Chairman Goldner.)

3                   WITNESS MASTON: I do.

4                   WITNESS YUSUF: I do.

5                   WITNESS GRANT: I do.

6                   CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you. The  
7                   witnesses are ready for direct.

8                   MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you.

9                   We'll begin by qualifying you folks and  
10                  adopting the testimony. I'll start we you, Ms.  
11                  Maston.

12                  **ALYSSA E. MASTON, SWORN**

13                  **ADAM R.M. YUSUF, SWORN**

14                  **SARAH B. GRANT, SWORN**

15                  **DIRECT EXAMINATION**

16                  BY MR. SHEEHAN:

17                  Q     We know your name now. Could you please give us  
18                        your position with Liberty, and your involvement  
19                        with this case today?

20                  A     (Maston) Yes. I am an Analyst II in the Rates  
21                        and Regulatory Department at Liberty Utilities.  
22                        I was not initially listed as a witness, but I  
23                        was involved in the preparation of the filing.  
24                        And, so, we decided to also put me up here to be

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1           able to answer questions, because I've done the  
2           Keene cost of gas in the past. So, I'm familiar  
3           with the model.

4                       MR. SHEEHAN: And, for the Commission's  
5           benefit, there's been some changing of  
6           responsibilities between Ms. Maston and  
7           Mr. Yusuf. So, right now they're both here just  
8           to cover all bases.

9 BY MR. SHEEHAN:

10 Q       Mr. Yusuf, please describe your position with the  
11       Company?

12 A       (Yusuf) I'm an Analyst I with Liberty, and helped  
13       to prepare the model and testimony for which  
14       we're discussing.

15 Q       Sure. There are four exhibits that have your  
16       name on it. The confidential and redacted  
17       versions of the Initial Filing, which are  
18       Exhibits 1 and 2, and then the confidential and  
19       redacted versions of the updated. Did you  
20       participate in -- it's actually two documents, is  
21       that correct?

22 A       (Yusuf) Correct.

23 Q       And do you have any changes you want to bring to  
24       the Commission's attention this afternoon?

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 A (Yusuf) No.

2 Q And, Ms. Grant, I'll go to you next. Your  
3 name -- we know your name. Your position with  
4 Liberty?

5 A (Grant) Yes. My name is Sarah Grant. And my  
6 position is Gas Supply Supervisor for Energy  
7 Procurement.

8 Q And the other day the Commission saw other folks  
9 from your group. You're part of Mr. Tilbury's  
10 group in Energy Procurement, is that correct?

11 A (Grant) That is correct.

12 Q And, Ms. Grant, did you participate in preparing  
13 the testimony and exhibits that have been marked,  
14 so there's four exhibits?

15 A (Grant) That's correct.

16 Q And do have any changes you want to bring to the  
17 Commission's attention this afternoon?

18 A (Grant) I do not.

19 Q Thank you. First, if one of you could explain  
20 the reason for the Updated Filing? We made the  
21 original filing back in September. And we made  
22 the Updated Filing, that is September 27th. Why?

23 A (Maston) The Updated Filing was made to take into  
24 account the new prime interest rate that came out

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 between the Initial Filing and the Updated  
2 Filing. I believe that was the only change, and  
3 it was a very minor change.

4 Q Okay. Could someone please point the Commission  
5 to where in the filing they could find the rates  
6 that we're seeking to be approved?

7 A (Maston) In Exhibit 3, Bates Page 007, there is a  
8 table at the top of the page that summarizes the  
9 rates that we're proposing.

10 Q And, for Keene, there is both a cost of gas and  
11 an FPO rate, is that correct?

12 A (Maston) Yes, as well as the Gas Assistance  
13 Program for both.

14 Q And the Chairman mentioned that other issues are  
15 not being addressed today. One of them is the  
16 FPO. That is going to be looked at in the  
17 context of the EnergyNorth case. But whatever  
18 comes out of that case would apply here as well,  
19 is that your understanding?

20 A (Maston) That is correct.

21 Q And could someone point to where in the filing  
22 are the bill impacts that compare the proposed  
23 rates to some prior rate?

24 A (Maston) Those are on Schedules K-1, K-2, L-1,

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 and L-2 of the Excel model, which can also be  
2 found on Bates Pages 030 to 033, of Exhibit 3.

3 Q And, generally, are the proposed rates higher or  
4 lower than the prior period?

5 A (Maston) In the table on Bates Page 007, that  
6 compares the proposed rates to the previously  
7 approved November 1st, 2023 rates. And it's  
8 about a 10 percent increase across the board,  
9 between last year and this year.

10 Q And, Ms. Grant, I think this question will be for  
11 you. Is it fair to say the reasons for the  
12 change in the cost of gas are market-driven? The  
13 market is slightly different than it was last  
14 year, is that fair?

15 A (Grant) Yes. But I do believe that there is an  
16 under-collection that was less this upcoming  
17 winter than it had been in the past.

18 Q And that would also affect -- contribute to the  
19 delta between the two years?

20 A (Grant) Correct.

21 MR. SHEEHAN: Okay. And that's all I  
22 have. Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you, Attorney  
24 Sheehan. Let's move now to the New Hampshire

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Department of Energy for cross.

2 MS. LYNCH: Thank you.

3 **CROSS-EXAMINATION**

4 BY MS. LYNCH:

5 Q I believe on direct you just testified as to why  
6 the supplemental filing was made. You testified  
7 that there was a change in the prime rate. But  
8 wasn't there another reason for the Updated  
9 Filing? And, specifically, I'd like to direct  
10 you to Exhibit 4, Bates Page 006, Line 10.

11 A (Grant) Yes. That is correct. The base use had  
12 been updated, in addition to commodity pricing.

13 Q Why did that need to be updated, compared to the  
14 original filing?

15 A (Grant) Well, it's typical to always update  
16 commodity pricing if the market changes. But the  
17 base use was originally reported incorrectly.  
18 When I had submitted the first update, the first  
19 filing, I had included the base use from 2023.  
20 And, in the second update, I had updated that to  
21 accurately depict the 2024 year.

22 Q Thank you. And I know we just discussed that  
23 there is, you know, looking at Exhibit 4, Bates  
24 Page 007, there is a 10 percent change in the

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 proposed rate from the prior winter period, is  
2 that correct?

3 A (Maston) Yes.

4 Q And we also, on direct, I believe we briefly  
5 discussed the bill impacts and so forth. But, if  
6 you look at the bill impacts, what does that --  
7 what would that show the Commission, in terms of  
8 the proposed rates, if you look at the bill  
9 impacts for the prior period, and, also, you  
10 know, kind of looking at Table K specifically, in  
11 terms of the residential rate?

12 A (Maston) Sure. So, the 10 percent increase is  
13 comparing the original approved rate from last  
14 winter, and Schedule K is comparing an average  
15 rate that was actually paid throughout the winter  
16 last year, adjusted for our monthly trigger  
17 filings that we make. And, so, the average cost  
18 of gas rate that was paid last winter was \$1.44.  
19 And, so, the percent change, just based on the  
20 cost of gas rate, on the bill impact is about a  
21 4 percent increase, because the rates were  
22 adjusted throughout the season.

23 Q All right.

24 A (Maston) And I'm seeing that on Line 33 of

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Schedule K-1, is a 4.1 percent change resulting  
2 from the cost of gas rate.

3 Q Can you please repeat the line again?

4 A (Maston) Line 33, on Schedule K-1.

5 Q Okay. Thank you. And is that -- and that is  
6 looking at the total bill, correct, including the  
7 LDAC?

8 A (Maston) Yes. That's looking at the total bill  
9 from last winter period, compared to the increase  
10 in just the cost of gas portion.

11 Q But, if you look -- so, what is Line -- Line 25  
12 shows a "7.1 percent increase". What is that  
13 showing, compared to the 4.1 percent?

14 A (Maston) So, yes. The "7.1 percent" is the  
15 increase year to year of just the cost of gas  
16 portion of the bill.

17 Q Uh-huh.

18 A (Maston) And, then, that 4.1 percent is comparing  
19 the portion of the total bill change that is  
20 attributable to the cost of gas. Does that make  
21 sense?

22 Q And that's including the LDAC?

23 A (Maston) The change resulting from the LDAC. So,  
24 on Line 32, it's the total bill change is 4.6



[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 percent year over the year, taking into account  
2 the delivery charges and the LDAC charges. And,  
3 of that 4.6 percent, 4.1 percent is attributable  
4 to the cost of gas changes, and 0.5 percent is  
5 attributable to the LDAC changes. And there were  
6 no changes to the delivery charge.

7 Q Okay. Thank you. That's very helpful. And I  
8 know we discussed -- or, Attorney Sheehan,  
9 through direct, discussed the cause of why the  
10 rates are increasing. And, if we turn to  
11 Exhibit 4, Bates Page 016, Line 16 and 17, there  
12 the Company also provided another reason for this  
13 change, this, you know, why the rates are  
14 increasing. Can you please provide that?

15 A (Maston) Yes. As Sarah alluded to, part of what  
16 is leading to the increase in rates is that there  
17 is a smaller over-collection balance this year,  
18 as compared to last season. And, when there is  
19 an over-collection, that basically counts against  
20 the rates, because that's money that the Company  
21 owes back to customers. And, so, because the  
22 over-collection balance is smaller this year,  
23 it's not decreasing, it's not offsetting the  
24 pricing as much.

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Q But isn't it also true that the Company explained  
2 in the filing that there is a slight decrease in  
3 projected sales?

4 A (Maston) Yes. I don't have those numbers on me,  
5 but I believe there was a very slight decrease in  
6 projected sales. We don't see much change year  
7 over year in the Keene customers and their usage.  
8 So, I believe that change was very small.

9 Q But isn't it true that the filing, in Exhibit 4,  
10 Bates Page 016, says "The main reasons for the  
11 0.1413 increase are the smaller over-collection  
12 balance as compared to the prior year and a  
13 slight decrease in projected sales while  
14 projected gas costs remain relatively consistent  
15 with the prior year's projected costs"?

16 A (Maston) Yes. That is true.

17 Q Do you know why there is, as you just stated, a  
18 slight decrease in projected sales?

19 A (Grant) I would say that we -- the forecast was  
20 calculated using weather-normalization, and that  
21 takes into account the last 20 years, and also  
22 takes into account the last 12 months of actual  
23 usage. So, that would be the reason for the  
24 decrease.

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Q Can you explain it slightly, I think -- I think I  
2 understand what you're saying, but can you  
3 explain it in a slightly different way, if  
4 possible?

5 A (Grant) Given the fact that we are sending out  
6 less and less over the last few years, and given  
7 the fact that weather-normalization is showing  
8 signs of less usage, that would be the reason for  
9 the sales forecast to have decreased.

10 Q And, as I believe Ms. Maston was referring to,  
11 the number of customers in Keene remains  
12 relatively stable, is that correct?

13 A *[Witness Yusuf indicating in the affirmative].*

14 A (Maston) Yes. That's correct.

15 Q And, if you look at Schedule J, Exhibit 4, Bates  
16 Page 29, does that -- does that, on the Lines 1  
17 and 12, give you an idea of the number of  
18 customers?

19 A (Grant) That's correct.

20 Q Okay. And, though, if you do look at that table,  
21 that does show some slight variation, you know,  
22 or there's projected slight variations in, you  
23 know, for between November 2024 and December  
24 2024, and so forth, is that correct?

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 A (Grant) That is correct.

2 Q Why is that?

3 A (Grant) I know it's consistent with past filings.

4 Q Okay.

5 A (Grant) But that could be something that I could  
6 research further for you.

7 Q Okay. Thank you. But you just said it, but just  
8 to reiterate, this is consistent with prior  
9 filings?

10 A (Grant) Yes.

11 Q And the number of customers is similar to prior  
12 filings?

13 A (Grant) Yes. That is correct.

14 Q Okay. Thank you. And, also, just to reiterate,  
15 the number of CNG customers, that has also, in  
16 particular, that has remained consistent compared  
17 to prior years as well?

18 A (Grant) That's correct.

19 Q And are the CNG customers limited to the  
20 Monadnock Marketplace on Key Road?

21 A (Grant) Yes. That's correct.

22 Q Thank you. And do you know how many customers  
23 that is?

24 A (Grant) Just one second. Approximately 25

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 customers.

2 Q Thank you. And I'd like to return to the  
3 under-collection that Ms. Maston just discussed.  
4 So, if we go to, I think, maybe the summary  
5 exhibit is the best place to go in Exhibit 4, and  
6 that is Bates Page 021.

7 This shows an over-collection of  
8 "\$82,846", is that correct?

9 A (Maston) Before taking into account interest,  
10 that is correct.

11 Q And what is that amount, when you calculate in  
12 the interest?

13 A (Maston) Interest totals "\$3,272", which brings  
14 the over-collection to "\$86,118".

15 Q And I believe this is -- this is a minor issue,  
16 but I think it would be helpful just to make sure  
17 we clarify this for the record. But, if the  
18 Company goes to Exhibit 4, Bates Page 009, isn't  
19 it true that the testimony says that there was an  
20 "under-collection of \$82,846", when it should say  
21 it was an "over-collection"?

22 A (Maston) Yes, that is correct. It should say  
23 "over-collection".

24 Q And, for us non-math people, I kind of wanted to

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 just focus on that in particular. Because, if we  
2 go to Schedule B, which is Bates Page 023 in  
3 Exhibit 4, and we go to Line -- or, I'm sorry,  
4 Row 41, Column (1), this -- is it true that --  
5 can you please explain what the "7,496" figure  
6 represents?

7 A (Maston) Yes. The "\$7,496" under-collection  
8 there represents the beginning balance. And this  
9 agrees to the ending balance per the  
10 reconciliation of the prior winter period.

11 Q Thank you. So, there was an under-collection.  
12 But, when you're calculating the cost of gas for  
13 this prior winter period, it was actually an  
14 over-collection. Is that somewhat fair to say?

15 A (Maston) Yes. The over-collection that we are  
16 beginning the winter period with is a projected  
17 balance, because at the time of filing we only  
18 had actual information through July. And, so,  
19 taking that into account, as well as the  
20 estimated activity, for August, September, and  
21 October, we arrive at that projected  
22 over-collection.

23 Q And can you explain this a little bit in more  
24 detail? So, why -- so, if I understand

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1           correctly, the prior winter period ended with an  
2           under-collection of \$7,496. But, between May of  
3           2024 and October of 2024, this under-collection  
4           becomes a projected over-collection when we're  
5           not in the winter period. Can you explain that  
6           please?

7    A       (Maston) Yes. So, the bulk of this change is due  
8           to billings from the last winter period that did  
9           not go to customers, or the money didn't come  
10          back to the Company until the months following  
11          the end of the period. So, for example, in May  
12          of 2024, you can see on Line 29, Column (2), of  
13          Schedule B, there were 86, almost \$87,000 of  
14          billed therms that came through in May. And  
15          that's common in the shoulder months, because of  
16          customers being on different billing cycles, they  
17          may not be billed for winter April activity until  
18          May.

19   Q       That's very helpful. Thank you. Okay. And,  
20          then, just sticking with Schedule B, so we don't  
21          have to go back to it after this line of  
22          questioning, can you please explain the  
23          adjustments that show up? We're sticking with  
24          Schedule B. I believe it's Line 18, and it shows

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 an adjustment in the amount of "\$50,221". And I  
2 believe it's Line 18. Sorry, Row (4). It's very  
3 difficult to -- it's small numbers, I'm trying --  
4 A (Maston) Yes. It's that, it's the 50,000.

5 Q Okay.

6 A (Maston) Yes. Those are accounting adjustments  
7 that were made after or during the audit of the  
8 winter reconciliation. If you -- there's a note,  
9 Note 1, for that line that reads: "The  
10 accounting adjustment made in July 2024 is the  
11 total of three adjusting entries made during the  
12 preparation of the Winter '23-'24  
13 Reconciliation." And, at the time of filing,  
14 they were currently being addressed, but those  
15 were ultimately addressed in the Audit Report on  
16 that filing. And they were various adjustments  
17 to -- I don't have that off the top of my head,  
18 but --

19 Q No problem. And just to correct the record, it  
20 was Row -- well, it was Line 18, and it was -- I  
21 would say it was "Column (4)".

22 And would it helpful if we -- would it  
23 help refresh your recollection if we went to  
24 Exhibit 8, which was some data requests that the



[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Department issued regarding this topic? Would  
2 that help? Would that help you?

3 A (Maston) Yes.

4 Q And it's Bates Page 016 and 017, I believe.

5 A (Maston) Okay. Yes. So, on Bates Page 017 of  
6 Exhibit 8, that does detail the three entries  
7 that make up that \$50,000 in July. One of them  
8 was for about -- for "\$26,451", and I believe  
9 that number is confidential, maybe not in this,  
10 is this exhibit confidential? It might not be.  
11 And that was for the incremental costs that were  
12 booked for last winter, the comparison between  
13 CNG and propane that we calculate.

14 There was a "\$9,423" adjustment that  
15 was booked to true up the April 30th, 2024  
16 beginning reconciliation balance to the prior  
17 audited ending balance. That was an adjustment  
18 that we realized had not been made until we began  
19 preparing the reconciliation.

20 And the third adjustment was for  
21 "\$14,348", and that was to reverse an entry that  
22 was made in April of 2024 that should not have  
23 been made.

24 MS. LYNCH: Thank you. Just, Attorney

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Sheehan, I don't believe any of those numbers are  
2 confidential, but can you just confirm?

3 MR. SHEEHAN: I'm not sure. We can  
4 check afterwards. And I'll let Mr. Patnaude know  
5 if it is or is not.

6 WITNESS MASTON: I don't think they  
7 are. I think the pricing that flows into the  
8 calculation of that number is confidential, but  
9 the number itself is not. My apologies.

10 MS. LYNCH: Oh, okay. Thank you.  
11 Thank you.

12 BY MS. LYNCH:

13 Q And, if the Commission wanted to look, I believe  
14 you discussed the \$26,451 figure, if the  
15 Commission wanted to see that figure in  
16 Schedule N, could they go to Exhibit 4, and I'll  
17 get the Bates Page in a second, and that's -- I  
18 believe that's Bates Page 035?

19 A (Maston) Yes. That's on Line 8, Column G.

20 Q Thank you. So, leaving Schedule B, the  
21 Department -- one thing that we, you know, the  
22 Department wanted to discuss today is how, and I  
23 believe this question is for Ms. Grant, how is  
24 the propane for this winter season being

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 transported to Keene?

2 A (Grant) For the upcoming winter, the propane is  
3 being transported, to our knowledge, by railroad.

4 Q From where to where please?

5 A (Grant) Sure. Mont Belvieu, Texas, to Bellows  
6 Falls, Vermont.

7 Q Is this is a change from the prior winter cost of  
8 gas?

9 A (Grant) It is.

10 Q And what is the change?

11 A (Grant) Previously, we had -- we had a supplier  
12 that was transporting the gas by pipeline from  
13 Mont Belvieu, Texas, to Selkirk, New York.

14 Q And why is the Company now transporting the  
15 propane via railroad, instead of pipeline?

16 A (Grant) That is not a Company decision. That was  
17 the decision on behalf of our supplier. Liberty  
18 does not require notice of how the gas is being  
19 transported. That was a discovery made after the  
20 RFP winner was selected.

21 Q Without -- because I am going to be referring to  
22 a confidential exhibit, Exhibit 11, Bates  
23 Page 014, but without disclosing specific  
24 numbers, and I'm going to get there as well,

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1           what -- can you explain what that shows without  
2           going into specific numbers?

3   A       (Grant) I'm sorry, what Bates Page?

4   Q       Fourteen. Oh. Fourteen.

5   A       (Maston) Can you share which data request number  
6           that was in response to?

7   Q       Sure. I believe it was in response to 2-2, and  
8           it was 2-2a, is on the top of the document.

9   A       (Grant) I'm sorry, Attorney Lynch, would you just  
10          mind repeating your question?

11   Q       No problem. Sure. So, without -- this is a  
12          confidential exhibit. So, without discussing  
13          individual numbers, can you please explain for  
14          the Commission what this page shows?

15   A       (Grant) Sure. This page was a request to provide  
16          transparency into the individual components that  
17          we believe make up the propane transport cost.  
18          We have categorized them by "Pipeline, "Broker",  
19          "Perc", "Supplier", and "Trucking". And, with  
20          the exception of the upcoming winter, that  
21          estimation, that's categorized as "pipeline", is  
22          also being viewed as "rail".

23   Q       And does it show that for this, for the last --  
24          the last line in that Excel, does that show that,

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 for this upcoming winter season, the rate is the  
2 lowest?

3 A (Grant) That's correct.

4 Q So, is it fair to say that this change, although,  
5 as you testified, not at the request of the  
6 Company, it seems to be causing lower rates?

7 A (Grant) As far as the propane commodity cost,  
8 that's correct.

9 Q Thank you. And thank you for clarifying that.  
10 And you also testified so that the propane is  
11 being transported via rail to Bellows Falls,  
12 whereas previously it was by pipeline, is that  
13 correct?

14 A (Grant) That's correct.

15 Q Does the Company see any negative implications  
16 with this change?

17 A (Grant) The Company does not. And this  
18 particular supplier has confirmed that they  
19 believe the firm deliveries are, I guess, more  
20 guaranteed with a rail supply, rather than a  
21 pipeline.

22 Q And does this decision prevent Liberty from  
23 switching back to using pipeline to get the  
24 propane from Texas to New York? Can you go back

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 to that way in the future?

2 A (Grant) It does not change our opinion of going  
3 back to that option. We've never had an issue  
4 before --

5 Q Uh-huh.

6 A (Grant) on whether it was pipeline. And we hope  
7 to not have an issue for the upcoming winter.

8 Q Thank you. And I apologize, I have one more  
9 question on Schedule N that I should have  
10 addressed earlier.

11 So, going back to Schedule N, Bates  
12 Page 035, is it fair to say that, beginning in  
13 the 2021-2022 Winter Period, it appears that CNG  
14 was cheaper than propane. Then, in the following  
15 winter period, air-propane was cheaper. And,  
16 then, in the next winter period, CNG was cheaper.  
17 Is that -- is that fair to say?

18 A (Maston) Yes.

19 Q So, they're switching?

20 A (Maston) Yes, for the past few years they have  
21 been.

22 Q Does the Company know what is causing that  
23 switch?

24 A (Grant) I would probably say due to supply and

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 demand. The market is constantly changing. But  
2 I would say the two are very competitive with one  
3 another.

4 Q So, has the Company investigated this further  
5 or --

6 A (Grant) The Company has not.

7 Q Okay. Thank you. And turning to lost and  
8 unaccounted-for gas. Is lost and unaccounted-for  
9 gas volumes included in this filing?

10 And I'm referring to Exhibit 4, Bates  
11 Page 012.

12 A (Maston) Yes. Lost and unaccounted-for gas is  
13 included.

14 Q And I'm sorry, actually, I believe the reference  
15 should have been "Exhibit 2, Bates Page 012".  
16 And what was that percentage?

17 A (Yusuf) It was 2.37 percent.

18 Q Thank you. And is the Company able to separate  
19 out the lost and unaccounted-for percentages for  
20 air-propane versus CNG?

21 A (Yusuf) At this moment, no. But we are  
22 constantly working towards making that a reality.

23 Q And, if the Commission referred to Exhibit 8,  
24 Bates Page 003, which was the Department's Data

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Request 1-2, is it fair to say that the Company  
2 reported that they hope to be able to do so by  
3 the summer cost of gas filing?

4 A (Yusuf) The Company hopes to. It's still a  
5 work-in-progress at this point.

6 Q Okay. Thank you. And how does the 2.37 percent  
7 compare to industry standards?

8 A (Maston) I'm not incredibly familiar with  
9 industry standards. But, based on my  
10 understanding, it is consistent, in the ballpark.

11 MS. LYNCH: Thank you. Nothing  
12 further. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you. We'll  
14 turn now to the Office of the Consumer Advocate  
15 for any cross.

16 MR. CROUSE: The OCA appreciates the  
17 opportunity for cross, but has no questions.  
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you. We'll  
20 turn now to Commissioner questions, beginning  
21 with Commissioner Chattopadhyay.

22 BY CMSR. CHATTOPADHYAY:

23 Q Do you perform any analysis on the forecast and  
24 compare it with the actual, to see how your



[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 forecasting is going, for therms?

2 A (Grant) If I understand correctly, on Schedule J,  
3 we, at Lines 23 and 24, include the difference  
4 between the actual and normalized. So, actual  
5 usage versus normalized forecast.

6 So, in other words, we are comparing  
7 the two.

8 Q Is this normalization of the actuals or is it  
9 forecast really? So, do -- I'm going to repeat  
10 my question. I'm not sure, when I look at this,  
11 this may be simply an exercise where the Row 23,  
12 you're registering the actuals, and then you're  
13 adjusting them to get the normalized. But that's  
14 really not a forecast.

15 I'm saying, when you're forecasting  
16 what it's going to be, and so you forecast  
17 numbers, and then, after the period plays out,  
18 you look at the normalized numbers in reality.  
19 And that kind of comparison is what I'm looking  
20 for?

21 A (Grant) At this point in time, the Company does  
22 not.

23 Q Okay. I think that would be very helpful,  
24 because you probably have data going back at

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 least five years.

2 This is something I'm sort of  
3 struggling with, and I will admit that previously  
4 I may have been involved in things like these.  
5 So, my recollection is still pretty rusty.

6 When I look at the numbers, and it was  
7 also corroborated by the analysis that DOE did,  
8 the demand costs, the CNG demand costs, it's --  
9 for winter, is it -- what is it? For total, it's  
10 \_\_\_\_\_, right?

11 A (Grant) \_\_\_\_\_.

12 Q \_\_\_\_\_, correct?

13 A (Grant) That is correct.

14 Q So, that is 75 percent of the total demand  
15 charges?

16 A (Grant) That is correct.

17 Q As to the best of my understanding, when I'm  
18 looking at the numbers, I want to first confirm  
19 that, if you go to Schedule B, the sendout that  
20 are being estimated, both for propane and CNG,  
21 they're for November 2024 through April 2025,  
22 correct?

23 A (Grant) Are you referring to a certain line on  
24 Schedule B?

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Q Yes. There are multiple lines, but let's say,  
2 let's go to "Propane Firm Sendout", it's Line 1,  
3 in Schedule B.

4 A (Grant) Yes.

5 Q So, those are, within quotes, the "winter  
6 months"?

7 A (Grant) That is correct.

8 Q So, all therms that are being used to calculate  
9 the final rates are winter therms?

10 A (Grant) That is correct.

11 Q So, when you go to the demand charges, what I'm  
12 confused with is that you only used those six  
13 months. So, essentially, you picked up \_\_\_\_\_  
14 for the demand charges. Okay? And I'm trying to  
15 understand why? And there may be a perfectly  
16 good answer, but I'm just trying to understand  
17 why.

18 A (Maston) We chose to do that to align with how  
19 those costs are booked to the GL to those  
20 accounts by the Accounting Department. I  
21 believe, in previous years, that \_\_\_\_\_ was only  
22 spread over the six months of the winter. But,  
23 when we look at the actual balance in the  
24 over/under deferral account, that amount is being

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1           booked over twelve months. And, so, to more  
2           accurately project the balance that we're  
3           starting the season with, we have spread that  
4           over the twelve months.

5    Q       But I would say that goes against the spirit of  
6           the -- the idea that the demand charges should be  
7           split 75 percent winter and 25 percent summer.  
8           So, the 75 percent piece is being recorded, and  
9           then you're really going for 37.5 percent of the  
10          demand charges and reflecting it in your costs  
11          that show up in the calculation in summary.  
12          Okay? So, that's -- I think that is a problem.

13                        You need to, regardless of how it's  
14          being booked, but the whole idea of demand  
15          charges being split into 75/25, 75 percent of  
16          that will go to winter, the winter therms will  
17          pay for it. The way you have reported it here,  
18          what's going to happen with the 62 and a half  
19          percent of the costs, are they going to be  
20          recovered in the summer? I'm not so sure. I  
21          don't understand what's going on. So, this needs  
22          to be looked at.

23    A       (Maston) We can definitely take a look and see  
24          how that is affecting it. The half that is

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1           booked during the off season, let's say, during  
2           the summer months to the winter account, that is  
3           reflected in the prior period balance that is on  
4           the summary. And, so, those costs are still  
5           ultimately flowing into the calculation of the  
6           winter rate.

7                         But that is definitely something we  
8           will look into further.

9                         CMSR. CHATTOPADHYAY: I may not have  
10          understood you fully. When I'm going through  
11          Schedule B, and when I'm looking at the schedule  
12          summary, consistent with what DOE has pointed  
13          out, it is apparent to me that only \_\_\_\_\_ is  
14          being picked up as demand charges. That is part  
15          of the cost. So, the rest of it is not being  
16          picked up. That's the point I'm making.

17                        And you may go back and check.  
18          Regardless of how it's being reported here, and I  
19          think it's true that, if you look at Line -- just  
20          a moment, if you look at Line 21, in Schedule B,  
21          okay, the total, that is 1,773,218, which appears  
22          in Column Q, that is the total of everything.  
23          But, ultimately, when you're going for the number  
24          that is appearing in the summary worksheet,

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1           where, and you can go there, Cell -- Excel Cell  
2           I19, if you go through the numbers, you'll find  
3           that it is only picking up Columns K through P  
4           for Schedule B. And the rows -- the row would be  
5           the same that we were talking about, 21.

6                        So, I'm just pointing out that there is  
7           an issue there that would create problems in  
8           summer, if you don't solve it. And, as you  
9           pointed out last time, you didn't have this  
10          treatment. It was a different treatment.

11                       If there is some issue with the  
12          alignment of how it's booked and what is being  
13          reported here, I would encourage you to give more  
14          weight to what's being -- what used to be done  
15          through the calculations, otherwise you're  
16          creating a problem.

17                       So, that's -- and let me stop there,  
18          because, I mean, I've probed enough. Thank you.

19                       CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you. The  
20          Chair has no further questions. We can move to  
21          redirect.

22                       MR. SHEEHAN: Sure. Just picking up on  
23          that topic.

24                                       **REDIRECT EXAMINATION**

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 BY MR. SHEEHAN:

2 Q Ms. Maston, the \_\_\_\_\_ represents 75 percent of  
3 the total demand costs, is that correct?

4 A (Maston) Yes, \_\_\_\_\_.

5 Q Okay. And we will certainly look into the  
6 Commissioner's questions to make sure this is  
7 done right. But are you comfortable that the  
8 full \_\_\_\_\_ of demand costs is being charged to  
9 winter customers only?

10 A (Maston) Yes. As the Commissioner pointed out,  
11 in the 1,796,383 total anticipated cost of gas  
12 sendout that is on that summary sheet, does only  
13 include half of the winter portion. But the  
14 \$86,118 over-collection that gets added to those  
15 costs does pick up the other half.

16 And, so, we will dig into it to make  
17 sure what I'm thinking is correct. But I believe  
18 they're just being picked up in two different  
19 places.

20 Q Okay.

21 A (Maston) But they are being picked up.

22 Q The Company fully accepts that 75 percent of  
23 those costs should go to the winter and 25 should  
24 go to summer?

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 A (Maston) Yes.

2 Q Okay. And we will certainly take the  
3 Commissioner's questions and see if there's a --  
4 maybe a clearer way to portray that that's  
5 actually what's happening. Thank you.

6 The only question I had is for Ms.  
7 Grant. The supplies that the Company contracted  
8 for this year, the rail versus pipeline  
9 distinction, when you submit the RFP for those --  
10 to those suppliers, what is the ask of the  
11 Company, that we want X amount of gas delivered  
12 where?

13 A (Grant) In the Company's RFPs, we ask for the  
14 suppliers to guarantee firm delivered propane to  
15 Keene, New Hampshire.

16 Q And this may sound a little flip, but we don't  
17 care how it gets there, as long as it gets there,  
18 is that fair?

19 A (Grant) That's correct.

20 Q And, of course, we want to make sure they're a  
21 valid supplier, and they have the capacity to  
22 deliver. But, at the end of the day, you're  
23 asking for deliveries to Keene?

24 A (Grant) That's correct.



[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 Q And, before it was pipeline to New York, and then  
2 trucked to Keene. And that's all the supplier's  
3 obligation?

4 A (Grant) That is correct.

5 Q And, now, it's a train to Vermont, to Keene.  
6 And, again, that's all the supplier's obligation?

7 A (Grant) That is correct.

8 Q Okay. And the only wrinkle to that is we do  
9 truck, we do contract for trucking from our own  
10 storage facility in Amherst, New Hampshire?

11 A (Grant) That is correct.

12 Q Okay. So, it is a change, we should be aware of  
13 it. But, at the end of the day, the supplier's  
14 obligation is to bring those quantities of  
15 propane to our yard in Keene?

16 A (Grant) That's correct.

17 MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you. That's all I  
18 have. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: I think Commissioner  
20 Chattopadhyay has a follow-up.

21 CMSR. CHATTOPADHYAY: Again, going back  
22 to the same issue.

23 BY CMSR. CHATTOPADHYAY:

24 Q You are picking up demand charges that are

[WITNESS PANEL: Maston|Yusuf|Grant]

1 projected to happen, okay?

2 A *[Witness Maston indicating in the affirmative].*

3 CMSR. CHATTOPADHYAY: So, to say that  
4 "half of it is being picked up, and the rest of  
5 it may be buried in something else that is in the  
6 over-collection", it's not really fully making  
7 sense to me, because that over-collection has to  
8 do with previous years.

9 And, so, I just don't understand the  
10 answer. But I would strongly prod you or, you  
11 know, encourage you to go back and check what's  
12 going on.

13 *[Witness Maston indicating in the*  
14 *affirmative].*

15 CMSR. CHATTOPADHYAY: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Any further  
17 redirect?

18 *[Atty. Sheehan indicating in the*  
19 *negative.]*

20 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. All right.  
21 Thank you to the witnesses today. The witnesses  
22 may step down.

23 And we'll invite the DOE to the stand.

24 *[Short pause for the change of witness*

[WITNESS PANEL: Blair|Alam]

1 *panels.]*

2 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: All right. Can you  
3 both, one at a time, please state your name for  
4 the record?

5 MR. BLAIR: My name is Bruce Blair.

6 MR. ALAM: My name is Ashraful Alam.

7 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you.

8 *(Whereupon **BRUCE L. BLAIR** and*  
9 ***ASHRAFUL ALAM** were duly sworn by*  
10 *Chairman Goldner.)*

11 WITNESS BLAIR: I do.

12 WITNESS ALAM: I do.

13 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you. The  
14 witnesses are ready for direct.

15 MS. LYNCH: Thank you.

16 **BRUCE L. BLAIR, SWORN**

17 **ASHRAFUL ALAM, SWORN**

18 **DIRECT EXAMINATION**

19 BY MS. LYNCH:

20 Q Can you both please state your role at the  
21 Department of Energy?

22 A (Blair) I'm a Public Utility Analyst for the Gas  
23 Division.

24 A (Alam) I am a Utility Analyst in the Department

[WITNESS PANEL: Blair|Alam]

1 of Energy.

2 Q Thank you. And can you both please briefly  
3 describe your educational background?

4 A (Blair) Sure. Lots of degrees, but the last one,  
5 my terminal degree, is a doctorate in Political  
6 Science, with a focus on Energy Policy and  
7 Administration.

8 Q Thank you.

9 A (Alam) I have a Master's and a Bachelor's degree  
10 in Economics.

11 Q Thank you. And you both have testified for this  
12 Commission before, is that correct?

13 A (Blair) Yes.

14 A (Alam) Yes.

15 Q Thank you. And can you please identify Exhibit 6  
16 and 7, and explain what they are for the  
17 Commission please?

18 A (Blair) Exhibit 6 is our redacted, it is  
19 Mr. Alam's and I redacted technical statement,  
20 and Exhibit 7 is our confidential technical  
21 statement.

22 Q And who prepared these estimates?

23 A (Blair) We both did.

24 Q Thank you. And do you have any corrections to

[WITNESS PANEL: Blair|Alam]

1 this technical statement, also known as  
2 "Exhibit 6" and "7"?

3 A (Blair) Yes. We have two small typographical  
4 errors, if you will.

5 On both Exhibit 6 and 7, on Bates Page  
6 002, under "Therm Sales Projection", under  
7 Section II, it says "November 2023 to  
8 April 2024", that should say "November 2024 to  
9 April 2025".

10 And the second correction is another  
11 typographical error, on both Exhibit 6 and 7, on  
12 Bates Page 004, the second to last line under  
13 "Fixed Price Option", it should say  
14 "October 19th, 2024", not "October 22nd".

15 Q Okay. Thank you. Subject to these two  
16 corrections, do you have anything else that this  
17 statement needs to reflect or be amended?

18 A (Blair) No.

19 Q Do you adopt this statement as your sworn  
20 testimony in this matter, with those two  
21 corrections?

22 A (Blair) Yes.

23 A (Alam) Yes.

24 Q Is there anything else that you would like to

[WITNESS PANEL: Blair|Alam]

1 highlight for the Commission regarding this  
2 proposed cost of gas rate?

3 A (Blair) No.

4 A (Alam) No.

5 MS. LYNCH: Thank you. Nothing else.

6 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you. Any  
7 cross from the Consumer Advocate?

8 MR. CROUSE: Thank you for the  
9 opportunity, but no questions at this time.

10 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you. And  
11 moving to Liberty?

12 MR. SHEEHAN: No questions. And thank  
13 you for the work that you've done. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. And I will  
15 begin with Commissioner questions with  
16 Commissioner Chattopadhyay.

17 BY CMSR. CHATTOPADHYAY:

18 Q So, I'm going to go to Table 3. And you heard  
19 the conversation I had with the previous  
20 witnesses. Do you agree or understand that the  
21 demand charges that are associated with winter is  
22 \_\_\_\_\_?

23 A (Alam) Yes, we do.

24 Q Do you agree that the way it's being represented

[WITNESS PANEL: Blair|Alam]

1 here only half of it is being shown as part of  
2 the CNG demand charges?

3 A (Alam) Yes. And the other half is shown in the  
4 prior period balance, and then the Company is  
5 representing it in this way, so we just picked up  
6 in that way, too.

7 CMSR. CHATTOPADHYAY: But, again, I'll  
8 let the Company go and explain this to us. These  
9 are costs that are projected, and these are costs  
10 that are associated with winter therms. So, I  
11 have issues with assuming that something that  
12 happened before is taking care of this  
13 projection.

14 So, I just -- I don't understand it,  
15 but there may be a reasonable explanation. And  
16 I'll wait for the Company to provide that.

17 I think that's all I have. Thank you.

18 WITNESS ALAM: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: The Chair has no  
20 further questions, but does appreciate the work  
21 that the Department did. The filing was very  
22 helpful.

23 Attorney Lynch, any redirect?

24 MS. LYNCH: Nothing further.

1                   CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. Thank you  
2 very much. The witnesses are excused. You can  
3 just stay seated there, if you like, and I think  
4 we'll wrap up the hearing.

5                   So, before we move to closing  
6 statements, I'll just check to see if there are  
7 any objections to moving the Exhibits 1 through  
8 11 into the record?

9                   *[No verbal response.]*

10                  CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. Seeing none.  
11 The Commission moves those exhibits to the  
12 record.

13                  In addition, I had earlier noted that  
14 there are several issues that were carved out of  
15 this docket to be addressed at a later time.  
16 During their closing statements, could the  
17 parties please address whether -- pardon me --  
18 whether they would be okay with a filing -- with  
19 filing a proposed schedule to resolve these  
20 issues, and then maybe the Company could drive  
21 that process, would be the suggestion.

22                  And, with that, let's move to closing  
23 statements, beginning with the Department.

24                  MS. LYNCH: Thank you.



1           The Department reviewed the filing,  
2           conducted two sets of data requests, and had two  
3           technical sessions with the Company. The  
4           Department supports the filing. But, you know,  
5           given Commissioner Chattopadhyay's questions, we  
6           will return to the office and look at that  
7           further.

8           Thank you.

9           CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Thank you. And any  
10          concerns with working out a procedural schedule  
11          to sort through the remaining issues?

12          MS. LYNCH: Of course not.

13          CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. Thank you.  
14          Okay. Attorney Crouse.

15          MR. CROUSE: Thank you.

16          The OCA does not object to the  
17          Company's filing. The OCA does support working  
18          with both the Department and Liberty to sort out  
19          a procedural schedule to address the concerns  
20          that are otherwise significant to the OCA.

21          Thank you.

22          CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. Thank you.  
23          And, finally, the Company.

24          MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you.

1           First, I want to note Mr. Garcia did  
2 manage to join us, and I think he's been  
3 listening more most of the session, but we  
4 managed to carry on without him.

5           As for a schedule, I did propose -- did  
6 send counsel a proposed schedule, I think I sent  
7 it under the other docket, so maybe the folks in  
8 this room didn't get it. And I sketched out two  
9 schedules. One to address the one small issue in  
10 the EnergyNorth rate case that could result in a  
11 December hearing, and then a second schedule to  
12 dive into the meatier issues of the FPO and the  
13 OCA's interest calculation. And I've also  
14 contemplated an early session to sit down with  
15 everybody and make sure we all agree on what the  
16 issues are.

17           So, hopefully, I'll get responses in  
18 the next day or so, and we can file those  
19 proposed schedules with the Commission.

20           Second, the conversation did pick up a  
21 bunch of confidential numbers. I'll work with  
22 Mr. Patnaude to flag those.

23           And, last, we appreciate the parties'  
24 support, and ask the Commission to approve the

1 rates as proposed in our updated filing.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN GOLDNER: Okay. Thank you, to  
4 everyone.

5 We'll issue an order on rates effective  
6 November 1st, 2024, in short order, likely  
7 tomorrow. We look forward to receiving a  
8 proposed schedule from the parties.

9 And we are adjourned. Thank you.

10 **(Whereupon the hearing was adjourned**  
11 **at 2:09 p.m.)**

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