

UTAH UTILITIES COM

Avista hike: Just say no

Avista Utilities and its leader, CEO Scott Morris, deserve a lot of credit for turning around a company that was faltering just a few years ago. They've invested intelligently in infrastructure and cautiously in future energy generation modes. And they've provided good service at generally fair rates to their North Idaho customers.

We're puzzled and disappointed, though, that our region's dominant utility company is seeking absurdly high rate increases: 14 percent for electric and 3.6 percent for natural gas.

Utility company rate requests are not unlike what you do when you set prices for items you wish to sell. You price the item a bit higher than you expect to receive, knowing you can settle for less and still meet your goals. So it is with utility rate hike requests.

But just in case nobody at Avista noticed, the economy is in turmoil. Rare is the person in North Idaho who has seen any increase in income the past year or two. Rarer still is the person whose expenses have not risen significantly without any appreciable improvement in standard of living.

In other words, Avista, your timing for a huge money grab could not be worse. And we believe you have jeopardized much of the goodwill you've built here by seeking increases that are completely beyond what so many of your customers are able to pay.

AARP, in imploring IPUC to deny the rate increase, noted that people over 65 spend an average of 20 percent of their household income on utilities. We suspect the same is true of many families with moderate or low incomes and young children whose health, like the elderly, could be harmed by having to keep the house too cold in winter and too hot on the hottest summer days.

The commission isn't expected to decide on the rate request — approve it as is, deny it or approve different numbers — until sometime this autumn. That allows plenty of time for customers to speak loud and clear on the matter.

We urge you to join us, AARP and many others in recommending denial of Avista's latest rate increase requests. To comment, go to www.puc.idaho.gov/forms/ipuc1/ipuc.html or write to Idaho Public Utilities Commission, P.O. Box 83720, Boise, 83720-0074. Phone: (208) 334-3762

*I certainly agree with the above editorial. Since Jim is a friend of mine and am disabled, I am unable to work. Jim writes before as it seems Avista is always asking for a rate hike. I am saying NO and hope you help, too.
Barbara Scarsella*



Barbara Scarsella
663 E. Dalton Ave.
Boise, ID 83715