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August 22, 2016

Utah Public Service Commission
Commissioners Thad LeVar, David Clark, and Jordan White
PO Box 14671
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-6751

RE: Docket 15-2508-01 Marian Seamons vs. Ticaboo Utility Improvement District (TUID)

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing this letter to express my concerns regarding docket 15-2508-01 filed by Marian Seamons against Ticaboo Utility Improvement District as others have done as posted on the Commission's website under the aforementioned docket. I request that my letter be entered as a matter of public record in this complaint.

In the interest of full disclosure, I am obligated to disclose that I am an appointed member of the TUID Board of Trustees; however, I was a property owner in Ticaboo long before that appointment. As such, I feel that I have the same rights as another interested party to express my views and thoughts regarding this complaint. This letter represents my views as a property owner and TUID customer that is paying my utility bills, and not as a member of the Board of Trustees.

I have been a part time resident of Ticaboo since 1997. During my tenure in Ticaboo, I have witnessed many changes, some good and some not so good. The one thing that has remained constant is the ongoing struggle for the town's survival. By now, you have heard the many stories of how expensive it can be living in Ticaboo. The common thread of all of these stories is the cost of electricity. While there was a time when electricity was cheap, this is only because it was being provided by the mining companies that were, at one time, heavily invested in the town in order to provide employee housing for the nearby uranium mine and mill and they were subsidizing the costs of utilities. This all ended in 2010 and the townspeople were left on their own to provide their own utilities including electricity. Thus, an improvement district was formed to provide electricity, while another special service district provided water, sewer, and garbage collection. These districts were finally merged into what is now Ticaboo Utility Improvement District.

Since there were no more handouts from the mining companies, the District struggled, and continues to struggle, to provide utility services at the best rates possible under the tough circumstances the district inherited. For a long time, the District operated on an entirely volunteer basis. Many residents, myself included, have spent time working to keep the utility systems in Ticaboo working. Folks in Ticaboo, including myself, have volunteered time to fix generators, respond to outages, dig trenches, installed and uninstalled equipment, read meters, and other functions in support of the District. If it had not been for Ticaboo Resort purchasing the commercial areas of town and thus buying a significant amount of electricity from the District, quite frankly I'm not sure that anyone would be left in Ticaboo today. The resort has done its best, but the cost of electricity continues to put a tremendous burden on them also.

In 2013 the District implemented standby fees, which require everyone who owns property in town to pay a portion of the ongoing expenses to keep the utility systems operational. This approach makes sense as a platted lot anywhere, let alone in little Ticaboo, is basically worthless if you can't get utility service to it. There is simply no way to develop a lot without utility service and the idea of going "off the grid" is impossible for all practical purposes with the current costs of solar and battery systems.

By filing her complaint with the PSC, Mrs. Seamons has voiced her disapproval of these fees. Unfortunately, Mrs. Seamons either fails to understand or just refuses to accept the rationale and need for standby fees and relentlessly continues to pursue, what appears to me, the idea that it is not her responsibility to contribute her fair share to maintain the public infrastructure in the town of Ticaboo. She continues to maintain that her age, disabilities, and minimal income somehow entitle her to some kind of special consideration that others in Ticaboo, even those that may be in the same situation as her, do not deserve. If Mrs. Seamons doesn't have to pay standby fees, the costs for maintaining the utility systems in Ticaboo then falls to everyone else, including me, and she gets a free ride. That is not fair to the paying customers of TUID. If like everyone else in town, Mrs. Seamons would pay her fair share of the expenses that keep the town going we would all be better off.

Mrs. Seamons has made all sorts of unfounded claims about the District and I know the District has spent a lot of time and money defending itself. It's not fair that one person with a grudge can hold everyone else hostage.

In following the PSC process on this complaint, it appears that the commission has ruled that the standby fees that are being imposed are legal. The questions that remain are whether TUID properly followed each and every procedure that is required by law to properly get them into the respective Tariff's. I don't see why this is an issue—if it is in fact even an issue—that is only being raised now. Being a part time resident, I can personally attest that I have received in the U.S. Mail all of the required notices and bills that the District has sent out. I knew about the standby fees before they were implemented and I know that everyone else did too. Even if someone ignored the mailed notices that were sent out and didn't follow anything the District did, they would clearly be aware of the standby fees when they saw the charges on their bills. I'm not sure how Mrs. Seamons claims that she did or did not receive a particular piece of mail in 2013 holds any weight. I listened to the hearing on YouTube and I'm not sure that Mrs. Seamons really knows what is going on other than that she doesn't want to pay for anything. Her complaint was so disorganized and nonsensical that it was going to get thrown out until she got an attorney to write a new one. I think that speaks a lot as to whether her testimony about receiving notice or not should carry any weight at all. Perhaps you could send a staff person down to Ticaboo to knock on doors and ask people whether the standby fees were a surprise. I'm confident that everyone will say they knew about them beforehand and, even if they don't like them that they understand why they are needed.

Frankly, I think that this entire proceeding is ridiculous and is going to either bankrupt the District or is going to bankrupt all of us residents when the fees go up to pay for all this. The rates I pay are extremely high already; while I understand that it is expensive to run an electric utility without a grid connection, I certainly don't want to pay more just to cover unfounded complaints like this one. The District does not have the throngs of attorneys that Rocky Mountain Power and other large for-profit utilities have.

In closing, I am not writing this letter to represent the thoughts of others in Ticaboo, but to represent my thoughts as a long time property owner. I choose to own property here and by doing so I realize that I must pay my fair share to keep the community going, and I trust that if put in the same situation, each of the Commissioners would feel the same way. No one is forced to own property in Ticaboo, and if the cost of owning it is, in their opinion, too expensive they have the same right as anyone else to dispose of it and leave.

I respectfully request your help in resolving this matter once and for all so that we can stop the district from bleeding money that is much needed elsewhere. The longer this dispute drags out, the more it will cost all of the rate payers in Ticaboo including Mrs. Seamons and including me. Just imagine yourselves standing in front of a room of retirees and wage earners that are forced to spend a good portion of the year living off of savings or unemployment because the only employment in the area is seasonal and telling them that their electric bills are going to go up possibly 2, 3 or 4 fold to cover a legal expense for an unjustified complaint just because the PSC makes TUID go through the same process as a billion-dollar company like Rocky Mountain Power. A legal expense that has been forced by one of their neighbors who for all intents and purposes appears to just want someone else to pay for their financial obligations. I really enjoy Ticaboo and am committed to seeing it survive and hopefully prosper someday. Without utility service life in Ticaboo would effectively be camping in a ghost town and my properties would be worthless. Please help Ticaboo survive and prosper rather than wiping it off the map.

Again, this letter contains my own personal thoughts and in no way represents the thoughts of others or the Ticaboo Utility Improvement District.

Sincerely,



Tom Hill

Property Owner

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