BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF UTAH

In the Matter of the	) Docket No. 15-053-01
Application of UBTA-UBET	)
Communications, Inc., dba	) HEARING
STRATA Networks for an Increase	)
in Utah Universal Service Fund	)
Support	)

December 15, 2015
10:00 a.m.

Location: Utah Public Service Commission
160 East 300 South Fourth Floor
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

Reporter: Susan S. Sprouse

A P P E A R A N C E S

For STRATA Networks: Stephen F. Mecham

For Division of Public Utilities: Justin Jetter

For the Office of Consumer Services: Rex Olsen

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Tuesday, December 15, 2015; 10:00 a.m.

P R O C E E D I N G S

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Go ahead and go on the record.

Good morning. Today is Tuesday, December 15th, 2015. It is ten o'clock in the morning. This is the date and time that has been set for a hearing in Docket No. 15-053-01 in the matter of the Application of UBTA-UBET Communications, Inc., which does business as STRATA Networks for Universal -- for Utah Universal Service Fund Support.

Let's get appearances on the record for STRATA.

MR. MECHAM: Steve Mecham, your Honor, appearing for STRATA Neworks.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Thank you. For the Division.

And I'm Justin Jetter. I'm here on behalf of the Utah Division of Public Utilities. And with me at counsel table is William Duncan with the Utah Division of Public Utilities.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: And for the Office.

REX OLSEN: Rex Olsen appearing on behalf of the Office. And with me at counsel table is Michele Beck, director of the Office of Consumer Services.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Thank you.

MR. MECHAM: And, your Honor, I should have noted the fact that Karl Searle from STRATA Networks is here and has testified in this proceeding.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: And he's here?

MR. MECHAM: He's here.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Okay. And then who do we have on the phone?

MR. MECHAM: I believe Bruce Todd.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Mr. Todd, can you hear me? Mr. Todd, are you on the line?

MR. MECHAM: Maybe --

ASSISTANT: I did hear the ding. I think they are on.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Good morning. Is anyone on the line?

CINDY GILBERT: Yes. This is STRATA Network.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: And what's your name?

CINDY GILBERT: Cindy Gilbert.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Cindy Gilbert?

CINDY GILBERT: Yes. Bruce should be arriving any time.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Okay. So Bruce Todd is not yet with us, but we expect him, correct?

MR. MECHAM: Correct.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: All right. Very

good.

For the record, this application was filed some time ago. This application was filed on April 6th, 2015?

MR. MECHAM: Correct.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Is that correct?

MR. MECHAM: Yes.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: And the parties have filed prehearing testimony. There's also been a motion for partial summary judgment that's been adjudicated in this case and the parties have finally managed to resolve it by stipulation. And so the purpose of this hearing is to make a record of the settlement agreement which will then -- which the Commission will then review.

Mr. Mecham, this is your application?

MR. MECHAM: It is.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: So you get to go first. And put on the record whatever it is you'd like the Commission to review today.

MR. TODD: Steve, I've joined. This is Bruce Todd.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Thank you, Mr. Todd.

MR. TODD: As well as Jason McGhee and Cindy Gilbert.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Thank you.

MR. MECHAM: Your Honor, I believe that

Mr. Jetter is going to review the terms of the stipulation and then I was intending on itemizing the various pieces of testimony that we filed in the case for the record.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: That's great. Go ahead, Mr. Jetter.

MR. JETTER: Thank you, your Honor. This is a little bit different than we normally do it. And so what we have, and let the record reflect that the stipulation that we've agreed to, was completed this morning. And so this is likely the first time the ALJ has seen the stipulation or the terms included therein. And I'm just going to walk briefly through the highlights of the agreement that the parties have reached in this matter.

STRATA is currently receiving $1,116,396 per year in Universal Service Funds from the State of Utah. The parties have agreed in settlement of the Universal Service Funds request in this docket to an increase in the annual Utah Universal Service Fund distribution of $850,000 to -- I guess, to further clarify that, that is in addition to the $1,116,396 STRATA is currently receiving.

The combined total will amount to $163,866.33 per month ongoing as a result of this stipulation if it's approved by the Commission.

The effective date for the change in Utah

Universal Service Fund distribution would be November 1, 2015. And as a result of that, there will be likely one or two months of Universal Service Fund distribution at the settled upon new increased amount that would be caught up in the first Universal Service Fund distribution after approval if this stipulation is approved by the Commission.

And the terms of -- the primary terms of the stipulation are found in paragraph 8 on page 3 of the stipulation.

In addition, there are going to be one time Universal Service Fund related costs that will be paid out of the Universal Service Fund. The parties at this point have not reached a final agreement on the amount of those, and so that was set aside in paragraph 9 of the stipulation to be reviewed and agreed to by the parties in the near future.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Okay.

MR. JETTER: I believe that generally summarizes the terms of the stipulation.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: So do, do the parties consider that it would be appropriate for the Commission to enter an order, should the Commission approve this stipulation, enter an order before there's an agreement as to the one time distribution for the cost of the

application, or is that -- do you anticipate that that's coming soon?

MR. MECHAM: Your Honor, I anticipate that it will come soon and likely before you issue an order.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: So within what kind of timeframe? I'm very fast at orders. Very fast.

MR. MECHAM: Okay. Well, in that event, it may be a subsequent order. It depends on how quickly you issue.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Okay. Do you have a sense of how -- like what kind of time it's going to take for you to work through the numbers and get an agreement?

So today is the 15th. So one week from today is the 23rd which is the last day that I'll be in the office before Christmas but I will be in the week after.

MR. JETTER: I think I can represent based on our just kind of brief informal discussion, we should be able to have that agreement to you by the 23rd.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: The 23rd. Actually, sorry that's a week from tomorrow.

MS. BECK: I think we can have it by the end of day 22nd, so that you can --

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Shoot for December 22nd?

MS. BECK: Yeah.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

MR. JETTER: So in light of that, I think that will make the most sense as we --

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: To hold the order till --

MR. JETTER: Hold the order until then.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: All right.

MR. OLSEN: Your Honor, would you like a memo when we reach that number? How would you like to have that provided?

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: I think maybe an amendment to the stipulation, I think would maybe be --

MR. OLSEN: All right.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: -- appropriate. All right.

MR. MECHAM: Thank you, your Honor. I have a list of all of the testimony that's been prefiled in the case. And part of the stipulation contemplates that we'll enter into the record all of the testimony. So if it's okay, may I approach and just give you a list?

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Sure.

MR. MECHAM: Unfortunately, I didn't make enough copies. I'll make one for you, or you can share and I'll make one for you.

You'll see that when we initiated this case, Bruce Todd, who's participating by telephone, e-filed direct testimony. That testimony has been marked as STRATA Exhibit 1. And he also filed rebuttal testimony in the case. The direct is six pages. The rebuttal is three pages.

Mr. Karl Searle, who is here, filed direct testimony that accompanied the application, and he had two exhibits which we marked as 2.1 and 2.2. Mr. Searle also filed rebuttal testimony which consists of 42 pages and numerous attachments which are marked 2.1R through 2.113 -- excuse me, 2.13.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: 2R.1.

MR. MECHAM: 2R --

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: 2R.12.

MR. MECHAM: And I'll get it right sooner or later.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Got it.

MR. MECHAM: Then Mr. Douglas Meredith also filed rebuttal testimony which we marked as STRATA Exhibit 3R and he had six exhibits attached to his testimony, which are marked 3R.1 through 3R.6. And all of them have identifying titles, both in the list I gave you as well as on the record.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Okay. Thank you. Do

the Division and Office also want to enter their prehearing testimony into the record?

MR. JETTER: Yeah. The Division would like to enter ours into the record. I didn't prepare a list summarizing it all. I think I've, as I read through, I believe the stipulation summarizes all of the testimony from all parties. If that's more convenient to use as a -- at least for the Division since I haven't prepared a full list of everything that has been filed.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: That's fine. That's fine. I don't need the list. It's helpful, but I can manage.

And the Office as well wants the prehearing testimony.

MR. OLSEN: We would, your Honor. And we've got a list, if I may approach.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Sure.

Do you want to review this --

MR. OLSEN: If --

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: -- for the record?

MR. OLSEN: If you'd like, your Honor. But if there's necessary -- it's simply the -- lists the various witnesses and then their confidential and redacted testimony and then the exhibits that we, the Company, the various submissions.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Thank you.

Do you want to call any witnesses, Mr. Mecham?

MR. MECHAM: I guess I would just simply proffer evidence. You know, no one in the stipulation gets everything they want. You will see what we requested and we did not get what we requested, nor did the other parties get what they proposed.

We think that and believe that in settlement, the outcome is just and reasonable and in the public interest and the Commission should approve the stipulation.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Thank you.

Mr. Jetter, do you want to call witnesses today?

MR. JETTER: Yes, your Honor. The Division would like to call Mr. Bill Duncan, and I believe he'll offer a brief statement in support.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Mr. Duncan, do you swear to tell the truth today?

THE WITNESS: Yes, I do.

(The witness is duly sworn.)

* * *

WILLIAM DUNCAN,

Called by the Division, having been duly Sworn, is examined and testifies as follows:

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: All right.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

BY MR. JETTER:

Q. Mr. Duncan, would you please state your name and occupation for the record.

A. My name is William Duncan. I'm manager of the telecommunication section in the Utah Division of Public Utilities.

Q. Thank you. And I believe you prepared a brief statement in support of the stipulation; is that correct?

A. Yes, I have.

Q. Please go ahead.

A. The Utah Division of Public Utilities supports a settlement stipulation presented today and requests that the Commission approve the stipulation as filed. The settlement stipulation resolves all issues associated with this docket.

The Division believes that this settlement is just, reasonable and in the public interest.

Let me just describe a brief history of the Division's involvement in this case.

On April 6th, 2015, STRATA Networks filed its application for USF support with the Utah Public Service Commission. During the ensuing months, the Division conducted a thorough review and audit of the books and records of STRATA Networks. Throughout that time the

Division issued comprehensive data requests seeking additional information. These data requests were promptly answered. The Division also worked informally and in a collaborative manner with STRATA when clarifications or explanations were needed.

As a result of this investigation, the Division proposed some adjustments to STRATA's request. On November 19th, 2015, the Division, the Office of Consumer Services and STRATA met in settlement discussions. As a result of these discussions with STRATA, the Division and the Office of Consumer Services were able to resolve the issues and come to a mutually agreeable solution. The result of that agreement is presented in the settlement stipulation.

The Division has reviewed this case using the same standards that have been applied in other USF requests and believes that the amount presented in the settlement stipulation of an additional 850,000 per year will allow STRATA to recover its operating costs and earn a fair return on its investment. This increase is in addition to the annual amount of $1,116,396 that STRATA currently receives for a total annual distribution of 1,966,396 or monthly distributions of $163,866.33.

For these reasons, the Division believes the settlement stipulation as presented is just, fair, is

reasonable in result and is in the public interest and request that the Commission approve the stipulation.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Thank you.

MR. JETTER: I have no further questions.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Does to the Office have any questions for Mr. Duncan?

MR. OLSEN: We have no questions.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Does STRATA have questions for Mr. Duncan?

MR. MECHAM: No thank you.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Mr. Olsen?

MR. OLSEN: The Office would like to have Michelle Beck make a brief statement in support of the stipulation.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Ms. Beck, do you swear to tell the truth today?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

(The witness is duly sworn.)

* * *

MICHELE BECK,

Called by the Office, having been duly Sworn, is examined and testifies as follows:

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Go ahead.

MS. BECK: The Office always participates -- when the Office participates in USF cases, we always

participate from the perspective both of the residential and small commercial customers of the telephone company in front of you as well as the residential and small commercial customers who are from other telephone companies and paying into the fund. So we feel like we try and balance those two perspectives.

We did participate fully in this case by hiring two experts to augment our internal team and also participated in the site visit and data requests in evaluating the responses both to our data requests as well as the Division's data requests. And I think we were able to do a fairly comprehensive analysis on this case.

All of that said, I'm here today to testify that we believe the settlement is, is one that is, that is just and reasonable to both sets of ratepayers that we feel like we are here representing. And we ask that you approve it. And we do -- I testify here today for you that we think it will be -- result in just and reasonable rates and also end results.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Thank you. Mr. Mecham, do you have any questions for the Office?

MR. MECHAM: I do not. Thank you.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Mr. Jetter?

MR. JETTER: No questions. Thank you.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: All right. I believe

I have what I need, then, to take back to the Commission and to start working on an order, which we will hold until the 22nd or until we get the agreement as to the distribution for the one time costs of the application.

If for any reason the parties need more time, would you just let me know, and then I'll talk to the Commission about continuing to hold the order or just issuing it subject to being amended.

All right. Is there anything else any party wants to put on the record today?

MR. MECHAM: No thank you.

MR. OLSEN: We have nothing further.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Well, then I believe we can call the hearing. Thank you all very much.

(Exhibits A, B, C & D marked.)

(The hearing concluded at 10:19 a.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF UTAH)
) SS.
COUNTY OF SALT LAKE)

I, Susan S. Sprouse, a Registered Professional Reporter, Certified Court Reporter, and Notary Public in and for the State of Utah, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing hearing was taken on December 15, 2015.

That the proceedings were reported by me in stenotype and thereafter transcribed by computer, and that a full, true, and correct transcription of said testimony so taken is set forth in the foregoing pages;

I further certify that I am not of kin or otherwise associated with any of the parties to said cause of action, and that I am not interested in the event thereof.

WITNESS MY HAND and official seal at Salt Lake City, Utah, this 21st day of December, 2015.

SUSAN S. SPROUSE
License No. 5965543-7801

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