



## BILLING DISPUTE APPEAL OF DETERMINATION FOR ELECTRIC METER READINGS AT 5004 GOLDEN AVENUE

Riverside Public Utilities

Board of Public Utilities

June 12, 2023

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## BACKGROUND

RPU follows the billing dispute process in Water Rule 17 and Electric Rule 21 Bill Dispute Appeal in coordination with Water Rule 6 and Electric Rule 6 Meter Investigations and Adjustments of Bills.

1. On February 24, 2023, Booker T. Cole spoke with Customer Service requesting review of electrical usage, reporting that the address had experienced flickering lights and partial power since December.
2. On February 27, 2023, meter technicians tested the electric meter and followed up directly on March 2, 2023.
  - a. It was disclosed that after receiving a large natural gas bill in January, the customer purchased a 1500-watt electric space heater as an alternative heat source.
  - b. While onsite, technicians observed and showed the meter disk emulator with the space heater both on and off and explained that the space heater was likely the source of the increased usage.
  - c. The meter disk emulator provides a visual indication of the rate of energy usage. The emulator slowed significantly with the space heater turned off and conversely sped up significantly with the space heater on - drawing 12 amps continuously.
  - d. Tests completed on the meter 26113948 passed all the accuracy tests for Full load, Light load and Power factor.
  - e. An AMI electric meter was installed so that usage reads could be collected more frequently, and to have the ability to set up the Home Connect to monitor energy usage.



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## BACKGROUND

3. On March 3, 2023, Booker T. Cole emailed staff about his February billing and electric turning off and on which was caused by branches on wires that someone would trim the following day. He mentioned that a meter supervisor checked the meter, everything was working great (and) gave suggestions. He said that he has have never had a billing such as this and asked for Alma Franco to address it.
4. On March 10, 2023, the Summary of Investigations letter from the Customer Service Manager was mailed to Booker T. Cole stating:
  - a. the results of the investigation indicate that the billings were calculated accurately for electric services
  - b. no City Electric Rules were found to be misapplied to the billings in question,
  - c. offered assistance for a payment arrangement plan, and
  - d. advised that he had 10 days to appeal the decision by contacting the Assistant General Manager for Customer Service.



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## BACKGROUND

5. On March 28, 2023, Customer Service Manager Alma Franco provided the electrical usage for the account which includes the February 27, 2023 AMI electric meter #343646750 installation for ease of monitoring energy management in response to his request.

Read Date	Meter	Reading	Usage	Rate	Class
3/6/2023	343646750	191	191	100	230
2/27/2023	343646750	0	0	100	230
2/2/2023	26113948	37593	2,282	100	230
1/5/2023	26113948	35311	175	100	230
12/6/2022	26113948	35136	246	100	230



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## BACKGROUND

6. On March 29, 2023, Booker T. Cole emailed "The investigation is incomplete he tried to summarize Why the charges were so high. He didn't know that 4 other homes were involved. I have all my notes and pictures to prove it. Don't take my word ask your associates. I do have names that's for a later date."
7. On April 1, 2023, Booker T. Cole emailed four photos, stating that the photos showed a 4-week reading and that two photos showed the difference between the calendar date and the reading dates. Photos provided were of the AMI electric meter readings on March 5, 2023, March 12, 2023, March 19, 2023, and March 26, 2023
8. On April 4, 2023, Booker T. Cole emailed an additional photo of a document with columns of data for the Read Date, Meter #, Usage, Unit, Other Unit, and Read Type, and indicated that the photos showed what is unacceptable and asked when repairs were done.
9. As the photos sent were for the next month's billing cycle, below is the revised review of electric service usage at 5004 Golden Avenue:

Read Date	Meter	Reading	Usage	Rate	Class
4/5/2023	343646750	891	700	100	230
3/6/2023	343646750	191	191	100	230
2/27/2023	343646750	0	0	100	230
2/2/2023	26113948	37593	2,282	100	230

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## BACKGROUND

10. On April 4, 2023, Booker T. Cole emailed Customer Service Manager Alma Franco for a response to his April 1, 2023 email. On April 4, 2023, Customer Service Manager Alma Franco emailed to advise that the documentation Booker T. Cole submitted was under review and a response would be sent that week.
11. On April 5, 2023, Customer Service Manager Alma Franco emailed and spoke with Booker T. Cole to advise that a tag generated for the past due balance on the account however steps were taken to temporarily pause this as the charges are pending dispute review.
12. On April 10, 2023, the Public Utilities Assistant General Manager mailed the summary of investigation and letter of findings to Booker T. Cole.

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## DISCUSSION

1. On April 17, 2023, Booker T. Cole emailed Public Utilities Department administrative staff an email following a voicemail message to confirm that staff received his request to dispute the April 10, 2023 Summary of Investigations and Letter of Findings.
2. On or about May 1, 2023, staff received a mailed package of documents from Booker T. Cole respective to the Board of Public Utilities review of the billing dispute.
3. On May 3, 2023, Booker T. Cole emailed staff to confirm receipt the receipt of mailed documents and to request a copy of the work order for the February 12th or 13th response to 5004 Golden Avenue.
4. On May 4, 2023, Booker T. Cole contacted Customer Service to inquire as to why the electric service was disconnected at 5004 Golden Avenue. The service was mistakenly disconnected by staff and was immediately reconnected, and the account placed on hold pending the outcome of the billing dispute.
5. On May 11, 2023, the work orders Booker T. Cole requested were emailed.
6. On May 11, 2023, the Notice of Hearing with the attachments was mailed regular and certified mail to Booker T. Cole.



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## DISCUSSION

The appeal procedure order of discussion is included in Board Standing Rule Section 7.A.3. Appeal Order of Discussion:

1. Staff presentation, information and reports
2. Appellant presentation, comments and information
3. Public comments
4. Closing statements by appellant
5. Closure of public testimony
6. Board of Public Utilities members, including questions, discussion, motion, and action



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# STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

## Strategic Priority No. 5 - High Performing Government

**Goal 5.3** - Enhance communication and collaboration with community members to improve transparency, build public trust, and encourage shared decision-making.

### Cross-Cutting Threads



Community Trust



Fiscal Responsibility



Sustainability & Resiliency



Equity



Innovation



# RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Public Utilities deny the appeal from Booker T. Cole of 5004 Golden Avenue, Riverside, 92505, for electric service billed on February 13, 2023 and March 15, 2023, for the account at the same address and uphold the Public Utilities Department findings that the billings were calculated accurately.

