Beyond smelter talk, electric rate proposal has some feeling 'sacrificed at the altar of big business'

Blake Douglas
NonDoc.com

At a public hearing June 25 to help determine the fate of an electric utility's proposed 15 percent rate increase, two dozen displeased citizens — alongside a dozen nonprofit and contractor partners supporting Public Service Company of Oklahoma — filled Thursday afternoon with public comment for and against the hefty hike.

When Thursday's meeting adjourned after nearly four hours, it ended with a lightning round of initial confusion and robust discussion about what hearings would come next — or even be held at all. Attorneys also revealed the existence of proposed settlement terms that had received some parties' signatures about "three minutes before" the hearing began. Some suggested the potential settlement could lower PSO's proposed base-rate increase on residential ratepayers from $25 a month to $2.45, if other undisclosed terms of the agreement are accepted.

The settlement was first referenced by PSO attorney Jack Fite, who said signatures from the Oklahoma Public Utility Division, Attorney General's Office, PSO and Petroleum Alliance of Oklahoma had been secured. Others, like an AARP representative, said they were unaware of the details.

"We looked at this settlement — and I get that it's last minute — but we presented this to [the Oklahoma Industrial Energy Consumers] on Tuesday. We were waiting for them to get back to us on if they were going to join it," said Thomas Grossnicklaus, an assistant attorney general. "We agreed to this because it lowered the impact to 1 percent, $2.45. The filed position was $25. This is a good deal."

The other parties present largely expressed unfamiliarity with the proposed framework, however, which led to discussions of how each party would like to move forward and how much time some may need to review terms, coordinate witness travel for hearings and more.

Tom Schroedter, an attorney representing the OIEC, called the settlement discussion a "last-minute stipulation" brought into the proceedings "improperly."

Commissioner Todd Hiett succinctly summarized the sudden influx of information after attorneys finished a dizzying back-and-forth with administrative law judge Kenneth Behrens about next week's schedule.

"To be honest, I'm not 100 percent clear on what just happened," Hiett said.

It's unclear when the proposed settlement terms will be made public ahead of the Corporation Commission's Monday, June 29, meeting, which will review the inclusion of large-load tariff terms in the settlement, a tool used to protect ratepayers from shouldering the burden of energy-intensive projects.

While company leaders have insisted the current base-rate change filed with the OCC would not directly support meeting the energy needs of new large-load projects, many data centers and other industrial proposals are pending in PSO's service area.

Largest among them is the controversial $4 billion aluminum smelter project from Emirates Global Aluminium that has been secured for development in Inola through a $225 million state rebate program and a $500 million U.S. Department of Energy grant.

The massive industrial project has been touted as a transformative win for the American economy and criticized for inevitable impacts on utility rates and the environment. Either way, how the smelter's developers will purchase enough power to break the bonds between aluminum and oxygen has remained unclear. According to testimony presented on PSO's behalf, "PSO owns a net generating capacity of approximately 5,076 megawatts."

Put another way, the smelter project ultimately could require electricity equivalent to 20 percent of the company's generation portfolio, a fact that has helped spur Attorney General Gentner Drummond's sudden opposition to the project.

"The facility is projected to draw more than 1,000 megawatts of continuous electricity, more power than many Oklahoma cities consume, placing extraordinary strain on the regional grid served by Public Service Company of Oklahoma and threatening the reliability and affordability of electricity for Oklahoma ratepayers," a press release from Drummond's office summarized June 2.

Fite spoke little at Thursday's hearing about PSO's specific goals with its pending rate increase, and documents filed with OCC so far offer mostly general overviews of how the regulated electric utility manages its debt load, generation assets and power demand.

After Thursday's hearing, director of corporate communications Matt Rahn released a statement to KTUL emphasizing that the current rate case does not directly aim to increase generation capacity for the proposed aluminum smelter, which could break ground this year in an effort to begin production in 2030.

"We appreciate the participation from customers and community members throughout the Oklahoma Corporation Commission process. Public input is an important part of how these decisions are made," Rahn said. "It's important to clarify that the rate review reflects the overall cost of providing safe, reliable electric service to customers. It includes only investments already made to serve customers. There are no investments made to serve the aluminum production plant under review by the commission in this filing."

But with the smelter project looming on the horizon for PSO's service territory, Rahn expanded upon the situation in a statement to NonDoc on Friday.

"We understand customers want to know how new, large energy users, such as data centers, may impact their electric service and bills. At PSO, we focus on balancing growth with the needs of the customers we serve today. Connecting large customers to the grid allows more customers to share the fixed costs of maintaining and improving the system," Rahn said. "Large customers are responsible for the costs associated with the infrastructure and service required to support their projects, with financial commitments and oversight by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission. These arrangements support continued investment in a stronger, more reliable grid that benefits all customers, while helping manage overall system costs as demand continues to grow."

Although the sudden settlement framework had been circulated to some of the parties present Thursday, Hiett made it clear the fate of the requested rate increase was not yet decided.

"When a lot of people hear the word 'settlement,' they may think that that means case is over. (…) That's not the case. What you all heard for the first time today, the commissioners and the judge also heard for the first time," Hiett said. "We're the ones that make the decision at the end of the day, so the case is not over. Your public comment did lay a great foundation that will have much merit in our decision making and in the hearings, depending on which hearings we decide to go with."

LEGALS

Public Sale: Airport Mega Storage 29091 S 637 Rd., Grove, OK 74344 will hold a public sale starting on July 21, 2026 and closing on August 5, 2026 at 1:00 pm or thereafter. Bids may be placed on storageauctions.com. Auction rules and additional details are provided on the website.

(Published in the Grove Sun July 21, 2026)
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Crossland Construction Company is accepting bids for the Grove Schools Playground Renovations. Bids are due by 2:00PM on Thursday, July 30th, 2026 at the Grove Superintendent Office – 310 S Broadway, Grove, OK. Only hand delivered bids accepted, no email/online bids will be accepted. The scope of work consists of the renovation of the playgrounds for Early Childhood, Upper Elementary, and Middle School. A non-mandatory prebid walk will be hosted at 2:00 PM on Monday, July 20th starting at the Early Childhood Center, all potential bidders are highly encouraged to attend.

Bid Packages and all other project specific information will be available through the Crossland Construction Columbus, KS Office at 620-429-1414. If you are interested in bidding on this project, please contact Nick Humble at nhumble@crossland.com.

(Published in the Grove Sun July 14, 17, 21, 24, and 28, 2026)
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**IN THE DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR
DELAWARE COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

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Flint Ridge Property Owners Association, Inc., an Oklahoma Corporation, Plaintiff,

vs.

Jesse Mathis and Unknown Spouse, if any, Joe Kenneth Whitaker and Joy Ellen Whitaker, husband and wife, Leo Vernoeau and Holly Vernoeau, husband and wife, all if living, or if any be deceased, their Unknown Heirs, Successors and Assigns and the Delaware County Treasurer, Defendants.

**Case No. CS-2026-224
Judge Jennifer McAffrey
NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE**

NOTICE is hereby given that on the 31st day of August, 2026 at 10:00 o'clock a.m., at the front door of the Courthouse at Jay, Delaware County, Oklahoma, the undersigned Sheriff of said County of Delaware will offer for sale and sell for cash at time of sale at public auction to the highest and best bidder, with appraisement, that certain real property situated in Delaware County, Oklahoma, to-wit:

Description:
Lot 90, Block 17, Berryhill Area, Flint Ridge No. 4. a subdivision located in Delaware County, State of Oklahoma, according to the recorded plat thereof; and 1983 Fleetwood Mobile Home, TOGETHER with the buildings, improvements, appurtenances, hereditaments and all other rights thereunto appertaining or belonging.

subject to taxes and tax sales, said property being duly appraised at a value of $10,000.00.

Sale will be made pursuant to an Order of Sale issued upon a Judgment entered in the District Court of Delaware County, Oklahoma, in Case No. CS-2026-224, in favor of Flint Ridge Property Owners Association, Inc. and against Defendant Jesse Mathis, in personam and in rem and all other Defendants in rem, in the amount of $4,345.00, together with additional assessments accruing from and after June 26, 2026, penalties, interest, costs and attorney fees of $4,000.00, together with costs of $873.46 and costs accruing; and a further judgment finding that the lien of Flint Ridge POA is a valid, subsisting first and prior lien upon the real property above described and ordering that if said judgment be not paid, that a Special Execution issue from the office of the Court Clerk, directed to the Sheriff of Delaware County, commanding such Sheriff to levy upon, advertise and sell said real property, with appraisement, as provided by law; and whereas, the judgment in favor of the Plaintiff remains wholly unpaid and the Plaintiff has requested a Special Execution and Order of Sale to issue in accordance with said judgment.

WITNESS my hand this 15th day of July, 2026.

**/s/ Joe White
Ray Thomas
Sheriff of Delaware County, Oklahoma**

**Tommy R. Dyer, Jr.,
O.B.A. #13594
DAVIS & THOMPSON, PLLC
314 S. 5th Street
P.O. Box 487
Jay, Oklahoma 74346-0487
Telephone: (918)801-4454
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Attorneys for Flint Ridge Property Owners Association, Inc.**

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**IN THE DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR
DELAWARE COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

Flint Ridge Property Owners Association, Inc., an Oklahoma Corporation, Plaintiff,

vs.

Pamala I. Houchin, a single person, if living, or if deceased, her Unknown Heirs, Successors and Assigns, Defendants.

**Case No. CS-2026-241
Judge Jennifer McAffrey
NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE**

NOTICE is hereby given that on the 31st day of August, 2026 at 10:00 o'clock a.m., at the front door of the Courthouse at Jay, Delaware County, Oklahoma, the undersigned Sheriff of said County of Delaware will offer for sale and sell for cash at time of sale at public auction to the highest and best bidder, with appraisement, that certain real property situated in Delaware County, Oklahoma, to-wit:

Lot 123, BLOCK NO. 1, BEAR LAKE AREA, FLINT RIDGE NO. 1-AMENDED, a Subdivision located in Delaware County, State of Oklahoma, according to the recorded plat thereof, TOGETHER with the buildings, improvements, appurtenances, hereditaments and all other rights thereunto appertaining or belonging.

subject to taxes and tax sales, said property being duly appraised at a value of $2,500.00.

Sale will be made pursuant to an Order of Sale issued upon a Judgment entered in the District Court of Delaware County, Oklahoma, in Case No. CS-2026-241, in favor of Flint Ridge Property Owners Association, Inc. and against Defendant Pamala I. Houchin, in personam and in rem, and all other Defendants, in rem, in the amount of $12,735.00, together with additional assessments accruing from and after June 26, 2026, penalties, interest, attorney fees in the amount of $4,000.00 together with costs of $728.17 and costs accruing; and a further judgment finding that the lien of Flint Ridge POA is a valid, subsisting first and prior lien upon the real property above described and ordering that if said judgment be not paid, that a Special Execution issue from the office of the Court Clerk, directed to the Sheriff of Delaware County, commanding such Sheriff to levy upon, advertise and sell said real property, with appraisement, as provided by law; and whereas, the judgment in favor of the Plaintiff remains wholly unpaid and the Plaintiff has requested a Special Execution and Order of Sale to issue in accordance with said judgment.

WITNESS my hand this 15th day of July, 2026.

**/s/ Joe White
Ray Thomas
Sheriff of Delaware County, Oklahoma**

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Attorneys for Flint Ridge Property Owners Association, Inc.**

(Published in the Grove Sun July 21 and 28, 2026)
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**IN THE DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR
DELAWARE COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

In the Matter of the Estate of Mary Jo Goldsborough, Deceased

**Case No. PB-2025-112
NOTICE OF SALE OF REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY**

NOTICE is hereby given that, in pursuance of an Order of the District Court of the County of Ottawa, State of Oklahoma, made on the 31st day of March, 2026, in the matter of the Estate of Mary Jo Goldsborough, the undersigned Personal Representative will sell at private sale to the highest bidder, subject to confirmation by the Court, after the 27th day of July, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at the office of John W. Thomas, 207 East Central, Miami, Oklahoma, all the right, title and interest in and to that real property, described as follows:

Real Property:
Lot 138 in Flint Ridge RV Park #2, according to the recorded Plat thereof.

Assessed Market Value…$ 35,000.00 (This value is merely an opinion of value based value based solely on the value assessed by the Delaware County Assessor for ad valorem taxes and is not a reflection of what the property might bring at a sale, private, public or otherwise)

Personal Property:
2003 Spinna RV – Model 33TS, VIN# 4X4FSPJ203G091063

2016 Jeep Compass, VIN# 1C4NJCBB4GD7058910;

General miscellaneous personal effects

SIGNED this 30th day of April, 2026.

/s/ Haley Furr
Haley Furr, Personal Representative

**John W. Thomas, OBA #22445
DAVIS and THOMPSON, PLLC
Attorney for Personal Representative
207 East Central
Miami, Oklahoma 74354
(918) 542-5524**

(Published in the Grove Sun July 14 and 21, 2026)
LPXLP

**IN THE DISTRICT COURT
WITHIN AND FOR
DELAWARE COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF JIMMIE J. SAWVEL*, Deceased

CASE NO. PB-2026-23

NOTICE AND ORDER FOR HEARING PETITION TO SELL REAL PROPERTY UNDER PROVISIONS OF TITLE 58 SECTION 239

Notice is hereby given to all persons interested in the Estate Of Jimmie J. Sawvel, Deceased, that on the 15th day of July, 2026, the Personal Representative, Jimmie D. Sawvel, filed in the District Court of Delaware County, Oklahoma, a Petition praying that an Order Authorizing the Personal Representative to Proceed Under Provisions of Title 58 Section 239 – Sale of Real and Personal Property be entered herein.

Pursuant to an Order of said Court made on the 16 day of July 2026, notice is hereby given that on the 18 day of August, 2026, at the hour of 1:30 o'clock p.m. of said day has been appointed as the time of hearing said Petition at District Courtroom No. #2 in the Courthouse in the City of Jay, County of Delaware, State of Oklahoma, when and where all persons interested may appear and contest the same.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of said Court this 16 day of July, 2026.

**/s/ David Crutchfield
HON. DAVID CRUTCHFIELD
DISTRICT COURT JUDGE**

**By: _____
Deputy Court Clerk**

**SUSAN A. MUSCARI,
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Attorney for Personal Representative**

(Published in the Grove Sun July 21 and 28, 2026)
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**DISTRICT COURT OF
DELAWARE COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF JERRY DANIEL SEXTON, DECEASED.

**PB-2026-30
NOTICE OF SALE OF REAL PROPERTY AT PRIVATE SALE**

NOTICE is hereby given that Larry Reamer, Personal Representative of the Estate of Jerry Daniel Sexton, will sell at private sale, to the highest bidder for cash or on terms approved by the Court, subject to confirmation by the District Court, on or after August 3, 2026 at 9:00 a.m., all the right, title, interest the estate has in and to the following-described real property located in Delaware County, Oklahoma:

Lot 19, Mohawk Addition, Delaware County, Oklahoma according to the recorded plat thereof (the "Real Estate")

all in accordance with the terms, covenants and conditions set forth, for cash or on terms approved by the Court with the closing to be held subject to and immediately after the confirmation of said sale by the District Court of Delaware County.

Bids must be in writing and may be submitted to the offices of Davis and Thompson, PLLC, P.O. Box 487, Jay, Oklahoma 74346 to the attention of Randall Vaughan.

DATED this 16th day of July, 2026.

**/s/ Randall G. Vaughan
Randall G. Vaughan,
OBA #11554
DAVIS & THOMPSON, PLLC
Mail P.O. Box 487;
Physical 314 S. Fifth St.
Jay, Oklahoma 74346
Phone (918) 801-4454;
Fax (918) 801-4493
Attorney for Personal Representative**

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