

Decision No. 68376

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

JACK H. WILSON,
WILLIAM D. BURNS, et al,

Complainants,

vs

TAMARISK WATER COMPANY,
a corporation,

Defendant.

Case No. 7993
(Filed August 24, 1964)
(Answered October 1, 1964)

John (Jack) H. Wilson and William David Burns,
in propria personae and for complainants.
Slaughter, Schlesinger & Schlecht, by John S.
McCullough, for defendant.

O P I N I O N

John (Jack) H. Wilson and William David Burns and some 44 other signers complain that at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 7, 1964, and until 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, July 8, 1964, their water service by Tamarisk Water Company, a public utility water corporation under the jurisdiction of this Commission, was shut off without notice. They also complain that water is still turned off on numerous occasions and users are not notified; water pressure fluctuates at an alarming rate; at times there is so little pressure that one cannot operate an automatic washing machine or refrigeration unit without causing serious mechanical damage to one or the other; and toilets will not flush, which is a hazard to health. They also complain about surging and air in the water, about sand which appears in sinks and bowls, and about erratic and inaccurate meter readings.

Public hearing was held before Examiner Warner on November 10, 1964, at Palm Springs. The matter was submitted subject to the receipt, as Exhibit No. 8, of a financial statement of defendant, which was filed on November 13, 1964.

The record discloses no significant dispute regarding the occurrence on July 7 and 8, 1964. It shows that the outage was due to failure of a reducer, and lack of knowledge on defendant's part that a valve in another part of the system, which could have provided adequate water flow to complainants' area, was and had been half turned off. When this condition was discovered and corrected, water service to complainants was restored.

Exhibit No. 3 is a map of defendant's water system to and in the vicinity of Tamarisk Country Club north of U. S. Highway No. 111 near Cathedral City, Riverside County. Complainants' area is west of Da Vall Drive to Talbert Street and includes 45 lots along Sunny, Papaya and Pomegranate Lanes at the northwestern extremity of the water system. The area is served by an 8-inch pipeline in Sunny Lane at its intersection with Da Vall Drive. The east and west laterals are 6 inches in diameter; the north and south pipeline in Talbert Street, which cross-connects the laterals on their west ends, is 4 inches in diameter, and the pipeline in Da Vall Drive, running north and south, which cross-connects the laterals on their east ends, is 6 inches in diameter.

Defendant serves about 300 customers including Tamarisk Country Club, to which only domestic water service is furnished, and the number of defendant's customers is increasing. As shown in Exhibit No. 8, defendant's depreciated utility plant as of June 30, 1964, totaled \$248,502, and earned surplus totaled \$7,260. Revenue from the sale of water for the 6-month period ended June 30, 1964,

totaled \$16,580; total expenses, including \$3,000 of depreciation, were \$18,381, including \$4,096 of legal expenses and engineering charges in connection with a proposed application for a rate increase; and net loss after taxes for the 6-month period was \$1,801.

Defendant's president is a consulting civil engineer with offices in Palm Springs, and defendant's principal stockholder, who has acquired defendant's stock, recently executed a main extension agreement with defendant for the installation of about 2,000 feet of 8-inch pipeline easterly from the intersection of 37th Avenue and Los Reyes Drive, to serve his properties and home. The July 7-8 outage occurred during the connection of said pipeline.

The record tends to be contradictory regarding the low water pressure conditions complained of. Pressure charts taken at the southwest extremity of complainants' area, Exhibits Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7, show certain pressure fluctuations, but none which can be interpreted to be chronic. However, the testimony that during the early part of July, 1964, one complainant was unable to shave at 6:00 a.m. 7 days out of 18 because of lack of water; that one housewife was unable to wash diapers on several recent occasions because of lack of water supply for her washing machine; that one complainant's air-conditioning pump failed during the summer of 1964 because of lack of water; and that one complainant was unable to bathe her asthmatic child pursuant to her doctor's orders because of lack of water, plus other testimony of a more

general nature regarding inability to take showers while outside sprinklers were on and inability to prepare dinner because of lack of water, cannot be disputed or ignored. It is an indication of chronically poor water service, due to some cause.

Defendant's president testified that a major cause of the lack of water pressure, surging, and air in the water is the fact that defendant's main source of supply, its Well No. 2, with an installed production capacity of 1,300 gpm, has so great a capacity that the pressure fluctuation is very great when it comes on.

As relief and as corrective action, defendant plans to install a 660-foot loop of 8-inch main northerly from Cobb Road in Da Vall Drive to connect to the 6-inch mains in Pomegranate Lane and Da Vall Drive at the southeast corner of complainants' area. The cost of such installation will be about \$7,000. Defendant also plans to install a gasoline engine standby booster pump at Well No. 2 which will operate during electric power outages. Installation of a storage tank at Well No. 2 is also planned by defendant. Total estimated cost of planned improvements is \$85,000. Lack of funds was given as the reason that such installation had not yet been made.

Based on the evidence, the Commission finds that, except for the July 7-8 outages, the poor water service conditions complained of are inexcusable; defendant's water system can and should be operated properly; and the public interest requires that defendant take all necessary steps to remedy the water service conditions complained of, and periodically report its action to the Commission and to complainants.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Within fifteen days after the effective date of this order, Tamarisk Water Company shall install an 8-inch main in Da Vall Drive north of Cobb Road to connect with its 6-inch mains at the southeast corner of Pomegranate Lane and Da Vall Drive, and shall, within five days thereafter, report to the Commission and to complainants Wilson and Burns in writing its compliance herewith.

2. Within thirty days after the effective date of this order, defendant shall install standby pumping equipment in its Well No. 2, and a storage tank, pursuant to its plans outlined in this proceeding, and shall, within five days thereafter, report to the Commission and to complainants Wilson and Burns in writing its compliance herewith.

3. Within forty-five days after the effective date of this order, defendant shall survey all water service connections in complainants' area to determine the cause of any low water pressure service condition and to determine any necessary remedial steps, and shall, within five days thereafter, report to the Commission and to complainants Wilson and Burns in writing the results of such survey, together with its plans to effect such remedy or remedies, and shall, within thirty days thereafter, effect such remedy or remedies, and within five days thereafter, shall report to the Commission and to complainants Wilson and Burns its compliance herewith.

Failure to comply with this order will cause the Commission to take whatever further action may be required to ensure satisfactory water service to complainants.

The effective date of this order shall be the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 22nd day of DECEMBER, 1964.

Franklin B. Halchoff
President
John J. Hittell
Charles C. Kays
George H. Thayer
William A. Burnett
Commissioners