



BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

OF THE

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COMMISSIONER MATTHEW BAKER, in attendance

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE MINH LeQUANG, presiding

Application of Great Oaks Water Company	)	PREHEARING
(U162W) for an Order Establishing its	)	CONFERENCE
Authorized Cost of Capital for the	)	
period from July 1, 2027 through June	)	Application
30, 2030.	)	26-05-001

REPORTERS' TRANSCRIPT

Virtual Proceeding

July 14, 2026

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Volume 1

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VIRTUAL PROCEEDING

JULY 14, 2026 - 10:00 A.M.

* * * * *

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE LeQUANG: We are on the record.

Today is July 14th, 2026, at approximately 10:00 a.m. This is the prehearing conference for Application 26-05-001, the Application of Great Oaks Water Company for an Order Establishing Its Authorized Cost of Capital For the Period of July 1st, 2027, Through June 30th, 2030.

My name is Minh LeQuang. I'm the administrative law judge assigned to the proceeding. Commissioner Matthew Baker is the assigned commissioner for this proceeding. Commissioner Baker is present.

Commissioner Baker, would you like to make a statement?

COMMISSIONER BAKER: Yes. Thank you, Judge.

I'm Matt Baker, the assigned commissioner on this application. We are here today to consider Great Oaks Water Company's request to update its cost of capital for the beginning of July 2027 through June 2030. I've reviewed the application, and I'm aware of Great Oaks' request to change its capital structure to 75 percent equity and 25 percent long-term debt. The

1 company seeks a 10 percent -- 10.3 percent return on
2 equity and a 9.35 percent overall cost of capital. If
3 approved, the cost of capital would raise the revenue
4 requirements by 1.25 percent, adding about \$2.05 to the
5 typical bimonthly residential bill.

6 I recognize the importance of securing funding
7 and investing in water infrastructure to provide safe
8 and reliable service. I also prioritize affordability,
9 and any rate increase requires careful consideration.

10 As we move through this proceeding, I will
11 examine whether Great Oaks' financial assumptions and
12 requested returns are reasonable, whether the proposed
13 capital structure aligns with long-term system needs,
14 whether the discontinuation of the Water Cost of Capital
15 Adjustment Mechanism is reasonable given Great Oaks'
16 specific risk and financing profile, and how these
17 requests balance the utility's obligations with
18 affordability for customers.

19 And as we evaluate the substance of Great Oaks'
20 request, I also want to emphasize that I remain fully
21 open to good faith settlement discussions between the
22 parties to this proceeding, aiming for an efficient,
23 collaborative outcome that benefits ratepayers and can
24 focus regulatory attention. If the parties believe that
25 portions of this application lend themselves to

1 consensus, I hope you will explore that either through
2 full settlements or partial settlements or stipulations.
3 The Commission has long recognized the benefits of
4 settlements, and I welcome any constructive efforts in
5 that direction.

6 Thank you for participating today.
7 Unfortunately, I will not be able to stay past 10:30
8 because I have another proceeding I have to attend to.
9 But for the rest of this proceeding, I look forward to
10 working with you, Judge LeQuang, on bringing this to a
11 fruitful conclusion. And thank you.

12 And with that, I'll pass it back over to you,
13 Judge.

14 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. Thank you,
15 Commissioner Baker.

16 Okay. So the first item is parties and
17 appearances and service lists. So I'd like each party
18 to state their name for the record, spell their last
19 name, state your title and who you represent.

20 And let's begin with the applicant, Great Oaks.
21 Is the representative for Great Oaks present?

22 MS. SOMOGYI: Good morning, your Honor and
23 Commissioner Baker. Megan Somogyi. That's
24 S-o-m-o-g-y-i. I am outside regulatory counsel for
25 Great Oaks Water Company.

1 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. And good morning to
2 you.

3 And will the representative for Cal Advocates
4 please --

5 MS. YU: Thank you, your Honor.

6 Good morning, your Honor and Commissioner
7 Baker. My name is Crystal Yu, last name spelled as Y-u.
8 I'm the attorney representing the Public Advocates
9 Office or Cal Advocates.

10 ALJ LeQUANG: Good morning to you as well.

11 Now, are there any other parties that are
12 present that would like to have party status?

13 (No response.)

14 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. Hearing none, I will
15 go to the next item, which is the categorization of the
16 proceeding.

17 Great Oaks in its application proposes a
18 ratesetting categorization. Is that correct,
19 Ms. Somogyi?

20 MS. SOMOGYI: Yes, your Honor. That is
21 correct.

22 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. And, Ms. Yu, in the
23 joint PHC statement, Cal Advocates does not object to
24 this categorization; is that correct?

25 MS. YU: Correct, your Honor.

1 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. So the next item is
2 hearings. In the joint PHC statements, the parties
3 believe that the evidentiary hearings may be necessary
4 and request that the evidentiary hearings be scheduled
5 in the scoping memo.

6 Is that correct, Ms. Somogyi?

7 MS. SOMOGYI: Yes, your Honor. That is
8 correct. The parties additionally identified a proposed
9 week in November that would be ideal to accommodate
10 Cal Advocates' schedule for hearings.

11 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. And so I looked at
12 the schedule that was provided. Now, November is very
13 busy. And the Commission wants an in-person hearing for
14 this proceeding, so it's very difficult for me to obtain
15 sequential dates. So the dates that I was able to get
16 may not align with both of your schedules. So I'm
17 letting you know now so that way, if you need, you can
18 ask for maybe another attorney to represent your client
19 or you can make arrangements.

20 So the dates that I have right now are
21 November 9th and 10th, which are -- which is a Monday
22 and a Tuesday. The Wednesday is actually a holiday.
23 And then I have the 11th (sic). So the 9th and 10th
24 would be in person in San Francisco, and the 11th (sic)
25 would be a virtual. So if we go past the two days and

1 we need an extra day, then we do have an extra day
2 that's virtual. But if we don't, then 9 and 10 would be
3 the days for the hearings.

4 Any questions or comments, Ms. Somogyi?

5 MS. SOMOGYI: No -- no comments. We certainly
6 appreciate the logistical challenges inherent in
7 scheduling hearings toward the end of the year. I did
8 just want to confirm that the Commission prefers
9 in-person hearings notwithstanding Great Oaks' request
10 in the prehearing conference for virtual hearings given
11 that Great Oaks' witness is located in Dallas, Texas.

12 ALJ LeQUANG: So yes. The Commission would
13 prefer in person. The witness could testify on the
14 virtual hearing day, if you'd like. So that would be
15 the 12th. So you can have the witness testify on that
16 date when we have a virtual hearing day.

17 Do you have more than one witness?

18 MS. SOMOGYI: No, your Honor. Great Oaks only
19 has the one witness. And we do appreciate the option
20 for that accommodation.

21 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. So let me take that into
22 consideration if you only have one witness. And then I
23 will get back to the parties.

24 Ms. Yu, any question or comments on the
25 evidentiary hearing dates that I just stated?

1 MS. YU: Thank you, your Honor. I appreciate
2 the efforts and do understand that the holiday schedule
3 can be very tight. So I will be out of country from
4 November 10th to 27th, so that would be very challenging
5 for hearings. And we are short of staff. But you did
6 mention November 9th. November 9th is doable.

7 So just one suggestion whether we can probably
8 try to complete hearing in one day on November 9th.
9 Cal Advocates only has one witness, and we can be in
10 person in San Francisco. But I understand that would be
11 also challenging for Great Oaks because their witness is
12 in Texas. So can we do, like, partial virtual and
13 partial in person on November 9th just so we can
14 accommodate all parties? It's just one consideration --
15 suggestion to your Honor. Thank you.

16 ALJ LeQUANG: And -- thank you. I understand
17 the logistics. I will -- let me take that into
18 consideration. As you know, it's not just up to me. I
19 have to find out whether or not I would be able to make
20 that work. The -- getting a hearing room, the dates and
21 so forth, is very difficult. So I don't really want to
22 give up the hearing rooms right now, but I will
23 definitely take it into consideration. And I will let
24 the parties know in a ruling subsequent to the PHC as to
25 what we can do. But I do understand.

1 All right. With that, the next issue is the
2 scope of issues. I reviewed the joint PHC statement,
3 and I looked at Cal Advocates' issues. I believe you
4 had 1 through 7. And I'm in agreement with 1 through 6.
5 I think number 7 is essentially in 1 through 6, so I
6 don't think that it needs to be included. So that's
7 what I'm thinking right now is that I would use
8 Cal Advocates' issues 1 through 6.

9 Any questions or comments, Ms. Somogyi?

10 MS. SOMOGYI: Thank you, your Honor. Great
11 Oaks is generally amenable to the use of Cal Advocates'
12 issues 1 through 6. And as we noted in the joint
13 prehearing conference statement, we certainly agree that
14 compliance with the Commission's rules is within the
15 scope of the proceeding. Whether that would need to be
16 an express issue, Great Oaks is not so sure. But we
17 certainly -- we do not object.

18 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. And Ms. Yu?

19 MS. YU: Your Honor, thank you. I have no
20 objection to include our issue number 1 to 6. So do you
21 want to address issue number 7 that Cal Advocates
22 proposed in the protest?

23 ALJ LeQUANG: Yeah. So what I'm thinking here
24 is number 7 is actually within 1 through 6 because
25 that's their burden. So I don't think that there needs

1 to be an issue 7. Do you have an explanation or
2 justification as to why I should include number 7?

3 MS. YU: Yes, your Honor. So regarding issue
4 number 7, Great Oaks contends that the burden of proof
5 is established in Commission precedent so that issue
6 number 7 does not need to be identified in the
7 proceeding. However, our position is that the question
8 in number 7 is not which party has the burden of proof
9 but whether Great Oaks has provided sufficient support
10 for its requested return on equity to meet its burden of
11 proof, which we believe is an essential factual question
12 that legal standard does not resolve. That's the reason
13 that Cal Advocates requests that issue 7 to be included
14 within the scope of this proceeding. And we can address
15 the specific factual issues as discovery proceeds.

16 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. So I will take number 7
17 into consideration. 1 through 6, I believe that the
18 parties are in agreement. And so number 7 will be taken
19 into consideration. So in addition here, I'm going to
20 consult with Commissioner Baker's office, and we will
21 confirm the issues in the scoping memo.

22 All right. So the next issue here is the
23 proceeding schedule.

24 Now, Ms. Somogyi, will Great Oaks be providing
25 testimony? If so, when -- well, are you going to be

1 providing testimony -- direct testimony or -- I mean
2 written testimony as well? Or are you only going to
3 have the witness testify?

4 MS. SOMOGYI: Yes, your Honor. Great Oaks has
5 provided its direct testimony as Exhibit F to the
6 application. It was served originally along with the
7 application when it was filed. And we'd certainly be
8 happy to recirculate that to the service list, if
9 necessary. So Great Oaks is not planning to submit any
10 additional direct testimony from any other witnesses
11 other than Mr. Roeder. And so we -- we believe that our
12 direct case at this point has been made.

13 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. Ms. Yu, has Cal Advocates
14 served its rebuttal testimony?

15 MS. YU: Cal Advocates will serve our prepared
16 testimony by the August -- I believe August 14th date.
17 And we don't have any plan or -- just currently to serve
18 any rebuttal testimony. And that is also not in the
19 proposed schedule because Great Oaks already served the
20 prepared testimony. So the plan is we only serve
21 prepared testimony in this proceeding.

22 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. And you said that you're
23 going to serve that by August 14th, 2026; correct?

24 MS. YU: Correct, your Honor.

25 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. So I will take that into

1 consideration as well.

2 Okay. So public participation hearings. Okay.
3 So we have that scheduled already. So the first will be
4 in person in San Jose on October 6th, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.
5 and at 6:00 p.m. A separate ruling will be sent to the
6 parties with the venue and address. The second public
7 participation hearing will be virtual. That will be
8 held on October 14th, 2026, at 2:00 o'clock p.m. and
9 6:00 o'clock p.m. And, again, a ruling will be sent
10 that will provide the parties the locations and times
11 and, in this case, the Webex links.

12 Any questions or comments on the public
13 participation hearings, Ms. Somogyi?

14 MS. SOMOGYI: None on the public participation
15 hearings, your Honor. But if I might just revisit the
16 schedule for testimony?

17 While Ms. Yu indicated that Cal Advocates is
18 not intending to submit rebuttal testimony, Great Oaks
19 is intending to submit rebuttal testimony. And we --
20 you know -- apologies. And we are happy to submit that
21 on the proposed September 4th date that was in your
22 Honor's preliminary schedule.

23 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. So I may give you both a
24 little bit more time here just in case. I want to give
25 you guys maybe about a month, assuming that we have

1 time. But I understand. I will take your dates into
2 consideration here.

3 Now, before we -- we already talked about the
4 evidentiary hearings. Does Great Oaks and Cal Advocates
5 anticipate any type of settlement conference or using
6 the Commission's ADR?

7 Ms. Somogyi?

8 MS. SOMOGYI: Thank you, your Honor. Great
9 Oaks would certainly be open to the possibility of
10 settlement and potentially the ADR program as well.
11 Great Oaks certainly agrees with the Commission that it
12 is ideal to be as efficient as possible in resolving
13 these matters. And so if settlement is possible, we
14 would be happy to pursue that with Cal Advocates.

15 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. Ms. Yu?

16 MS. YU: Yes, your Honor. Cal Advocates is
17 also open to settlement discussions. And I'm aware that
18 there is a mandatory settlement conference no later than
19 September 18th on the ruling. And we are open to engage
20 in settlement discussion with Great Oaks.

21 Regarding ADR, I think we have to circle back
22 on that. I think historically we normally engage in
23 settlement discussions, and that has been -- proved very
24 efficient.]

25 ALJ LeQUANG: I am sorry, what was the

1 mandatory settlement conference date again that you
2 said, September?

3 MS. YU: So on the schedule email ruling is no
4 later than September 18th.

5 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. Let me just keep these
6 dates in here. All right. So we're talking -- all
7 right. So opening briefs, I have for December 18, 2026.
8 Now, I -- obviously, I understand that there's the
9 holidays. I am trying to put this before the holidays
10 so that way everyone can enjoy their holidays.

11 So December 18, 2026, I have for opening briefs
12 and then reply briefs I have for January 22, 2026.

13 Questions or comments, Ms. Somogyi?

14 MS. SOMOGYI: Thank you, your Honor. Those --
15 those dates will be fine for Great Oaks.

16 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. Ms. Yu?

17 MS. YU: The dates are good. Thank you, your
18 Honor.

19 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. All right. Again, I just
20 discussed the ADR process, and if you do decide to go
21 and use the ADR process, please go to the Commission's
22 website or you can contact Administrative Law Judge
23 Charles Ferguson.

24 Now, before we go -- move it forward here, we
25 have an issue with ex-parte here. It looks like Cal

1 Oaks -- I'm sorry, not Cal Oaks -- Cal Advocates is
2 requesting that -- that the Commission restrict or
3 prohibit all ex-parte communication; is that correct,
4 Ms. Yu?

5 MS. YU: Just to clarify, your Honor, so
6 Cal Advocates proposed that all verbal ex-parte
7 communications should be prohibited, and we should only
8 have all-party meetings and written ex-parte
9 communications in this proceeding.

10 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. Ms. Somogyi, what's your
11 position on this?

12 MS. SOMOGYI: Thank you, your Honor. Great
13 Oaks opposes Cal Advocates' recommendation to restrict
14 oral ex-parte communications.

15 There are established advance and post meeting
16 notification requirements wherein the party who has been
17 granted a meeting has to give notice of the meeting, and
18 also what was discussed during the meeting; and we
19 believe that that process provides sufficient
20 transparency to all parties and the service list
21 regarding the oral ex-parte communications.

22 I will also note that Cal Advocates' preference
23 for written ex-parte communications and all-party
24 meetings is premised on ensuring the accuracy of the
25 evidentiary record, and I will note that unless an

1 all-party meeting is transcribed, what is said there
2 does not become part of the record; and it's also my
3 understanding that written ex-parte communications are
4 not formally considered part of the evidentiary record;
5 and so, we do not believe that Cal Advocates' premise
6 for the restriction would actually serve to bolster the
7 formal record of the proceeding, and we would request
8 that all avenues for ex-parte communications remain open
9 during this proceeding and that is to the benefit of
10 both Cal Advocates and Great Oaks.

11 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. Thank you,
12 Ms. Somogyi.

13 Ms. Yu, Ms. Somogyi makes some pretty good
14 points there. Did you want to respond?

15 MS. YU: Yes, your Honor.

16 So as Cal Advocates stated in the PHC
17 statement, the nature of the proceeding makes individual
18 oral communications inappropriate, because the cost of
19 capital determination turns out quantitative
20 record-intensive evidence. In section -- the Public
21 Utilities Code Section 1701.3 confirms that written and
22 oral ex-parte communications shall not be part of the
23 evidentiary record of the proceeding. It's what
24 Ms. Somogyi just mentioned and the commissioner -- the
25 Commission's own Rule 8.2(m) requires that the

1 Commission render its decision based on the evidence of
2 the record.

3 So the ex-parte communications and any notice
4 are not part of the evidentiary record, which makes the
5 quantitative analysis more difficult, if not all the
6 information or data is in the evidentiary record.

7 So the second point is we believe that Great
8 Oaks overstates that notification and reporting
9 requirements, what they can accomplish.

10 As you -- Your Honor knows, Rule 8.2, 8.4
11 notice is a summary drafted by the interested party
12 itself. It only describes the interested party's side
13 of the story and argument; it's not a transcript. So
14 the other parties only learn after the meeting has
15 occurred a self-selected narrative of what was
16 discussed. So we do not want the details, the legal
17 framing of the argument or the commissioners or
18 commissioner advisors' questions and reactions during
19 those meetings, so the reporting does not eliminate the
20 non-transparency of oral ex-parte communications.

21 On the other hand, all-party meeting ensures
22 that every party hears the same presentation at the same
23 time, and we can respond to what was actually said in
24 real time; and written communications also served on all
25 parties at the time day, they are documented in their

1 entirety.

2 So the alternative that Cal Advocates proposed
3 is not a ban on communication with decision makers, we
4 only preserve every substantive channel of communication
5 while we only remove the -- the asymmetric channel of
6 communication.

7 Thank you, your Honor.

8 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. So to be clear, Ms. Yu, so
9 you're essentially just saying that you -- if there is
10 an ex-parte communication that both parties need to be
11 present, correct?

12 MS. YU: We -- yes, we propose either all-party
13 ex-parte communications or written communications where
14 the record can be reserved in its entirety.

15 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. Ms. Somogyi, I -- I
16 gave Ms. Yu a chance to respond. Did you want to
17 respond or are you -- or not?

18 MS. SOMOGYI: Thank you, your Honor. I will
19 just note briefly with respect to the summary or
20 paraphrasing nature of post-oral meeting notices, as a
21 practical matter, there is very little mystery regarding
22 the party's respective positions in proceedings like
23 this particularly when you've gotten to the end after
24 testimony has been submitted after evidentiary hearings;
25 and that is the point and time where ex-parte

1 communications are often employed when the parties go to
2 the decision makers to sort of make their -- their final
3 pitch for their position; and so, you know, to -- to the
4 extent that the post-meeting notices are not a
5 transcription, it is extremely unlikely that anything
6 would be argued in those meetings that would be a
7 surprise to the other party as it's just a practical
8 reality; and so, we would continue to request that this
9 valuable advocacy tool be -- remain available to both
10 Cal Advocates and to Great Oaks.

11 This is not benefit that inures just to the
12 applicant, and so we ask that the Commission preserve
13 the standard ex-parte rules for ratesetting proceedings
14 that allow oral communications.

15 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. Thank you,
16 Ms. Somogyi.

17 All right. Are there any other matters or
18 issues that we have not addressed, Ms. Somogyi?

19 MS. SOMOGYI: No, your Honor.

20 ALJ LeQUANG: All right. Ms. Yu?

21 MS. YU: No, your Honor, but if I may just
22 respond to Ms. Somogyi's last argument regarding
23 ex-parte communications?

24 ALJ LeQUANG: No. At this point, I have given
25 both of you two -- two attempts, and I think I've -- I

1 understand your position and I understand Ms. Somogyi.
2 If I allow you to speak, then I am going to have to
3 allow Ms. Somogyi to speak as well, and I don't think
4 that's necessary.

5 Do you have any other issues that you -- or any
6 other matters that we have not discussed that you would
7 like to discuss right now?

8 MS. YU: No other issues. Thank you, your
9 Honor.

10 ALJ LeQUANG: Okay. All right.

11 So with that, I would like to thank both
12 parties for being present and being very cordial. If
13 settlement is possible, I ask both parties to please
14 explore it.

15 And with that, this prehearing conference is
16 concluded. We are off the record.

17 (At the hour of 10:30 a.m., this matter
18 having been concluded, the Commission then
19 adjourned.)]

20 * * * * *

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BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

CERTIFICATION OF TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

I, JACQUELYN HAUPT, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER
NO. 13964, IN AND FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DO HEREBY
CERTIFY THAT THE PAGES OF THIS TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY ME
COMPRISE A FULL, TRUE, AND CORRECT TRANSCRIPT OF THE
TESTIMONY AND PROCEEDINGS HELD IN THIS MATTER ON
JULY 14, 2026.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE
EVENTS OF THE MATTER OR THE OUTCOME OF THE PROCEEDING.

EXECUTED THIS 8TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2026.


JACQUELYN HAUPT
CSR NO. 13964

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

CERTIFICATION OF TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

I, ASHLEIGH BUTTON, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER
NO. 14013, IN AND FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DO HEREBY
CERTIFY THAT THE PAGES OF THIS TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY ME
COMPRISE A FULL, TRUE, AND CORRECT TRANSCRIPT OF THE
TESTIMONY AND PROCEEDINGS HELD IN THIS MATTER ON
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I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE
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EXECUTED THIS 8TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2026.


ASHLEIGH BUTTON
CSR NO. 14013

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