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THE TOPEKA CAPITAL-JOURNAL

MONDAY, JUNE 9, 2025 | CJONLINE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Public hearings on rate increase set

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Evergy is asking Kansas utility regulators for permission to raise electric rates, increasing how much customers pay to the monopoly each month. Here's what to know about the rate case ahead of public hearings by the Kansas Corporation Commission.

Will the Evergy rate case affect me?

Evergy is proposing a \$196 million annual rate increase for Evergy Kansas Central customers. Evergy Kansas Metro customers wouldn't be affected. The Evergy Kansas Central service territory covers about 735,000 customers in central and eastern Kansas. It is headquartered in Topeka and spans from Leavenworth to Salina and Hutchinson to Pittsburg. The company estimated that an average residential customer — based on an average household usage of about 900 kilowatt-hours per month — would see a

\$13.05, or 10% increase, in their monthly bill. **How much would my Evergy electric bill increase?** Of the \$196 million net increase — which is about a 9% net increase in total retail revenues — \$192 million would be from actual base rate changes, according to Evergy's application filed with the KCC in January. That \$192 million increase in yearly retail revenues — from \$1.41 billion to

\$1.60 billion — is about a 14% increase. But some classes have different percentage increases, according to a retail revenue summary for Evergy Kansas Central. The main residential service class would pay about 15% more under Evergy's proposal, according to the company's application documents. Those roughly 630,000 residential customers would collectively pay about \$96 million more a year. **See RATE, Page 3A**



Downtown Topeka can be seen in the distance from this 2020 view above the Great Overland Station. City and county leaders are considering investing in a proposed riverfront development. THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL FILE

River project offers 'quality of life opportunities'

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During a joint Shawnee County Commission and Topeka City Council meeting June 3, Topeka and Shawnee County were asked to pay hundreds of thousands to help the development of the Kansas River. Several leaders expressed reluctance to invest in the project. Michelle Cuevas Stubblefield, senior vice president of strategy at the Greater Topeka Partnership, said the cost and benefit to business and community should be looked at to ensure the investment is sound. "I appreciate and respect that our city and county leaders are expressing those concerns to ensure that the riverfront — a long-standing interest of the community is reflective of the needs and aspirations," said Cuevas Stubblefield. Topeka Riverfront chair Greg Schwerdt and taskforce chair John Hunter on June 3 asked the city and county to each give \$200,000 annually for two

years while presenting the first phase of the project. **'We are hearing excitement'** "The initial steps proposed is early activation to enjoy quality of life opportunities on and along the river while also addressing safety concerns," Cuevas Stubblefield said. "As we share about this early work, we are hearing excitement." Deputy Mayor Brett Kell on June 3 said expressed concern about what might be in the water and added that he hasn't heard positive feedback about the project. "I just don't see it as a feasible thing," Kell said, "and like I said, I haven't heard anything positive from the public via social media or emails." Other leaders brought up such issues as affordability and financial support. They suggested the city and county could work with the Riverfront Advisory Council to apply for grants and other funding, while making the project part of their budget processes.

What's the vision for the Riverfront Project? Cuevas Stubblefield cited several community aspirations shared in the vision plan:

- Walking, jogging and biking trails.
- Picnic and play areas.
- Ability to safely kayak, canoe or paddle boat.
- Enhance safety through lighting and features.
- Begin to connect NOTO and downtown Topeka.

 "Our community deserves these initial steps that we hope will lead to implementation of the bigger picture a fully developed riverfront that also generates economic prosperity and a vibrant quality of place," she said. The Topeka Riverfront Vision Plan was unveiled Oct. 8, 2024. "Our vision for the riverfront builds on previous efforts to activate a community asset that is central to the Topeka area's growth and success," said Kevin Holland, chair-elect of the Riverfront Advisory Council, in a news release.

Homicide defendant cites the Stand Your Ground law

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A former security guard at a southeast Topeka events venue is citing the Kansas Stand Your Ground law in his defense against a homicide charge. Gang members last March entered The Villa Event Venue in southeast Topeka to carry out what is thought to have been an "ordered gang hit" on 22-year-old Yancey Whitehead, who carried a gun, according to a court document. Robert Reyes, 45, was working at the time as a security guard at the venue, his defense attorney, KiAnn Caprice, said in that motion filed June 4 seeking dismissal of a charge he faces alleging he fatally shot Whitehead early March 8. "The facts will show that the defendant did not know what was occurring, but did see the victim with a gun which led the defendant to believe his actions were necessary to prevent the death of himself and other involved parties," the motion said.

Preliminary hearing lasted several hours June 5, set to resume June 9 Reyes was being held June 6 on a \$1 million bond in the Shawnee County Jail on a charge of intentional second-degree murder, according to jail records. He should be declared immune from prosecution under the Stand Your Ground law, Caprice's motion said. It said that law considers a person justified in using deadly force against another when the person using force believes it is necessary to prevent "imminent death or great bodily harm" to themselves or a third party. A Shawnee County District Court preliminary hearing to determine if probable cause exists to bind over Reyes for trial began at 9:30 a.m. and lasted until the late afternoon June 5. It was then scheduled to resume at

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