1	STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE		
2	PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION		
3	NHPUC 10SEP 19812:57		
4	August 27, 2019 - 10:08 a.m.		
5	Concord, New Hampshire		
6	RE: DE 16-576		
7	ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION UTILITIES: Development of New Alternative Net		
8	Metering Tariffs and/or other Regulatory Mechanisms and Tariffs		
9	for Customer-Generators. (Hearing to receive public comment)		
10	,		
11	PRESENT: Chairman Martin P. Honigberg, Presiding		
12	Commissioner Michael S. Giaimo		
13	Sandy Deno, Clerk		
14			
15	APPEARANCES: Reptg. Eversource Energy: Matthew J. Fossum, Esq.		
16	Reptg. Unitil Energy Systems, Inc.:		
17	Gary Epler, Esq.		
18	Reptg. Liberty Utilities (Granite State Electric) d/b/a Liberty		
19	Utilities: Heather Tebbetts		
20	Anthony Strabone Melissa Samenfeld		
21	David Lepie		
22	137 3. 3. 3. 3.		
23	Court Reporter: Steven E. Patnaude, LCR No. 52		
24			

1		
2	APPEARANCES:	(Continued)
3		Reptg. Conservation Law Foundation: Meredith A. Hatfield, Esq.
4		Reptg. New Hampshire Legal Assistance:
5		Raymond Burke, Esq.
6		Reptg. Clean Energy NH: Madeleine Mineau, Executive Director
7		Reptg. Residential Ratepayers:
8		D. Maurice Kreis, Esq., Consumer Adv. Office of Consumer Advocate
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LO		Reptg. PUC Staff: David K. Wiesner, Esq. Mary Schwarzer, Esq.
L 1		Karen Cramton, Dir./Sustainable Energy
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L 3		
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PROCEEDING

today in Docket 16-576, which is the net metering docket. We're here on a Staff recommendation to consider modifications to Order Number 26,029, which was issued in 2017. Under the statute, in order to amend an order, we need to hold a hearing. That is the hearing we're here for today.

Before we do anything else, I know it's styled as a "public comment hearing", but we're going to take appearances from the parties who are here, since this is a hearing in Docket 16-576. Starting over here.

MS. TEBBETTS: Good morning,

Commissioners. My name is Heather Tebbetts,

and I'm here to represent Liberty Utilities

(Granite State Electric). And with me today is

Anthony Strabone, Melissa Samenfeld, and David

Lepie.

MR. FOSSUM: And good morning,

Commissioners. Matthew Fossum, here for Public

Service Company of New Hampshire, doing

business as Eversource Energy.

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1
                   MR. EPLER: Good morning,
 2
         Commissioners. Gary Epler, appearing on behalf
 3
         of Unitil Energy Systems. Thank you.
 4
                   MS. HATFIELD: Good morning,
         Commissioners. Meredith Hatfield, for
 6
         Conservation Law Foundation.
 7
                   CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Welcome back,
 8
         Ms. Hatfield.
                   MR. BURKE: Good morning,
 9
10
         Commissioners. Raymond Burke, from New
11
         Hampshire Legal Assistance.
12
                   MS. MINEAU: Madeleine Mineau,
13
         representing Clean Energy New Hampshire,
14
         formerly known as the "New Hampshire
15
         Sustainable Energy Association".
16
                   MR. KREIS: Good morning, your Honor
17
         and/or Chairman Honigberg. Good morning,
18
         Commissioner Giaimo. I am D. Maurice Kreis,
         sometimes called "Don Kreis". I'm the Consumer
19
20
         Advocate.
21
                   And I'm happy to see Unitil on this
22
         side of the aisle.
23
                   MR. WIESNER: Good morning,
24
         Commissioners. Dave Wiesner, for Commission
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Staff. With me are Karen Cramton, Director of the Sustainable Energy Division; Tanya Wayland, an Analyst with that Division; and Mary Schwarzer, co-counsel.

the record that Commissioner Bailey is not here this morning. She will be participating.

She's going to be reviewing the transcript and any written submissions. I believe the secretarial letter indicates that we'll take written comments and filings in this matter until September 3rd, 2019.

Again, since this is a hearing in the docket, I'm going to look to the parties first, if they want to comment. Maybe Staff should go first to set the scene for those who are here. But I'll be looking for the parties in the docket first to provide their comments before going to nonparties.

Mr. Wiesner, you want to start us off?

MR. WIESNER: I think that would make sense, Mr. Chairman. I'll just give hopefully a brief overview of our recommendation and some

of the basis for it.

We have recommended that the low/moderate income pilot program requirement of the June 2017 order you referenced be eliminated. That order contemplated that there might be duplication and potential inconsistency with legislative initiatives that were specifically referenced, Senate Bill 129 of 2017, which was in process, but had not been enacted at the time when the order was issued.

Since that time, further legislation this year, Senate Bill 165 of 2019 has been enacted, with what we understand was bipartisan support, become effective July 1st, and is in the process of being implemented. We have proposed a conceptual framework for implementation of that legislation through rules. And we, in fact, will be discussing that with stakeholders this afternoon in a technical session.

There is, in our view, considerable potential duplication, in particular, between Senate Bill 165 and the low and moderate income pilot programs as described at a high level in

the June 2017 order.

In particular, both would provide on-mill -- excuse me, on-bill monetary credits to low and moderate income customers; both would require direct benefits to those customers; both would provide an adder for LMI customers above and beyond what the compensation that would otherwise be payable pursuant to net metering; and both require data collection and reporting of costs and benefits, which is one of the primary drivers for this settlement proposal that was approved by the Commission in June 2017 in this docket.

I'd like to take just a moment to run through Senate Bill 129 implementation. We now have two fiscal years' worth of experience with that bill. That is the legislation that required that 15 percent annually of the Renewable Energy Fund be used to support low and moderate income solar projects. The Commission has implemented that through a competitive solicitation process.

Over the past two fiscal years, that program has awarded grant funding to six

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1
         projects, for a total of $904,721. Three of
         those projects are currently operational, and
 2
 3
         others are under development or construction.
 4
         They range in size from 54 kilowatts to 100
 5
         kilowatts AC, for a total of approximately
 6
         420 kilowatts in total. And the projects are
 7
         expected to provide an average monthly benefit
         of $32 to more than 120 low and moderate income
 8
 9
         households. In fact, approximately ten of
10
         those households are considered moderate
11
         income, rather than low income. The benefits
12
         are provided in the form of either lot rent
13
         reductions, which is the norm for manufactured
14
         housing resident-owned cooperative projects, or
         through on-bill credits, in particular, the
15
16
         Solar Shares Program implemented in
17
         collaboration with the New Hampshire Electric
18
         Cooperative, or through the elimination of
19
         electric bills for low-income housing
20
         residents, as has been approved with the
21
         Laconia Housing Authority.
22
                    The Program, the SB 129 Grant
23
         Program, has not been fully subscribed.
                                                   Ιn
24
         fact, $150,000 of the 15 percent annual
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set-aside was carried forward from last year into this year. We believe that suggests that there may not be enough low and moderate income solar projects that are ready, even when grant funding is offered.

Again, it's not yet clear how the market will respond to the SB 165 incentives. They only became effective on July 1st. We are in the process of implementing them through a rulemaking. But we do expect that there will be a robust response from the market. And again, we see that as potentially duplicative of the model for the low and moderate income pilot programs as contemplated in the June 2017 net metering order.

Finally, we were asked by Senator

Feltes, who cannot be here today, to read into
the record a statement. And I will do that
now. These are his words.

CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: And just before you do that, I want to make sure I understand and the record is clear. You alluded to implementing one of the statutes by a rulemaking, and you also said that there was a

1 technical session this afternoon on rules. Are we talking about the same thing there? 2 3 MR. WIESNER: Yes. That's correct. 4 These are the Puc 900 Net Metering rules. They 5 are due to expire very shortly. 6 We have proposed through an outline 7 that was circulated yesterday an approach for implementation of SB 165. We'll be discussing 8 that in further detail with stakeholders this 9 10 afternoon, including, I would expect, many of 11 the folks who are in the room right now. 12 CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: I suspect you're 13 right. 14 And now you have a statement from 15 Senator Feltes you want to read into the 16 record. 17 MR. WIESNER: Yes. These are his 18 "Senator Dan Feltes, who is unable to 19 be here today, and who is the prime sponsor of 20 Senate Bill 165, wishes us to convey to the Commission that the elimination of current or 21 22 proposed pilots was not intended by SB 165." 23 And that's all I have, Mr. Chairman. 24 CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: That's it?

1 MR. WIESNER: Yes. 2 CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: All righty. 3 do have some people who signed up and signed I can take them in that order, if they're 4 5 all parties, or we can go in some other order. 6 But the people who look like they put in the 7 column that they wanted to speak were Ms. Mineau, Ms. Hatfield, Mr. Kreis, Ms. 8 9 Tebbetts, and Mr. Fossum. 10 Is there anyone other than that who 11 knows they want to speak right now? 12 [No indication given.] 13 CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: All right. 14 We'll take them in that order. Ms. Mineau, why 15 don't you start us off. 16 MS. MINEAU: Thank you, Commissioner. 17 Clean Energy New Hampshire opposes 18 removing the requirement for low/moderate 19 income net metering pilots from the order being 20 discussed today. We think that the proposed 21 pilot, especially the recent proposal brought 22 forward by Eversource, are not necessarily 23 duplicative of existing low/moderate income 24 programs under SB 129, or what would come

forward with the implementation of SB 165.

Specifically, we commend Eversource for developing a pilot that includes a collaborative effort between utility and solar developers.

We think that their proposal would leverage access of utility customer information, specifically making available EAP customers to participate in group net metering as part of these projects, would be a really great opportunity and something that should be looked into. And that would not, I think, necessarily occur if SB 165, you know, SB 165 wouldn't necessarily bring those opportunities.

The time line also would be very uncertain. As Attorney Wiesner mentioned, there has not been an overabundance of demand for the low/moderate income community solar grants. And so, it's uncertain how many or when projects would come on line due to the implementation of SB 165.

The order had made it clear that there was data that would come out of the pilots that would be used for future

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1
         development of net metering policies.
         think that continuing forward with the required
 2
 3
         pilots has a much higher likelihood of
         generating that data in a timely fashion than
 4
 5
         just hoping that projects will come on line
 6
         otherwise.
 7
                    The Eversource proposal specifically
         proposes 20 megawatts of low/moderate income
 8
 9
         community solar to come on line in the next few
10
         years.
11
                    I will remind the parties that we're
12
         already past the recommended implementation
13
         date, which was within 18 months of the order.
14
         And so, I also fear that, if we remove this
15
         requirement, we would send a message that, if
16
         the utilities don't really want to do
17
         something, if they drag their feet then they
18
         won't have to do it.
19
                    CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Ms. Hatfield,
20
         followed by Mr. Kreis.
21
                    MS. HATFIELD: Thank you, Mr.
22
         Chairman.
23
                    Conservation Law Foundation agrees
24
         with the comments of Clean Energy New
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1
         Hampshire. We also want to thank Staff for the
 2
         additional information provided this morning.
 3
         We did have a number of questions that we
         shared with Staff about the number of customers
 4
 5
         currently being served, and other information
 6
         that was helpful to hear.
 7
                   We also do not support Staff's
         proposal. We are very sympathetic to their
 8
         concerns about potential duplication. But our
 9
10
         feeling is that the parties can work with the
11
         utilities and with Staff to try to prevent
12
         that. And that perhaps the pilot that
13
         Eversource has proposed could be part of
14
         complying with Senate Bill 165.
15
                   So, we think that the parties, who
16
         have a history of working together on these
17
         issues, could ensure that there was not
18
         duplication, so that we could serve as many low
19
         and moderate income customers as possible.
20
                    Thank you.
21
                   CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Mr. Kreis, to be
22
         followed by Ms. Tebbetts.
23
                   MR. KREIS:
                                Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
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The scheduling of today's hearing

prompted me to go back and review the bidding when it comes to LMI solar projects, meaning net-metered projects to benefit low and moderate income customers. And I noted the following:

The settlement agreement that my office signed with the utilities in the net metering docket way back when simply agreed that there would be a task force that would guide the creation, design and request for Commission approval, in other words, subsequent Commission approval of a bunch of different pilot programs, one of which was an initiative that uses monetary bill credits to make the benefits of solar available to non-host low and moderate income customers, whose circumstances would otherwise not allow them to participate in a net-metered project.

The Commission then went on in its ultimate order on the merits in 16-576 a couple of years ago to strengthen that commitment somewhat, and said, and I think this is probably consistent with the other settlement agreement in the docket, that each utility

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should develop a pilot program to include a statistically significant number of program participants, if possible, in order to ensure data validity. And as Mr. Wiesner noted, there was a reference to what was then pending, Senate Bill 129, and a statement that the Commission did not want "duplicative efforts".

I do think, as an aside, that Senate Bill 129, Senate Bill 165 from this past session, and what the Commission approved in this docket, should all be regarded as cumulative and requirements and policy preferences that can and should be harmonized with each other.

And so, then we move to the adoption this summer -- or, this spring rather, of Senate Bill 165, which states in relevant part "the Commission shall authorize at least two new low and moderate income community solar projects each year in each utility service territory starting in January of this year."

So, consistent with the statement that Mr. Wiesner read from Senator Feltes, it's clearly the public policy of this state at this

point that there should be significant efforts to assist with the development of net metering projects that benefit low and moderate income customers.

Like Ms. Hatfield, I'm grateful for the history that Mr. Wiesner rattled off, because it does suggest that there has been significant progress.

I think I'm inclined to favor an outcome here that makes clear that, whether we do it under the rubric of the order that's now two years old, or whether we do it under the rubric of Senate Bill 165, the Commission expects that everybody in this room will cooperate to assure that the benefits of net metering are made meaningfully available to as many low income customers as possible.

It's gratifying to note that, and I don't mean to put words in the mouth of Eversource, but my understanding is that the position of Eversource is that it intends to press forward with Commission approval for the pilot program it has proposed in Docket DE 19-104. I don't think that we should encourage

Eversource to walk away from that interesting initiative.

It's disappointing that the other two investor-owned utilities haven't made similar proposals. I think we should encourage them to do so. But I don't -- I have no firm position on whether it makes sense to eliminate the requirement that you adopted in your order two years ago, or whether we figure out some other way to move forward. It's just important that we move forward. I apologize for equivocating, but I really favor what works.

CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: All right.

 ${\tt Ms.}$ Tebbetts, and then ${\tt Mr.}$ Fossum.

MS. TEBBETTS: Good morning again.

Granite State Electric is neutral to Staff's memorandum to eliminate the requirement in Docket DE 16-576 for low and moderate income pilots.

We look forward to working with the parties to find a marriage between the order and what's in that order and the outcome of Senate Bill 165.

Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Mr. Fossum.

MR. FOSSUM: Thank you. Good morning. And thank you for taking our comments this morning.

We recognize that the specific
purpose of this morning's hearing is discussing
the potential modification of the Commission's
order regarding the LMI pilots. But as the
Staff Recommendation notes, and as some of the
other parties have discussed, the
recommendation underlying this order, the order
scheduling today's hearing, was the Staff's
Recommendation that specifically Eversource's
proposed Clean Innovation Community Solar Pilot
be eliminated.

So, rather than more generally discussing the underlying order from two years ago, our comments this morning are going to come from the perspective of the proposal that we have made and its relation to the Staff's Recommendation.

And as a couple of the parties have noted already this morning, Eversource filed it's Clean Innovation Community Solar Pilot

proposal over in Docket 19-104, following participation in a fairly lengthy stakeholder process, extensive and careful consideration of the existing barriers of LMI project participation in this and other jurisdictions, and evaluation of this Company's -- our Company's internal capabilities to support these kinds of projects.

We continued to refine that proposal nearly up until the time of filing, and there may yet be cause to refine that proposal depending on additional stakeholder input.

But based on the stakeholder feedback we've received so far, and continued developments in the solar market, including passage of SB 165, or at least at the time of our proposal the potential passage of SB 165, we took care to propose a program consistent with SB 165 were it to become law. And while it was intended to be consistent, we're not at this point convinced that it's actually duplicative of what might be required under SB 165.

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While it's true that projects that

might participate in our pilot would produce on-bill credits for residential customers, and likewise the case that projects that might participate in our pilot would be eligible for additional compensation above and beyond the standard net metering credits for their generation output for low and moderate income projects.

But there are differences. As we've explained in our filing, and based on our review, bill credit mechanisms and additional compensation on their own have not been demonstrated to be consistently successful tools for overcoming the barriers for LMI solar participation.

Acquiring and managing customer enrollment is a significant barrier for solar projects to serve low-income customers.

Therefore, our proposal included a mechanism for utilizing existing resources within the Company's billing system, and the successful New Hampshire Electric Assistance Program, to enroll and ensure that the benefits of these programs can be delivered to low and moderate

income customers. At least at this stage, we do not see any similar mechanism to efficiently enroll and managing customers being provided for under SB 165.

The Eversource proposal also includes participation on a pilot basis of projects up to 5 megawatts in size. And we believe that that is an appropriate opportunity to consider potential advantages that this scale of solar installation may be able to provide, in terms of achieving economies of scale and greater benefits for customers.

We acknowledge that in some of the discussions we've had there is some measure of disagreement on whether projects above the current one megawatt threshold could be included even on a pilot basis. But a pilot basis does appear to be the only potential forum at this time to test the benefits of larger projects.

The Company is eager to explore through its pilot an alternative model for community solar that it believes has the potential to maximize benefits for

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stakeholders. We would be pleased to address
any specific concerns from the Staff and other
stakeholders, and the Commission, regarding
potential duplication of 165 in the course of
the review of our pilot proposal.

But, at this stage, we believe it's in the best interest of customers, and in light of the substantial work that's already been undertaken, that our proposal move forward, that it be reviewed, further refined, and allowed to take place and test the benefits that it might provide for New Hampshire customers.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: All right.

There's no one on the sign-up sheets who said that they wanted to speak. Is there anyone here who wishes to speak for the first time now?

[No indication given.]

CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Is there anybody who would like to respond to something someone else said, and Mr. Wiesner and Staff, I'll include you in that. Is there anything you've

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heard that, you know, you want to respond to?
 1
 2
         Anyone at all?
 3
                         [No indication given.]
                    CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Do you want to
 4
 5
         take a few minutes to think about it?
 6
                    I see one finger went up in the air
 7
         telling me to wait.
 8
                         (Short pause.)
                    MR. WIESNER: I'll just say quickly
 9
10
         that, just in response to Attorney Fossum's
         comments, I don't think this is the forum where
11
12
         a final decision would be made about the status
13
         of Eversource's low and moderate income pilot
14
         program proposal.
15
                    What we are talking about here is
16
         whether there will be a requirement in the net
17
         metering docket for the utilities, including
18
         Eversource, to develop such pilots, bring them
         forward for the Commission's review and
19
20
         approval.
21
                    And if that requirement is
22
         eliminated, that does not prejudge the final
23
         disposition of Eversource's pilot. That's a
24
         different docket, with a different schedule,
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         and it will go forward on its own merits.
                   CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Okay. Anyone
 2
 3
         else want to say anything in response to
 4
         something someone else said?
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                         [No indication given.]
 6
                   CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: I have a
 7
         question about 165, and who is the object of
         that legislation? I know that Mr. Kreis read
 8
 9
         some of the language, which obligates or seems
10
         anyway to be directed at the Commission, in
11
         "the Commission shall approve". Who's -- or
         "authorized", I guess maybe is the word,
12
13
         "authorized". Who's on the other end of that
14
         authorization? Is it a utility? Is it a
15
         developer? And are those people in any way,
16
         shape or form obligated themselves to do
17
         something? Or is this just a "we're going to
18
         be waiting under 165"? And if people bring
19
         projects forward, that's when the Commission
20
         does something with them.
21
                    I'll give you the first crack, Mr.
22
         Kreis, since you were helpful enough to
23
         introduce the language in the hearing.
24
                                Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
                   MR. KREIS:
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                    I would say, I mean, the language
         that I read before that you're alluding to is
 2
         somewhat ambiguous. But it does say -- it
 3
         refers to "each utility's service territory".
 4
 5
         And my gloss on that somewhat ambiguous
 6
         language is that it seems to imply that the
 7
         utility should do something. Otherwise,
         what -- like the idea that there should be "two
 8
 9
         projects in the service territory of each
10
         utility" wouldn't be terribly significant.
11
                   CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: But we know that
12
         developers need to connect, be connected to the
13
         utilities' systems. So that may be -- that may
14
         be good enough for them. Maybe they need to
15
         drum up the business, but are they the ones who
16
         have to sponsor it?
17
                    I mean, setting aside Mr. Fossum's
18
         points about Eversource's project and
19
         Mr. Wiesner's response to it. You know, we
20
         don't have anything from Unitil and Liberty.
         And I'm not sure that under 165 we have to.
21
22
                   MR. KREIS: I don't think that the
23
         Commission has to do anything until somebody
24
         comes to the Commission and says "Please
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authorize our low and moderate income community solar project."

But I think there's an implicit
expectation in the bill that the utilities will
be actively involved in pressing that forward
to the Commission for its approval. Although I
admit that the language is not as clear as it
might otherwise be.

CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Mr. Wiesner, you wanted to say something. I'll get to you next, Ms. Mineau.

MR. WIESNER: I think our view is that SB 165 provides an incentive, both in terms of a monetary adder and in that adder being delivered through on-bill credits to approved net-metering hosts and their groups. And that what we really need to do is see the market respond.

And so, I agree with the Consumer

Advocate that it is ambiguous what the minimum

of "two per utility service territory" is

entitled -- is meant to cover. It refers to

"authorize". But the Commission authorizes

something when a project is brought to it.

1 And I think our view is that group 2 hosts seek registration of low and moderate 3 income community solar projects, which would 4 entitle them to the three-cent, initially, and 5 then it goes down to two and a half cents after 6 a couple of years, adder for those projects 7 through on-bill monetary credits. And it's not clear, in the absence of market response to 8 9 that incentive, what the utility's role would 10 be or what the Commission's role would be, 11 other than to review what is brought to it. 12 CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Ms. Mineau. 13 MS. MINEAU: That ambiguity in SB 165 14 is at the root of our concern that enough 15 low/moderate income community projects would be 16 developed in a timely manner to generate the 17 type of information that the required pilots 18 were seeking to generate. 19 I agree that it is very unclear that 20 there is a requirement for who the requirement is aimed at, and that there is no consequence 21 22

is aimed at, and that there is no consequence stated in the policy. If no projects are brought forward, the Commission only needs to authorize what is brought forward. And if

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nothing is proposed, then it seems like there's
 1
         no actual consequences.
 2
                    CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: Thank you. Any
 3
         other comments or statements people want to
 4
 5
         make before we close this hearing?
 6
                         [No indication given.]
 7
                    CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: All right.
 8
         will then adjourn the hearing, understanding
         that people can provide comments and
 9
10
         information in writing until September 3rd.
                    Anything else we need to do?
11
                         [No indication given.]
12
13
                    CHAIRMAN HONIGBERG: All right.
14
         are adjourned.
15
                         (Whereupon the hearing was
16
                         adjourned at 10:37 a.m.)
17
18
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