

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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March 24, 2020

Debra A. Howland
Executive Director
New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission
21 South Fruit Street Suite 10
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: Docket No. DE 19-057
Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy
Notice of Intent to File Rate Schedules

Status of Investigation into Change to Distribution Rates

Dear Ms. Howland:

On March 19, 2020 Staff filed a letter with the Commission proposing a procedural schedule change to the above-captioned docket. The change is necessitated by the public guidance following Governor Sununu's March 13, 2020 declaration of a state of emergency regarding the COVID-19 virus.

On March 20, 2020, the Commission issued a secretarial letter canceling the technical sessions/settlement conferences scheduled for March 24 and 25, 2020 and moving the technical sessions/settlement conference to the previously scheduled hearing dates reserved in this docket, as proposed by Staff. The parties to the docket are committed to continue discussions in efforts to procure a settlement agreement in this docket, and those efforts will continue as we work remotely pursuant to public guidance.

This accommodation is possible because Eversource has agreed to an extension of the procedural schedule for up to three months. In an effort to conclude this proceeding in three months, Staff will be looking for hearing dates in late June and early July.

Under this agreement, Eversource has agreed to waive its statutory right to the 12-month investigation time-frame for the investigation into the proposed tariff, the time-frame set out in RSA 378:6, I, (a). Eversource will continue to bill temporary distribution rates as approved by the Commission in Order No. 26,265 (June 27, 2019).

Order No. 26,265 approved a settlement agreement that established temporary rates for effect on a service-rendered basis on and after July 1, 2019, for the duration of this permanent rate case investigation. That settlement agreement provided, among other things, for the funding of vegetation management activities at specified levels through June 30, 2020, subject to refund to customers for any amounts recovered but not spent by the Company. Under the revised procedural schedule, Eversource will continue to bill at the approved temporary rates and manage its vegetation program to amounts recovered in rates for this initiative. Thus, the Company will refund to customers any over recovery for amounts recovered but not spent related to vegetation management activities during the term of the extension period, consistent with the temporary rate settlement.

In addition, the temporary rate settlement provided for the credit to customers of amounts previously collected in rates related to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. This amount will be fully refunded to customers as of July 1, 2020. Therefore, the extension of temporary rates according to this letter will result in a surplus credit to customers of approximately \$1 million per month for each month beyond July 1, 2020 that the permanent rate change is postponed.

Pursuant to RSA 378:29, Eversource is authorized to reconcile permanent rates to the temporary rates on a retroactive basis to July 1, 2019 once permanent rates are set. Therefore, the Company will incorporate any over-credit to customers for the TCJA, or any over-collection of vegetation management expenses for the period July 1, 2019 until permanent rates are set, into that reconciliation amount. Staff understands that Eversource will continue to conduct its operations as it has from July 1, 2019 to the present day.

Staff can report that the Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) agrees with this approach to resolving this complex docket, while complying with the public guidance on the COVID-19 virus. Staff expects to use this time to pursue settlement in the proceeding.

Once Staff has had an opportunity to review the calendar and find dates for the hearing, Staff will report to the Commission for the scheduling of the merits hearing.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Amidon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Suzanne Amidon
Staff Counsel

Cc: Service List (electronically)

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