

CHAIRMAN
Martin P. Honigberg

COMMISSIONERS
Robert R. Scott

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Debra A. Howland

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10
Concord, N.H. 03301-2429

TDD Access: Relay NH
1-800-735-2964

Tel. (603) 271-2431

FAX No. 271-3878

Website:
www.puc.nh.gov

NHPUC 28 JAN 15 PM 1:36

January 28, 2015

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

Re: DW 14-360, Abenaki Water Company
Request to Convert to Monthly Billing
Water and Sewer Billings – Belmont
Water Billings – Bow
Staff Recommendation for Approval

Dear Ms. Howland:

The purpose of this letter is to offer Staff's recommendation with respect to its review of the petition of Abenaki Water Company (Abenaki) in the above-referenced docket. Abenaki provides water service to approximately 253 customers in Belmont and Bow, New Hampshire, and 158 sewer customers in Belmont. Abenaki currently issues bills on a quarterly basis but seeks permission to convert to monthly billing. Staff has reviewed the filing, supports the petition and recommends the Commission approve Abenaki's request.

On December 11, 2014, Abenaki filed its petition along with the prefiled testimony of Donald J.E. Vaughan, Chairman, Board of Directors of Abenaki Water Company. According to Mr. Vaughan's testimony, the proposed change in billing cycle is in the public interest for a number of reasons. He states that domestic plumbing leaks and unaccounted-for water loss can be more quickly identified; conservation and customer awareness of usage is more quickly realized with more frequent billing; and delinquencies and bed debts can be minimized. In addition, with Abenaki converting to radio-read meters, the company expects any costs of monthly billing to be offset by a reduction in meter reading costs and administrative costs associated with handling customer complaints.

In Mr. Vaughan's testimony, a table is provided showing that Abenaki's existing quarterly rates will be divided by three in order to establish new base charges for the monthly billing. The Commission found these rates to be just and reasonable pursuant to RSA 378:28

DW 14-360 Abenaki Water Company
Request to Convert to Monthly Billing
Staff Recommendation
Page 2 of 2

in Docket No. DW 10-306, *see* Order No. 25,357 (May 1, 2012) (Belmont system), and Docket No. DW 06-101, *see* Order No. 24,741 (April 13, 2007) (Bow system).

Staff recommends approval of Abenaki's request to convert its billing from a quarterly frequency to a monthly frequency. Staff agrees that more frequent billing will give the company and customers more timely information about leaks, and may result in reduced uncollectible revenues and disconnect notices. *See North Country Water Supply, Inc.*, Order No. 20,957 (September 9, 1993) (Commission approved company's request for monthly billing, recognizing its "policy to favor more frequent billing, thereby reducing uncollectible revenues and disconnect notices").

Staff proposes monthly billing should be effective for service rendered on or after April 1, 2015, or the second quarter of 2015. Abenaki should notify customers of the conversion to monthly billings through a direct mailing within 30 days of the effective date of an Order approving monthly billing and again with an insert in the first quarter billing, which is mailed in early April.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robyn J. Descoteau". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robyn J. Descoteau
Utility Analyst III

cc: Service list

SERVICE LIST - EMAIL ADDRESSES - DOCKET RELATED

Pursuant to N.H. Admin Rule Puc 203.11 (a) (1): Serve an electronic copy on each person identified on the service list.

Executive.Director@puc.nh.gov
amanda.noonan@puc.nh.gov
dcarson@newenglandservicecompany.com
mark.naylor@puc.nh.gov
ocalitigation@oca.nh.gov
robyn.descoteau@puc.nh.gov
rorie.hollenberg@puc.nh.gov
steve.frink@puc.nh.gov

Docket #: 14-360-1 Printed: January 28, 2015

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:

- a) Pursuant to N.H. Admin Rule Puc 203.02 (a), with the exception of Discovery, file 7 copies, as well as an electronic copy, of all documents including cover letter with:**
- DEBRA A HOWLAND
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NHPUC
21 S. FRUIT ST, SUITE 10
CONCORD NH 03301-2429
- b) Serve an electronic copy with each person identified on the Commission's service list and with the Office of Consumer Advocate.**
- c) Serve a written copy on each person on the service list not able to receive electronic mail.**