

1 STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2 PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION AND
3 NEW HAMPSHIRE HOMELAND SECURITY
4 & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

5
6 April 28, 2009 - 7:08 p.m.
7 Goffstown High School
8 27 Wallace Road
9 Goffstown, New Hampshire

10 RE: DECEMBER 2008 ICE STORM REVIEW
11 Hearing to receive public statements.

12
13 PRESENT: Chairman Thomas B. Getz, Presiding (NHPUC)
14 Commissioner Graham J. Morrison (NHPUC)
15 Commissioner Clifton C. Below (NHPUC)

16 ALSO PRESENT: Reptg. the New Hampshire PUC Staff:
17 Steven E. Mullen, Asst. Dir. - Electric Div.
18 Randall Knepper, Director - Safety Division

19 Reptg. Residential Ratepayers:
20 Christina Martin
21 Office of Consumer Advocate

22 Reptg. NH Homeland Security & Emergency Mgt.:
23 James C. Van Dongen, Public Information Off.

24 Court Reporter: Steven E. Patnaude, LCR No. 52

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN GETZ: Okay. Good evening,
3 everyone. I'm going to open this public statement hearing
4 with respect to the December 2008 ice storm. My name is
5 Tom Getz. I'm the Chairman of the Public Utilities
6 Commission. On my right is Commissioner Clifton Below, on
7 my left is Commissioner Graham Morrison. Also here this
8 evening, this is Randy Knepper, the Director of our Safety
9 Division, and the Assistant Director of our Electric
10 Division, Steve Mullen, and also here this evening is Jim
11 Van Dongen, from the Division of Homeland Security &
12 Emergency Management. And, I'll note that Christina
13 Martin, from the Office of Consumer Advocate, is here as
14 well.

15 And, I'm going to make some opening
16 remarks for the record. To the best of my understanding,
17 at least so far, that there are no one here tonight who is
18 interested in making a public statement. But I'm going to
19 put some introductory remarks on the record, and then
20 we'll stay here for an additional, it's about 7:10 at the
21 moment, and we'll stay for an additional 10 or 15 minutes
22 to see if anyone else from the public arrives tonight.

23 So, the public statement hearing this
24 evening is a joint effort of the Public Utilities
{December Ice Storm Hearing @ Goffstown 04-28-09}

1 Commission and the Division of Emergency Management as
2 part of our after action review of the December 2008 ice
3 storm, which will review the preparedness and response
4 both of public utilities and State government to the ice
5 storm that began on the evening of December 11, effected
6 approximately 60 percent of New Hampshire customers at its
7 peak, and resulted in some customers going without service
8 for as long as two weeks. An after action review is
9 focused on analyzing what happened, why it happened, and
10 how it can be done better. And, in order to effectively
11 analyze what happened, we are systematically gathering
12 data. And, this data collection effort began during the
13 ice storm with the records and notes kept by the various
14 individuals involved in responding to the ice storm. In
15 addition, the PUC has submitted over 400 requests for
16 interrogatories and for documents to the public utilities.
17 And, those questions and answers are available on our
18 website, at puc.nh.gov. Some utilities have also
19 submitted their own information reports, which are also
20 available on our website, which will be part of our -- of
21 the information we'll be looking at as part of our
22 analysis. We have also posted a comment form on our
23 website for public input asking specific questions. And,
24 we have over 150 responses to those questions that are
{December Ice Storm Hearing @ Goffstown 04-28-09}

1 also posted on our website.

2 And, this public statement hearing
3 tonight is the ninth of ten that we are holding around the
4 state. The last of the public statement hearings will be
5 Thursday night in Rochester.

6 One other effort that will be occurring
7 this spring concerns the issue of undergrounding. And,
8 Chairman Naida Kaen, of the House Science, Technology &
9 Energy Committee, will be holding an informational session
10 that will be looking to better understand the potential
11 costs and benefits of undergrounding, and New Hampshire is
12 also looking at the potential for automated outage
13 maintenance systems in New Hampshire.

14 It's not our intention to prejudge
15 anything, but I think there's no serious debate that
16 communications on many levels must be improved. And,
17 that's a lesson that was obvious from within a couple of
18 days at the beginning of the ice storm, and it's been a
19 consistent theme that we've heard throughout the public
20 statement hearings. And, that is why Mr. Knepper is
21 facilitating an effort to review utility communications
22 practices. We'll be looking at communications to the PUC
23 from the utilities, to State Emergency Management, to
24 local Emergency Management Directors, and to the public
{December Ice Storm Hearing @ Goffstown 04-28-09}

1 generally. And, the goal of that effort is to develop
2 model practices which should be adopted by all utilities.

3 We will also be looking at a variety of
4 other substantive issues, including whether utilities were
5 reasonably prepared, and did they respond reasonably.
6 And, among those issues, we will be considering the effect
7 of tree-trimming on customer outages, the status of mutual
8 aid arrangements among utilities, protocols for
9 prioritizing restoration, and decisions on allocating work
10 crews during the ice storm.

11 As I noted, we haven't reached any
12 specific conclusions at this point, and that's because our
13 job is to take an objective look at all of the facts. But
14 I can assure you we will be following the information we
15 receive wherever it leads us. And, we're hoping to have a
16 couple of outputs from this process: First is we will be
17 issuing a report in September that will set forth the
18 results of our after action review, including
19 recommendations for specific proceedings that may be
20 required as a follow-up; and we will be looking to make
21 sure the utilities have improved their planning and
22 response protocols, especially as they concern
23 communications for next winter.

24 I'll also point out a couple of other
{December Ice Storm Hearing @ Goffstown 04-28-09}

1 efforts that have been conducted by the Division of
2 Emergency Management. And, the Emergency Management,
3 under the direction of Director Chris Pope, has held a
4 series of meetings with local public, safety and
5 community officials to develop a after action review and
6 improved practices, specifically as it affects the actions
7 of local Emergency Management Directors and in their
8 relationship to the Emergency Operations Center, and also
9 has conducted an after action review within State
10 government, to make sure that government state agencies
11 are responding appropriately and are improving their
12 practices in advance of next winter.

13 And, if Mr. -- I'm getting the
14 indication from Mr. Van Dongen that I've appropriately
15 covered some of the steps that Emergency Management has
16 been taking.

17 So, that summarizes the steps that we
18 have been taking. And, this is an opportunity for public
19 comment, if anyone would like to take advantage of that?

20 (No verbal response)

21 CHAIRMAN GETZ: And, I guess, if not,
22 I'll note for the record that it's 7:15. We will stay
23 here for another ten minutes or so. I'll also point out
24 that Mr. Van Dongen, from Emergency Management, as well as
{December Ice Storm Hearing @ Goffstown 04-28-09}

1 the members of the Commission Staff are happy to answer
2 any questions off the record.

3 So, with that, I will turn off this
4 microphone. And, the record will reflect that the public
5 statement session of this public statement hearing is
6 closed, but we will stay around to answer questions from
7 anyone else who might show up. So, thank you.

8 (Whereupon the hearing ended at 7:17
9 p.m.)

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