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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

March 22, 2022 - 9:00 a.m.

RE: DE 21-138
LIBERTY UTILITIES (GRANITE STATE
ELECTRIC) CORP.
2022 Reliability Enhancement Program
and Vegetation Management Program Plan
(Prehearing Conference)

PRESENT: Commissioner Carlton Simpson, Presiding
Commissioner Pradip Chattopadhyay

Tracey Russo, Clerk

APPEARANCES: Reptg. Liberty Utilities (GSE) Corp.:
Michael J. Sheehan, Esq.

Reptg. N.H. Dept. of Energy:
Paul B. Dexter, Esq.

Court Reporter: Susan J. Robidas, NH LCR No. 44

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Good
3 morning, everyone.

4 MR. SHEEHAN: Good morning.

5 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: I'm
6 Commissioner Simpson. I'm presiding over
7 today's prehearing conference, as Chairman
8 Goldner's unavailable. I'm joined today by
9 Commissioner Chattopadhyay. We're here this
10 morning in Docket DE 21-138 for a prehearing
11 conference regarding Liberty Utilities (Granite
12 State Electric) Corp.'s 2022 Reliability
13 Enhancement Program and Vegetation Management
14 Program Plan. Let's take appearances.
15 Liberty.

16 MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you. Mike
17 Sheehan for Liberty Utilities (Granite State
18 Electric). And we have some old faces in the
19 room, a new face, and an old face in a new
20 place. So I'll introduce them briefly.

21 Of course, next to me is
22 Heather Tebbetts. And next to her is Heather
23 Green, who's our manager of veg management.
24 Next to Heather is Chris Steele, who is
25 relatively new with the Company. He's the

1 director of all electric ops. Comes to us
2 from Florida. And behind me is Erica Menard,
3 as of last week with Liberty, taking Steve
4 Mullen's old seat, as Steve has moved on to
5 broader corporate roles, where he's going to
6 be working on rate cases across the country.
7 Lucky him. Thank you.

8 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Thank
9 you. Welcome.

10 New Hampshire Department of
11 Energy.

12 MR. DEXTER: Good morning,
13 Commissioner. Paul Dexter appearing on behalf
14 of the Department of Energy. I'm joined today
15 by Jay Dudley, an analyst in the Regulatory
16 Support Division.

17 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Thank
18 you, Attorney Dexter. Appreciate that. Good
19 to see you, Mr. Dudley.

20 So in terms of preliminary
21 matters, the Commission has not received, to
22 our knowledge, any petitions to intervene or
23 motions regarding this matter. Are there any
24 motions this morning?

25 MR. SHEEHAN: Not from the

1 Company.

2 MR. DEXTER: None for the
3 Department.

4 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: And
5 are there any would-be intervenors here today?

6 [No verbal response].

7 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Any
8 requests on any other preliminary matters at
9 this time?

10 [No verbal response]

11 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Okay.
12 Let's proceed with initial position statements.
13 I'll recognize Mr. Sheehan.

14 MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you. I have
15 maybe a bit more lengthy than normal opening
16 statement, given all the changes that have been
17 going on in veg management with the Company, so
18 I thought this would be a good opportunity to
19 do so. We have this docket. We have the 2021
20 reconciliation that was just filed. And as
21 you'll hear in a minute, with all the changes
22 going on, and we plan to file a rate case next
23 summer, this would be an issue there, too. So
24 I thought it would be helpful to give the
25 Commission sort of a broader picture.

1 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Please
2 proceed. Thank you.

3 MR. SHEEHAN: This docket is to
4 review the Company's veg management plan, VMP,
5 budget for 2022. Our request in this docket is
6 that the Commission approve the 2022 budget of
7 approximately \$3 million. As I mentioned,
8 there are many items that have happened in
9 recent years that resulted in this request of
10 \$3 million, which I'll explain.

11 This particular docket is
12 governed by Attachment E to the 2014
13 Settlement Agreement in DE 13-063, which was
14 two rate cases ago. And Attachment E is the
15 REP, which was the reliability enhancement
16 program, not relevant here, that was
17 replacing bare wire and the VMP. There was a
18 section particular to those items. And what
19 it says relevant to this docket is that on
20 November 15th of each year, the Company will
21 provide it's VMP plan to Staff for the
22 following calendar year for Staff's review.
23 After review by Staff, the Company will take
24 all reasonable steps it deems appropriate to
25 carry out and implement the plan, taking into

1 account comments by Staff.

2 Of course, November of 2021,
3 Staff didn't exist as its former self, and
4 the Company elected to file the plan here
5 with the Commission rather than just with the
6 Department of Energy. In the past, this did
7 not result in a docket. We'd have the
8 conversation with Staff, and we would proceed
9 with our budget, knowing what they had told
10 us, sometimes agreeing, sometimes not; but at
11 least we went into the year with an
12 understanding. Again, we elected to file it
13 here, and of course the Commission opened
14 this docket.

15 The next provision of the
16 settlement governs the reconciliation docket
17 that we just filed, which requires that
18 filing by March 15 of each year, where the
19 Company reconciles the amount spent in the
20 prior year compared to the amount that was
21 approved in rates.

22 As I mentioned, this docket,
23 the reconciliation docket, and the veg
24 management program in general will be
25 thoroughly reviewed in the upcoming rate case

1 to address the following issues.

2 A number of things have
3 happened in the last few years, and they are
4 the following: In the 2016 rate case, the
5 Commission approved the Company moving from a
6 five-year cycle to a four-year cycle. Real
7 rough numbers, we have a thousand miles of
8 vines. And these aren't accurate numbers,
9 but just give you an illustration, under a
10 five-year cycle we would trim 200 each year,
11 200 miles each year; under a four-year cycle
12 we would be trimming 250 each year. When you
13 switch from a five- to a four-year cycle, it
14 is more expensive in the short term because
15 you are covering more miles per year, but in
16 the long term, since you're there more
17 frequently, the trimming is less intensive;
18 you're getting back to those spots more
19 quickly. And we projected it, and the basis
20 for the move was better reliability and
21 better costs. In the short term, however, it
22 is an increase in mileage.

23 The second factor is we have
24 lost the contribution from Consolidated
25 Communications. Under the vintage 1980

1 agreement between Liberty and Consolidated,
2 Consolidated obviously was its predecessor
3 then, contributed a certain amount of money
4 each year to the veg management. That number
5 was roughly half a million dollars a year in
6 recent years. That contract contained
7 another provision going back to 1980 that
8 simply allowed them to walk away from that
9 part of the contract, and they did so a
10 couple years ago. So we have lost that
11 contribution.

12 The third change was a PUC
13 rule that went into effect a few years ago
14 that requires the -- defines the distance
15 that we had to trim away from lines. The new
16 rule requires eight feet of side clearance.
17 Granite State Electric for decades had been
18 working under a side clearance of six feet.
19 So our corridors were very mature six-foot
20 corridors. To comply with eight feet, we are
21 cutting a lot of big trees because they had
22 never been cut before. So that was another
23 change that we're trying to implement that
24 puts upward pressure on costs.

25 Another change was we had a

1 very favorable long-term contract with our
2 tree-trimming contractor, Asplundh. We
3 signed it, I'm not exactly sure of the year.
4 I think it was in effect '16 or '17. That
5 contract expired at the end of '20. By the
6 time it expired, it was well below market.
7 We advised the Commission and others as those
8 years were going along that the good days
9 will end when that contract ends. And in
10 fact it did. We went out to bid in the
11 summer of '20 for the next four-year contract
12 beginning '21, and the prices jumped
13 significantly.

14 Another issue is the Company
15 that wanted that contract to begin in 2021
16 for the next four years, Clearway, did not do
17 well. And if you review the testimony,
18 you've seen that almost exactly a year ago,
19 in March of 2021, they simply walked off the
20 job. They were struggling the first couple
21 months. We worked hard to get them up to
22 speed to help them, and they simply said,
23 "We're not going to make payroll. We're
24 leaving." So that left us in a tough spot,
25 obviously. We turned to the No. 2 bidder,

1 which was Asplundh. They did step in. They
2 charged more. They did not have enough crews
3 to do all the work that was planned, but they
4 at least "kept the finger in the dike," if
5 you will. So over 2021, we trimmed far less
6 than we planned because of that change and
7 some of these other factors.

8 So you put all that together,
9 and what happened? First, we trimmed about
10 85 miles last year of the projected 200-plus.
11 The primary reason was the Clearway default,
12 the time it took to get the replacement
13 contractor up to speed, and the fact that
14 that replacement contractor simply couldn't
15 get enough bodies to do the work. Another
16 underlying factor here is people who do tree
17 work have been leaving to go out west or
18 leaving the industry altogether. It's a very
19 much smaller pool of workers. All the
20 utilities are competing for them. The prices
21 go up. Classic supply and demand.

22 Second, because of those
23 factors, we trimmed only 85 miles. The cost
24 per mile was significantly higher in the
25 past. Our approved -- what's approved in

1 rates for annual trimming is \$2.4 million.
2 That came out of the rate case, the '19 rate
3 case that settled in 2020.

4 So we were supposed to spend
5 2.4 million per year. Last year we spent 1.9
6 million. Not in this docket, but in a
7 companion docket, we're asking the Commission
8 to approve moving that underspent into 2022.
9 And that is allowed under the language of the
10 Settlement Agreement and the Order. But
11 that's how we get to the \$3 million budget
12 that we've proposed here, is the 2.4 that's
13 in rates plus the \$500,000 we didn't spend
14 last year gets you to \$3 million. I'm
15 obviously using lawyer math.

16 The third result of all of
17 this is we're seeing a -- possibly seeing a
18 downward trend in reliability metrics. We
19 have trimmed less. And when you trim less,
20 more trees fall on wires and cause problems.
21 We had a number of years with a steady
22 improvement of reliability. The graphs were
23 all trending down. And now we've seen a tick
24 up. The metrics in this field are not
25 immediate sometimes, as you all know. You

1 get blips because of the weather and the
2 like. But the initial numbers are that we're
3 seeing an upward trend, or a poor trend in
4 those metrics.

5 So that leaves us now in 2022
6 with a lot of catch-up to do. And that's the
7 budget we presented to you, the \$3 million
8 budget. And in the testimony, the plan
9 outlined in detail what we hope to do with
10 that \$3 million to begin catch up and begin
11 to set the stage for the proposal we will
12 make in the rate case next year. Frankly,
13 that proposal is going to be a significant
14 increase in the VMP budget. For all these
15 reasons, it's simply going to take a lot more
16 than \$2.4 million per year to, A, catch up,
17 and, B, do all the work that we should be
18 doing every year.

19 And that leaves the Commission
20 and us with the two big factors that I think
21 inform VMP budget decisions. First, we
22 obviously have to trim trees. If we don't,
23 bad things will happen. And if we don't keep
24 up, you know, this is one of the classic
25 cases of deferred maintenance, we'll pay a

1 lot down the road. And obviously, if we
2 don't trim trees, reliability goes downhill
3 fast. On the other side, of course, this
4 costs money. We all appreciate that there's
5 a sensitivity to rates. And so you end up
6 with this tension of spend more money to get
7 better performance by cutting trees; spend
8 less money and don't cut the trees and get
9 poor performance. There's always trying to
10 find the right balance between those two
11 factors. And we're here to work with the
12 Staff, DOE and the Commission to find that
13 right balance today, and certainly more
14 substantively the upcoming rate case. Thank
15 you.

16 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Thank
17 you, Mr. Sheehan.

18 Mr. Dexter.

19 MR. DEXTER: Thank you,
20 Commissioner. We appreciate the background
21 provided by Attorney Sheehan. And I don't
22 think I disagree with any of the procedural
23 discussion that he gave, in terms of the
24 history of the program. From the Department of
25 Energy's perspective, we were Staff of the PUC

1 at the time the last rate case was settled,
2 presented and approved. And our role in this
3 case, our objective in this case is that this
4 2022 plan conform to the requirements that were
5 set out in the 19-064 rate case because that's
6 the time period that's covered by that
7 settlement.

8 It appears that the Company
9 has come up with a budget that is in the
10 ballpark of what was agreed to in the 19-064
11 rate case. But unfortunately, the work
12 that's being done under that budget is
13 significantly less than what was envisioned
14 when the rate case settlement was presented
15 and approved, in that, that rate case
16 settlement included a four-year trim cycle
17 which, you know, was not completed, frankly.
18 And we've heard the reasons from the Company,
19 you know, why it wasn't completed. But
20 that's something that we will be looking at
21 in this case. In other words, what we're
22 trying to achieve here is compliance with the
23 19-064 settlement which included \$2.2 million
24 in rates and a four-year trim cycle,
25 compliant with the PUC rule that's been in

1 place now for five or six or seven years, or
2 something like that. I'm not sure exactly.

3 The Company has indicated that
4 the budget from the rate case was 2.4
5 million. DOE wants to go back and look at
6 what was built into that settlement. My
7 recollection, without having delved into
8 this, is that it was 2.2 million built into
9 rates, with the opportunity for a 10 percent
10 overflow, which would get you to the 2.4
11 million that Attorney Sheehan mentioned. I
12 don't recall whether the 2.4 was actually
13 built into the rates or that was something
14 that needed to come in and be requested in a
15 reconciliation docket. It's not a big issue,
16 but it's something we want to look into.

17 I agree with Attorney Sheehan
18 that this phase of this proceeding has not
19 been docketed in the past. This is something
20 that, according to the settlement back in
21 13-063, was done informally. It was usually
22 meeting between the Staff of the PUC and the
23 Company, and I guess the Attorney General
24 from time to time -- I'm sorry, the Consumer
25 Advocate from time to time. I'm not sure

1 exactly if they participated.

2 Having been docketed, we agree
3 with the Company that the issue before the
4 Commission is whether or not the budget that
5 they presented is reasonable. So we agree
6 that's the issue. We agree that the yard
7 stick for measuring whether that's reasonable
8 is how closely it conforms to the agreement
9 from 19-064; and if it doesn't, are there
10 good reasons, you know, why it doesn't. So
11 those are the issues we'll be discussing. We
12 want to hear more about the Clearway
13 situation that came up. We want to explore
14 the absence of payments from Consolidated.
15 And also we want to look at the allocation of
16 the \$3 million, how it is spread across the
17 various veg management activities that are
18 laid out line by line in the budget.

19 And I guess the one thing
20 we're hearing from this, which does not come
21 as a surprise, is that there will be a
22 significant request for increased funds in
23 the next Liberty electric rate case, which we
24 understand is coming in 2023. So we will
25 consider ourselves put on notice. As I said,

1 that does not come as a surprise based on
2 some of the information we've been seeing
3 from the Company over the past couple of
4 years. But in our view, that's for that
5 case, not for this case. This case, as I've
6 said a number of times, is conformance with
7 the 19-064 Settlement.

8 Mr. Sheehan -- Attorney

9 Sheehan was kind enough to put together a
10 draft procedural schedule, which we've
11 reviewed and want to talk about at our tech
12 session which follows this. And I believe we
13 will be presenting a joint proposed
14 procedural schedule sometime shortly after
15 the tech session, as requested in the
16 Commission's procedural order that
17 established this prehearing conference.

18 So with that, that completes
19 my opening statement.

20 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Thank
21 you, Attorney Dexter. And a collaborative
22 process on a procedural schedule is greatly
23 appreciated by the Commissioners. Thank you.

24 I think the Company and the
25 Department have noted some areas that we've

1 also found were ripe for review. We noted in
2 our commencement of the adjudicative
3 proceeding and notice of preconference order
4 that we were interested in seeing further
5 discussion and analysis prior to a final
6 hearing on this matter regarding accounting
7 for the Company's projected costs of the
8 calendar year 2022 vegetation management
9 plan; whether the plan and proposed budget
10 are consistent with prior Commission orders;
11 and what actions the Company has taken and
12 will take to control costs.

13 We recognize that for this
14 prehearing conference the Company witnesses
15 may not be prepared to comment today. We did
16 identify some areas with alignment in many
17 respects to what the Department and the
18 Company have identified, where it would be
19 helpful if the Company could provide more
20 insight and additional testimony. Those
21 areas include: How the goals of the
22 Settlement in the DG 06-107 Settlement in
23 Order 24,777 have been met or not been met;
24 whether changes to the process for annual
25 reconciliation of REP and VMP costs are

1 warranted; Company analyses, including cost
2 benefit and impacts to reliability metrics,
3 including SAIDI and SAIFI; the cycles used
4 for vegetable management; possible options
5 for addressing the loss of revenue for
6 vegetable management by joint owners and
7 attachers; whether changes to PUC rules,
8 specifically PUC 307.10, should be discussed,
9 given that the changes identified by the
10 Company as an area of concern occurred eight
11 years ago; and a discussion concerning
12 whether REP and VMP costs would be better
13 reconciled in the Company's general rate
14 cases as noted. We would encourage the
15 parties to consider these questions
16 throughout their discussions in this
17 proceeding. And as mentioned by the Company,
18 and I believe the Department as well, we'd
19 appreciate any updates with respect to the
20 reporting requirements as per the DG 06-107
21 Settlement, as modified by subsequent
22 settlements and orders. We would anticipate
23 that such reports would be prepared by the
24 Company, provided to Energy for their review,
25 and available to the Commission well in

1 advance of the final hearing on this matter.

2 Is there anything else that
3 the parties would like to discuss today?

4 MR. SHEEHAN: So the schedule that
5 we have informally exchanged, the basic track
6 was to get this case resolved at the same time
7 as the reconciliation, which is a relatively
8 short track. That's the mainline rate change.
9 So that was sort of the framework we used. And
10 again, as Mr. Dexter said, we'll finalize it
11 for your review. The reason for that is it is
12 a 2022 budget, and we are in 2022. So it
13 can't -- the longer it goes into the year, the
14 harder it would be for us to react to any
15 change in that budget. So given the list of
16 information you've mentioned, a lot of it is
17 available, of course, and a lot of it's in the
18 testimony and in the plan.

19 But I guess the question is:
20 What does the Commission see us giving you,
21 if you accept that schedule, which would be a
22 hearing in a month? What do you foresee as
23 to how to get all that information to you?
24 Are you looking to -- expecting to see a
25 package of revised testimony that makes sure

1 all those questions have been answered, or
2 live testimony on those topics would be
3 sufficient? Just so we give you what you're
4 looking for.

5 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: In
6 reaction to that, I would say if the Department
7 and the Company can provide us with a
8 procedural schedule that you both agree to,
9 then we can determine the next steps,
10 appropriate next steps from that given schedule
11 provided by both the parties.

12 MR. SHEEHAN: Okay.

13 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: And
14 Commissioner Chattopadhyay.

15 COMMISSIONER CHATTOPADHYAY: So
16 that I fully understand exactly what you're
17 saying, so the procedural schedule that you
18 have in mind right now, that is driven by the
19 need to wrap up things by May, if I understood
20 right.

21 But as far as the points that
22 Commissioner Simpson was making, it would be
23 helpful for us to understand what do you, the
24 parties, think, as well as the Company of
25 course, think that would work in terms of the

1 information that we are seeking. I mean, I'm
2 just -- personally, I don't believe there's
3 enough time to do it by May. But it's up to
4 the parties to think through it and come up
5 with a approach that would help us.

6 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON:

7 Attorney Dexter, do you have something to add?

8 MR. DEXTER: Well, I'm not sure.
9 I probably shouldn't say anything, but I'll
10 give it a shot.

11 Again, we go back to this was
12 set up years ago, a decade ago, as an
13 informal process. And each year the Company
14 filed a plan, and there was informal
15 discussions between the Staff and the
16 Company. And as I said, often it -- my
17 recollection was many years there was
18 agreement, some years there weren't
19 agreement. But the fact of the matter is the
20 Company had to go forward. And so they
21 presented a plan, we'd have the discussion in
22 the early part of the year, and by the time
23 tree-trimming season came around, they knew
24 what they were going to do.

25 I sympathize with the

1 Company's position, that if this docket isn't
2 wrapped up in time for the tree-trimming
3 season, I'm not sure what we've accomplished.
4 So let's say we took three or four months and
5 went through all these detailed plans that
6 the Company has. If it's then too late for
7 them to implement -- again, getting back to
8 what the nature of this docket is, it's a,
9 you know, it's always been an informal
10 review, sort of to keep us in the loop as to
11 what the Company was doing.

12 The basic dollar figures were
13 set in the rate case, as I said. And in the
14 annual reconciliation dockets, there has been
15 some allowance for collection of over-spend
16 or under-spend. But typically they've been
17 over-spend. That docket was filed a week or
18 so ago.

19 But my understanding of that
20 docket, and correct me if I'm wrong, Attorney
21 Sheehan, that's a reconciliation of 2021
22 actual, not 2022.

23 MR. SHEEHAN: Correct.

24 MR. DEXTER: That, according to
25 the settlement back in 2013, allows for rate

1 changes in May. So I believe that's where the
2 Company came up with the May 1st date.

3 So I'm rambling a bit here,
4 but we want to use the tech session to get
5 some information. The schedule has an
6 opportunity for Staff to put in testimony if
7 we are in, you know, significant disagreement
8 with the plan, which we will do. And we'll
9 do the best we can by May 1st. But I think
10 extending it beyond May 1st for an in-depth
11 analysis of this is counterproductive to
12 ultimately giving the Company the direction
13 that it needs before the trimming season
14 starts.

15 So let me sum up by saying we
16 started with an informal process which, you
17 know, seemed to have worked over the years.
18 I would -- the Department of Energy would not
19 be interested in making this into such a
20 detailed, formal investigation that it
21 prevents the Company from getting the
22 direction that it needs before the
23 tree-trimming season.

24 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Thank
25 you, Attorney Dexter.

1 Do you have anything to add,
2 Attorney Sheehan?

3 MR. SHEEHAN: Yeah, I guess just
4 to supplement that, given the limited issue
5 that's before the Commission in this docket,
6 and we totally understand about the desire for
7 you folks to dive in, again, all of it -- most
8 of the information I presented is going to
9 support a rate case request, and that's next
10 year. And then of course everyone's diving in
11 to their heart's content. So I guess I would
12 echo what Mr. Dexter said, that maybe we save
13 some of that for then. Again, we'll have live
14 bodies on the stand in this docket in an April
15 hearing, if you approve the schedule, to at
16 least answer a lot of the questions, but maybe
17 not to the depth that you may be thinking.

18 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON:
19 Commissioner Chattopadhyay.

20 COMMISSIONER CHATTOPADHYAY: I'm
21 just speaking as Commissioner Chattopadhyay
22 here. I think the tree-trimming cycle issue is
23 important. And I fully understand the need to
24 take care of what needs to be done right now.
25 So my point earlier was more in the nature of

1 figuring out not necessarily in this docket
2 itself, but overall strategy to address the
3 issues that have been raised. And it would be
4 useful for the folks to think through it, even
5 if you are being driven by the May deadline, to
6 at least ensure that you know exactly the kind
7 of things that ultimately have to be looked at.
8 So that was my point.

9 If you don't mind, I have a
10 very quick question. I know there's nobody
11 here, you know, going to be using the
12 testimony to support what they're saying.
13 But you mentioned that in 2021, 85 miles was
14 taken care of. What was the plan earlier?
15 Was it 220 or 200?

16 MS. GREEN: Approximately 230.

17 COMMISSIONER CHATTOPADHYAY:
18 Approximately 230. And what are you
19 anticipating in 2022?

20 MS. GREEN: A hundred fifty-three.

21 COMMISSIONER CHATTOPADHYAY: One
22 hundred fifty-three? Okay. Is that --
23 typically is that a lower number than what you
24 would have done?

25 MS. GREEN: Yes. Sorry.

1 MR. SHEEHAN: Yes. And the basic
2 math is with the increased costs, \$3 million
3 only buys you so many miles.

4 COMMISSIONER CHATTOPADHYAY: Okay.

5 MR. SHEEHAN: We can't trim
6 230 miles plus all the other obligations of
7 tree trimming with those dollars. And if you
8 read the testimony, to do everything would
9 require about \$5 million. We're not asking
10 that, but we put that information in the
11 testimony.

12 COMMISSIONER CHATTOPADHYAY: Do
13 you have a sense right now of how many years
14 would be needed to catch up?

15 MR. SHEEHAN: I don't. I suspect
16 the people to my right may. But I can tell
17 you, Commissioner, that the things you're
18 asking us to think about, we are thinking about
19 actively and constantly. And I'm confident
20 that we could answer all of these questions at
21 a hearing with Mr. Steele and Ms. Green in this
22 matter and --

23 COMMISSIONER CHATTOPADHYAY: Okay.
24 And, you know, I'm generally also focused on
25 when you think about cost benefit analysis,

1 there needs to be some -- there needs to be a
2 reasonable analysis of what the long-term
3 benefits, you know -- I would like to see that.

4 MR. SHEEHAN: The basic analysis
5 that is done in this area is the performance
6 metrics; how many dollars to increase or better
7 the SAIDI or the SAIFI. And those are the ups
8 and downs. And again, very simplistically,
9 more dollars spent will give you better
10 numbers. But the Company can get that down to
11 dollars per hour of and dollars per frequency
12 based on -- those numbers are all something
13 they look at regularly.

14 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: So I
15 just want to say we really appreciate the input
16 from both the parties here today. Certainly
17 our attention is -- or I should say that we
18 certainly recognize the timeliness of the
19 season and the work that has to be done. Given
20 the changes to the composition of the
21 Commission, PUC Staff now the Department of
22 Energy, this seemed like a good opportunity to
23 convene the parties and take a look at the
24 nuances of this particular issue, particularly
25 given the dimension of the issues that the

1 Company identified with tree-trimming
2 personnel, processes and costs that they've
3 experienced over the last year or so, and they
4 anticipate moving forward.

5 In terms of moving forward in
6 this proceeding, certainly the technical
7 session that the parties mentioned subsequent
8 to this hearing may provide an opportunity
9 for proposal of a Settlement Agreement in
10 this particular matter with respect to the
11 2022 budget, as well as a process for moving
12 forward; how the parties, the Department and
13 the Commission might approach these filings
14 in the future, given the changes to the
15 administration.

16 I think that's all that I
17 have. Is there anything anybody else would
18 like to add? Any questions raised?

19 [No verbal response]

20 PRESIDING OFFICER SIMPSON: Okay.
21 Well, thank you. We're adjourned.

22 (Hearing concluded at 9:36 a.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Susan J. Robidas, a Licensed
Shorthand Court Reporter and Notary Public
of the State of New Hampshire, do hereby
certify that the foregoing is a true and
accurate transcript of my stenographic
notes of these proceedings taken at the
place and on the date hereinbefore set
forth, to the best of my skill and ability
under the conditions present at the time.

I further certify that I am neither
attorney or counsel for, nor related to or
employed by any of the parties to the
action; and further, that I am not a
relative or employee of any attorney or
counsel employed in this case, nor am I
financially interested in this action.

(ORIGINAL CERTIFICATION FILED WITH
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION)

Susan J. Robidas, LCR/RPR
Licensed Shorthand Court Reporter
Registered Professional Reporter
N.H. LCR No. 44 (RSA 310-A:173)

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