

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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

May 25, 2021

Re: IR 20-089, New Hampshire Public Utilities
Investigation into the Effects of the COVID-19 Emergency on Utilities and Utility Customers
Approving Amendment to Agreement Approved on October 5, 2020

To the Parties:

On April 19, 2021, Commission Staff (Staff) filed an amendment to the disconnection and payment plan agreement between the Commission's Consumer Services and External Affairs Division (CSEAD) and most of the state's rate-regulated utilities and other parties to the above-captioned docket, which the Commission approved by secretarial letter dated October 5, 2020 (Agreement). The amendment was signed by CSEAD, the Office of the Consumer Advocate, New Hampshire Legal Assistance, New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, Inc. (NHEC), and a number of rate-regulated utilities.¹ No objections to the amendment have been filed.


In its secretarial letter dated October 5, 2020, the Commission found that the Agreement fulfilled the requirements of Emergency Order #58 issued by Governor Sununu, which terminated the temporary moratorium established in Emergency Order #3 on disconnection or discontinuation of service by providers of specified essential services. Emergency Order #58 required rate-regulated utilities and NHEC to "offer payment arrangements, refrain from charging late fees, and begin normal collection activity and disconnections consistent with an agreement between a utility or utilities and the Commission's [CSEAD], subsequent order of the Commission, and/or rules adopted by the Commission pursuant to RSA 541-A." The Agreement provided protections to customers of gas, electric, and water utilities concerning collections, disconnections, late payment charges, deposits, and payment arrangements. It also provided protections to residential customers facing "financial hardship" (FH), as defined in New Hampshire Code of Administrative Rules Puc 1202.09.

¹ The following rate-regulated utilities have signed the amendment at this time: Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy; Liberty Utilities (Granite State Electric) Corp. d/b/a Liberty Utilities; Unitil Energy Systems, Inc.; Northern Utilities, Inc.; Aquarion Water Company of New Hampshire, Inc.; Lakes Region Water Company, Inc.; Liberty Utilities (EnergyNorth Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty Utilities; and Mill Brook Village Water System.

Staff noted in its cover letter that the amendment to the Agreement extends protections for FH customers, some of which expired on April 1. Staff stated that the amendment is a result of negotiations by its signatories to extend those protections until May 31, 2021. According to Staff, the signatories to the amendment intended to abide by its terms as of the date of its submittal, unless the Commission directed otherwise.

The Commission has reviewed the amendment to the Agreement and found that its extension of protections afforded FH customers is just and reasonable, serves the public interest, and is consistent with Emergency Order #58.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra A. Howland".

Debra A. Howland
Executive Director

cc: Service List (Electronically)
Docket File

Service List - Docket Related

Docket#: 20-089

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