STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

July 20, 2020 - 1:38 p.m.
Concord, New Hampshire

RE: DE 20-098
UNITIL ENERGY SYSTEMS, INC.
ANNUAL STRANDED COST
RECOVERY AND EXTERNAL
DELIVERY CHARGE
RECONCILIATION AND
RATE FILING
[Hearing]

PRESENT:
Chairwoman Dianne Martin, Presiding
Commissioner Kathryn M. Bailey
Commissioner Michael S. Giaimo

Jody Carmody, Clerk

APPEARANCES:

Reptg. Unitil Energy Systems, Inc.:
Gary Epler, Esquire

Reptg. Residential Ratepayers:
D. Maurice Kreis, Esq. (Cons. Adv.)

Reptg. Commission Staff:
F. Anne Ross, Esq.

COURT REPORTER: SUSAN J. ROBIDAS, N.H. LCR NO. 44

I N D E X

WITNESS PANEL: LINDA S. McNAMARA
DOUGLAS J. DEBSKI
LISA S. GLOVE
SARA SANKOWICH
RAYMOND LETOURNEAU

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P R O C E E D I N G

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: We'll go on the record. We're here this afternoon in Docket DE 20-098, which is Unitil Energy Systems annual reconciliation and rate filing for stranded costs and external delivery charge for the period beginning August 1, 2020.

I need to make a few findings because this is a remote hearing.

As Chairwoman of the Public Utilities Commission, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order No. 12, pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically. Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this hearing which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are utilizing Webex for this electronic hearing. All members of the Commission have

the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this hearing through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate.

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the hearing in the Order of Notice. If anybody has a problem, please call (603)271-2431. In the event the public is unable to access the hearing, this hearing will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Okay. Let's start by taking roll call attendance of the Commission. Commissioners, when you state your attendance, please also state where you are located. And if anyone else is with you, please identify them.

My name is Dianne Martin. I am the Chairwoman of the Public Utilities Commission. I am located at my home in Deerfield, New Hampshire. No one else is with me.

Commissioner Bailey.

COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Commissioner Kathryn Bailey, and I am alone.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner Giaimo.

COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Commissioner Michael Giaimo. I, too, am alone.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Let's take appearances, starting with Mr. Epler.

MR. EPLER: Yes. Good afternoon, Commissioners. My name is Gary Epler. I'm the chief regulatory counsel for Unitil Service Corporation. I am appearing today on behalf of Unitil Energy Systems. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank you.

And Ms. Ross.

MS. ROSS: Good afternoon, Commissioners. Anne Ross, Staff attorney representing Commission Staff today. And with me is Kurt Demmer, an analyst in the Electric Division, who may assist with some follow-up questions.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Great. Thank you.

I have Exhibits 1 and 2 having been prefiled and premarked. And we also have a table of contents for Exhibit 1. Is there anything else we need to cover before we swear in the witnesses?

MR. EPLER: No. Thank you, Chairwoman.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Ms. Robidas.

(WHEREUPON, LINDA S. McNAMARA, DOUGLAS J. DEBSKI, LISA S. GLOVER, SARA SANKOWICH and RAYMOND LETOURNEAU were duly sworn and cautioned by the Court Reporter.)

LINDA S. McNAMARA, SWORN

DOUGLAS J. DEBSKI, SWORN

LISA S. GLOVER, SWORN

SARA SANKOWICH, SWORN

RAYMOND LETOURNEAU, SWORN

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Mr. Epler.

MR. EPLER: Thank you, Chairwoman. I will start introducing the witnesses.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

BY MR. EPLER:

Q. Ms. McNamara, could you please state your full name and your position with the Company.

A. (McNamara) Hi. My name is Linda McNamara. I'm senior regulatory analyst for Unitil Service Corp.

Q. Mr. Debski.

A. (Debski) My full name is Douglas Debski. And I'm also a senior regulatory analyst for Unitil Service Corp.

Q. Ms. Glover.

A. (Glover) Good afternoon. I'm Lisa Glover. I am a senior energy analyst for Unitil Service Corp.

Q. Ms. Sankowich.

A. (Sankowich) Hello. My name is Sara Sankowich. I am the manager of forestry operations and sustainability at Unitil Service Corp.

Q. And Mr. Letourneau.

A. (Letourneau) Good afternoon. My name is Raymond A. Letourneau, Jr. I am the vice-president of electric operations for

Unitil. Thank you.
Q. Okay. So now I will return in the order that you introduced yourselves and go through the exhibits and identify them.
Ms. McNamara, could you please turn to what's been marked as Exhibit No. 1. And I draw your attention to Pages 1 through 41 in that exhibit. Were these prepared -- were those pages prepared by you or under your direction?
A. (McNamara) Yes, they were.
Q. And do you have any changes or corrections?
A. (McNamara) No.
Q. And do you adopt this -- those pages as your testimony in this proceeding?
A. (McNamara) I do.
Q. Thank you.
Mr. Debski, will you please turn to Exhibit 1. And I refer you to Pages 77 to 163. Were these prepared by you or under your direction?
A. (Debski) Yes, they were.
Q. And do you have any changes or corrections?
A. (Debski) I do not.

Q. And do you adopt these as your testimony in this proceeding?
A. (Debski) Yes.
Q. Thank you.
Ms. Glover, could you please turn to Exhibit No. 1 and Pages 43 through 75. Were these prepared by you or under your direction?
A. (Glover) Yes, they were.
Q. And do you have any changes or corrections?
A. (Glover) No, I do not.
Q. And do you adopt this as your testimony in this proceeding?
A. (Glover) Yes, I do.
Q. Ms. Sankowich, you did not cause testimony to be filed in this proceeding. However, my understanding is that you prepared -- if you turn to Exhibit No. 2, which is the, if I'm reading the title right, the reliability program and vegetation management program annual report for 2019; is that correct?
A. (Sankowich) Correct.
Q. And were you responsible for the preparation of Pages 1 through 13 of that report?

A. (Sankowich) Yes, that is correct.
Q. Okay. And for purposes of this hearing, would you adopt those pages as your testimony?
A. (Sankowich) Yes, I would.
MR. EPLER: Okay. Mr. Letourneau is -- did not prepare testimony. He may have had some participation in some of the preparation of the report. However, given his position with the Company, he is here available to the Commission and the Staff to answer any questions you might have that the other witnesses might not be able to address.
CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Mr. Epler.
MR. EPLER: Yes.
CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Can I interrupt for a moment? I just want to make sure I got everything correctly. I had Page 77 to 163 for Mr. Debski, but I only had Page 43 through 75 for Ms. Glover. Is 76 -- (connectivity issue)
MR. EPLER: I believe -- I'm getting there now. One moment, please. 76 is an intentionally left blank page.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Ah, okay. So what you said was correct.

MR. EPLER: Yeah. This was prepared back in the old days when we also prepared hard copies. So to have them print out correctly, sometimes we have to insert a hard, clean page.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank you for the clarification. I just didn't want to miss a page.

MR. EPLER: The witnesses are available for cross-examination if there's nothing further.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Ms. Ross.

MS. ROSS: Yes. I do have a few questions.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY MS. ROSS:

Q. So I'm going to begin with the -- some of the preliminary issues. So for 2019, there was an increase of costs in the cycle pruning of approximately $460,000. Can the Company briefly explain the increase in costs?

A. (Sankowich) Sure, I can answer that. In 2019

we had an increase of costs due to a number of different factors, one of them being an increase in our costs of labor. So the cost to have our three pruning vendors do the work, we saw an increase in cost there.

We also saw an increase in hazard trees that had to be removed in different areas of our New Hampshire territory. And we also saw along that same line an increase in hazard removals on a portion of our storm resiliency program.

Q. Do the tree contractors performing the cycle pruning do it on a fixed price contract?

A. (Sankowich) They do, yes. We have two types of contracts, one of which is a fixed-price bid contract for the bulk of our cycle pruning work and our storm resiliency work. We also do have a time and material contract for our customer calls, what we call our core work, our other work. And there's a limited number of crews on that. And we have a time and material contract for that work.

Q. So can you just explain, if it's a contract for fixed price, where do the increases come

in?
A. (Sankowich) Yeah. Every year we annually go out and get a price, market price, from all of our vendors that are qualified to bid on our work, and that fixed price is annually for all of the work related to that year. So overall prices may change from year to year based on the quantity of work that's going out to bid and a lot of the back-end costs on the vendor side. So they've seen increases in insurance or labor. Those costs are included in the fixed price cost they put in and get awarded for work.
Q. So you're telling me that, even though it's called a fixed price contract, it has accelerators in it that allow the price to rise?
A. (Sankowich) No, that's not correct. So we annually get -- accept a price. We put out an RFP for proposal for the work and our vendors submit a price back. We then accept that price, and then it's a fixed price for all of the work in that work package.
So then it is up to the vendor to do all

of the work to specification. We don't dictate how many removals or how much pruning occurs, other than they must meet specifications, which we audit a hundred percent of their work before payment. So that price is fixed and it's -- it does not escalate.

Q. So have you experienced unexpected increases in cost so far this year?

A. (Sankowich) Yes. In 2020 we have seen a request for increased prices as well due to labor. Our vendors are looking to keep the existing workforce employed doing our work, and in order to do that they have had to increase pricing.

They've also seen some increase in insurance pricing and other costs on their back end. When we saw an increase in price, we asked what the drivers were to pricing, and we received statement letters from each of our vendors on what's driving their price increase.

Q. So that's in response to a request for proposals that you're getting these increased

prices?
A. (Sankowich) Correct. So when we put the request for proposal out, we got pricing that was outside of our expected realm of pricing. In order to figure out what the drivers were for that increased pricing, we asked for breakdown of costs per vendor that were submitted to our procurement team to review.
We looked at past five-year costs and, you know, inflation related to those. And if they were outside of normal window, we sought to get some explanation on the drivers of those cost increases.
Q. And roughly what percentage cost increase are you looking at then in this year's bids?
A. (Sankowich) It varies by vendor. But it was at least a 3 percent increase on our regular pruning work. You know, certain types of work had a larger increase based on workforce availability and other factors known to the vendors.
Q. Does the Company foresee any costs or schedule impacts in any of the vegetation activities due to the COVID-19 event? And if

so, would you please explain the possible impacts and the measures the Company is implementing or planning to implement to mitigate those impacts.

A. (Sankowich) There was a record -- there was a discovery request related to this, and my answer for 114 has not changed. We do not see an impact at this time related to the pandemic. We still anticipate to get all work done. We are slightly ahead of schedule right now.

We did have to change some of our processes for notification to public and customers of the work that needed to be done. So we had to switch from an in-person, knocking-on-the-door process to a phone process and electronic authorization of pruning and removals.

But that went -- that switchover was done right at the very beginning. That process has already been worked through, so we are all schedule and don't anticipate any other problems.

Q. Based on successfully completing --

MS. ROSS: Sorry.

MR. EPLER: One moment. One moment. Just to -- if I could just clarify for the record, the witness referred to a discovery request, and I believe that, to make the record clear, that discovery request was asked and answered in Docket 20-027, which is the VM -- the vegetation -- the docket where the vegetation management report is filed.

MS. ROSS: Thank you.

BY MS. ROSS:

Q. Based on successfully completing the 2020 SRP mileage of 34.7 miles, what is the anticipated completion time frame for the overall SRP program, and will 2021 have the same or reduced mileage in the SRP initiative?

A. (Sankowich) We anticipate to finish the 2020 SRP work by December 31st of 2020. And our 2021 expected mileage and work is consistent with our 10-year program, approximately 30 miles of storm resiliency program work. (connectivity issue)

(Court Reporter interrupts.)
Q. That was 30 miles not 3.
A. Three, zero. Thirty. And it will be -- it is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2021 as of right now.
Q. In last year's EDC Docket 19-111, Order 26, 278 noted the need for the Company to reduce or mitigate customer demand during peak use in order to stabilize or lower transmission costs. In Lisa Glover's testimony on Bates Page 079, which I'm not sure now what page that is, the Company discusses the 15 percent increase in RNS rates for the 2021 year.
What is the present and projected RNS rate?
A. (Glover) The -- can you hear, me? I just want to double check.
Q. Yes.
A. (Glover) The current RNS rate, effective June 1st, 2020, is $129.26.
Q. And what's the unit on that rate? For what?
A. (Glover) Kilowatt year.
Q. And the forecasted -- the current and forecasted LNS rate?

A. (Glover) So we obtain LNS service from Eversource, and we are taking Category A network service, which means that what we're paying to them is based on a load ratio share percentage times their revenue requirement. So if we had firm point-to-point service, there would be an LNS rate. But because we are taking Category A network service, it is not a specific rate. I do know what the firm point-to-point rate is, but that's not what we're paying.

Q. And based on your percentage times revenue requirement, can you back out the functional rate?

A. (Glover) It's going to vary, because what we do is we provide to Eversource on a monthly basis what our peak load is coincident with what the system load is for Eversource, and then they give us that percentage. I mean, I could give you a number. It's going to probably be in that ballpark. But if I take their revenue requirement and divide it by that percentage, it would give you a number, but it's -- on the average right now, we're

paying roughly around $325,000 a month for that service. And that is because the revenue requirement has gone up since the last time we got a revenue requirement, which would have been -- they change it generally in June of every year.

What they've decided to do is -- actually, they change it in January and then they change it again in June. What they've decided to do for us is they're going to keep the revenue requirement what it's been since January until the end of the year because they're unsure of what the load is going to be for the rest of the year with the COVID would be my assumption.

Q. So what is the megawatt reduction in 2019 attributed to the initiative, the demand response initiative, as well as any 2020 residential involvement in that initiative?

A. (Glover) Regarding the peak demand energy efficiency initiative, Unitil had a summer goal in 2019 of 1800 kilowatts, and their actual was 1185. And there was one event called last year on July 30th, and there were

four customers that participated.

In 2020 they had, in this report that they filed under -- give me one second. I wrote it down. Hold on. I can pull it up. Got it right here.

(Pause)

So they filed this report, called the 2020 Demand Reduction Initiative Supplemental Information under NH PUC Docket DE 17-136. And they had initially put a 2020 goal in for 2.7 megawatts for the C&I, and that would have been nine customers. And they had a residential goal of .9-megawatts for 500 customers. And for the residential, that would have been Wi-Fi thermostats primarily. What I am hearing now is that they updated the goal for residential to be zero; and for C&I, the goal is seven customers and 2.11 megawatts.

Q. Why were the goals updated? Do you know?

A. (Glover) The goals were updated for residential. Trying to -- the goals were updated for residential because they had some logistical issues with Wi-Fi for the

residential customers because I guess they're using something Google. They were using the Nest thermostat, and Google was auditing those pieces of equipment for cyber security purposes. So they weren't able to kind of get that off the ground is what I was told.

And they had been looking at batteries for the residential sector, and they were trying to find an implementation vendor who would take on a very -- a lot of -- trying to figure out how to word this -- several small entities where it made it worth it for them to actually roll out the program. So, you know, being a small customer, they wanted to try to get a whole bunch of them together. It just -- my understanding is it just didn't get off the ground for residential.

I was told that they may call an event today and that there may possibly be some residential customers who will respond. It would be outside of this program, per se, but they may be trying to test that a little bit with the thermostat for some residential.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

I notice you said that the demand was 1185, whereas the target was 1800. I assume that has to be COVID-related. Is that the case? I mean, how much of that --

A. (Glover) I do not know why they reduced the demand specifically. I have heard that one of the things that they find is when they set the goal, the customers, when they respond -- first off, not all customers respond because it's not mandatory.

And then while they say they may reduce a certain volume of energy, they don't necessarily get to that point. So sometimes whatever they commit to isn't what they actually end up reducing.

MS. ROSS: Kurt, do you have any follow-up on these areas?

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Mr. Demmer, you're on mute.

MR. DEMMER: Sorry. Can you hear me okay?

MS. ROSS: Yes.

MR. DEMMER: Okay. I just have one follow-up for Sara.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY MR. DEMMER:

Q. Sara, the report comes out around April of, say, for example, for the forecasted year for 2019, which is what we're looking back on, the report comes out around April of 2019; correct?

A. (Sankowich) We file in February, I believe.

Q. Okay. And when does -- when do you do -- (connectivity issue)

(Court Reporter interrupts.)

Q. When do you do your fixed price bidding for 2019 work for the short cycle pruning?

A. (Sankowich) Our cycle pruning work goes out to bid in the last quarter of the year before. So, for 2019, it went out to bid starting in September, October time frame of 2018.

Q. Okay. So I guess that's why Anne probably asked about escalators, because that amount that you had received in 2018 for 2019 work came out of 2018 bid pricing, and you had put in your report that number for the short cycle pruning; correct?

A. (Sankowich) I'm not a hundred percent sure I follow, but perhaps I can clarify. We go out to bid in September, October time frame. We give them a window of time to look at the work. They provide their pricing, you know, right after Thanksgiving time frame. We accept pricing from the vendor, and at that point pricing will go into effect first of January for 2019. And that price remains in effect for all work under that fixed price contract until the end of December 2019, at which point the new prices for 2020 would go into effect for work that went out to bid in October time frame of 2019.

Q. And that price that you're talking about that started in January of 2019, you put that price into your projected cost for 2019 in your report in February of 2019; correct?

A. (Sankowich) Correct.

Q. You reported in 2018 and you report on what you're going to spend in 2019.

So I guess my question is when you talk about having increased costs in these items such as healthcare costs and the such that

would be covered under the fixed price, how do those cycle trim costs get increased after the fact when it was a fixed price cost and it came in and you had actually just reported what you got for a cost from the vendor?

A. (Sankowich) That's a great question. Yes. Certain pieces of our process happen during the calendar year of 2019. So cycle pruning work, whatever is put out for the fixed cycle, we get the pricing back beforehand. But things like SRP and other miscellaneous projects for mid cycle or reliability work, those occur during the year. So our prices for those are not quite known.

The other factor that comes into play is that our budgeting process occurs in September of 2019 -- 2018, September of 2018 for all of 2019 work. So we are estimating what we expect the pricing to be at that point.

So what you see in the budgets is a combination of expected pricing, actual realized pricing that we have gotten back from the vendor before the time of filing,

and estimated for the remainder of 2019.
Q. But SRP in those other items you talked about, the increased costs, those are separate line items, correct, mid-cycle pruning, SRP?
A. (Sankowich) Yes, that's correct. They do contribute to the total overage for all of the VMP components.
Q. Okay. So just getting back to that, so what you're saying is the price you get back from the vendor in November of 2018, that price was not utilized in the report in February of 2019 to the actual price bid that the short cycle pruning was going to be? Can you use the budget instead rather than the actual bid cost?
A. (Sankowich) Let me just verify that.
(Pause)
That's correct. Yes. So the price reflected in the report for last year, for what we expected to spend for 2019, included the budgeted costs. It did not factor in all the additional costs for cycled pruning. We were still under negotiation and not sure if

we could absorb that cost through other portions of the VMP. So it did -- it was based off of our budget estimate. Correct.

Q. Okay. Thank you, Sara. That's all I have.

CROSS-EXAMINATION (CONT'D)

BY MS. ROSS:

Q. One additional question. And I'm not sure of the Bates page because this relates to the old Bates number. But it is LSG-2, Page 3 of 4. And the question is please explain the large estimated payment of $2.67 million that's designated for June 2020 on that schedule. I think it's Bates Page 67 on Exhibit 1, but I may be wrong on that.

A. (Glover) Yes, I can explain that. That is -- that includes what we put in as a $2.35 million true-up that we estimated that we would have from Eversource for our LNS service. And that true-up actually ended up becoming about 2.674 million when we got the actual billing.

Q. So why would the LNS service true-up be so large? How does that happen?

I mean, you're billed something like

$300,000 a month. So that's --
A. (Glover) Yes.
Q. -- that's a lot if that's your monthly -- I mean, that would be, what, three-something million a year, right?
A. (Glover) That's correct. Eversource notified us that the true-up was going to be large, and the reason for that is the revenue requirement was higher than originally estimated and that the loads were quite a bit lower than they had expected in 2019.
MS. ROSS: Okay. I think that is it for Staff's questions of these witnesses. Thank you.
CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Commissioner Bailey.
INTERROGATORIES BY COMMISSIONERS
BY COMMISSIONER BAILEY:
Q. Thank you. Good afternoon. Ms. Sankowich, I want to just -- one final, hopefully, follow-up on the difference between the price that you knew you received on the bid and the budget costs that you put in your filing. Why did you do that?

A. (Sankowich) I think because of the process of generating the report, it occurs earlier. I'm looking back through all of my reports to see if this was an anomaly. But, you know, it appears that the template that we've used in the past takes our proposed budget, what the Company has proposed as a budget, and lists that for our next year's proposal when we file in February.

So I have made a note just to check and, when possible, use actual pricing if that pricing is in in time to help true up and make it a little bit more accurate at the time of proposal. But that's how we had been filing in the past as our practice.

Q. So did that happen this year?

A. (Sankowich) 2020, yes, it did.

Q. Do you know what the price difference is going to be between what you budgeted and what the actual cost is? Is it a similar order of magnitude from last year?

A. (Sankowich) See if I can pull that up quickly here.

MR. EPLER: Chairwoman Martin, I

just want to note for the record, I lost the transmission somewhere between the end of Mr. Demmer's questions and the beginning of Commissioner Bailey's questions. I think I know where things are, but not what's been said. So I don't think we need to repeat anything. I just want to note it in case we do have to review something.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Commissioner Bailey had asked follow-up questions related to -- (connectivity issue) -- and reporting. And I think she had asked only two so far. Did you catch those, or would you like a recap?

MR. EPLER: I definitely caught the second one. I'm not sure if I caught the first. But I think, based on the second one, I understand where we are, so I don't need clarification at this point. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank you.

A. (Sankowich) So after review, it appears that I did true it up to the best of our knowledge at the time when we filed in February.

Typically we had our cycle prune at about 1.1 million in past years. But due to overages in 2019 and the pricing that we had received and had a contract firm for at the time of preparing this report, we noted that there was an overage.

So in this year's proposal, you'll note that it's at 1.49. So we did include some increase. I don't have the full amount at hand right now, but I can tell you that we've had quite a number of hazard trees this year as well, and we are on track to meet and possibly exceed some of the hazard tree mitigation as well.

So we are looking at another year of definitely meeting our total and will try to keep it as minimal as possible for any overages. But that number of 1.49 is adjusted for some of the cost increases we've seen.

BY COMMISSIONER BAILEY:

Q. Okay. Thanks.

Ms. Glover, I was shocked to hear that the FERC-approved transmission rate is $129

and something per kilowatt year compared to last year, which was 111-something, wasn't it?

A. (Glover) You are correct. It was 111-something. 111.94.

Q. Okay. So why has the cost of that rate increased so significantly in a year?

A. (Glover) From what I could tell, is when I compared the two rates and the components that go into it, the total New England revenue requirement had gone up 10 percent and the New England loads had decreased 5 percent. And so the way that that rate is calculated is it takes the revenue requirement and it's dividing the -- divided by the New England loads. So with the revenue requirement going up and the loads going down, it increased that rate 15 percent.

Q. Do you know why the revenue requirement went up 10 percent? I mean, what got built last year?

A. (Glover) That I could not answer for you without going through their filing.

Q. Okay. So the primary increase in the rate that we are being asked to approve, which is more than a penny per kilowatt hour, is because of this increase that FERC approved from $111 per kilowatt year to $129 per kilowatt year, and you're passing that through; is that correct?
A. (Glover) That's correct.
Q. Okay. Thank you.
Ms. McNamara, in your testimony on Page 12, Line -- starting at Line 9, it seems to suggest that the average residential class bill will increase by 6.7 percent. Do you see that?
A. (McNamara) Not yet. Sorry. Could you repeat the page reference?
Q. Page 12, Bates Page 12, Exhibit 1.
A. (McNamara) I'm sorry. I'm looking at the old page numbers. I'm sorry about that. Okay. I'm there. I'm sorry.
Q. Okay. So on Line 9 going on to Line 10, it says that the average bill increase as a result of the transmission increase is about 6.7 percent for the residential class. Do

you see that?
A. (McNamara) Yes.
Q. All right. Now, if you go to your schedule on Page 31, I think that that shows that it's not really the bill that's increasing by 6.7 percent, it's the rate that's increasing by 6.7 percent. And I just want you to confirm that that is correct.
A. (McNamara) I'm referencing Bates Page 31 of 163. The 6.7 percent that's shown is the increase on the typical bill for a 650-kilowatt-hour residential customer taking default service. It is a $7 and I believe it says 14 cent increase.
Q. Okay. I see that now. Wow. So FERC has raised our bill, our residential bill, by 6.7 percent; is that correct?
A. (McNamara) Yes. The increase as a result of the EDC is shown on that same table at 6.8 percent, with a slight decrease in the stranded cost charge.
Q. All right. Thank you.
Okay. I'd like to turn -- the questions are probably going to be for Mr. Letourneau.

But I want to ask some questions about the SAIDI and SAIFI and your goals.

Actually, if we can turn to Exhibit 2, Page 11, please. I think that was -- somebody else took responsibility for that page. It says under Paragraph 2.4, third sentence, "Unitil is experiencing less damage during storm events, resulting in a quicker restoration and the ability to send line and tree crews to our neighboring utilities to assist with their restoration."

Do you see that? Is that Mr. Debski's responsibility?

A. (Sankowich) That's under my testimony, that report.

Q. All right. Thank you.

So at what point do we know that we've spent enough money to have adequate storm restoration results, and not so much money that we are so good that we can send your New Hampshire crews to your affiliates?

A. (Sankowich) Excellent question. That is the exact same question we were looking to answer this year. When do we get to diminishing

returns from this program where the cost to do it doesn't result in any measurable increase of reliability and, you know, it's not worth spending that money.

So this past year, we hired a consultant company to come in and perform an analysis of the program, looking at the work that we have done to date using our work management software, our OMS -- or outage management system -- and our customer information system, looking at their numbers of customer calls and where damage occurred. We lined that up with where customers had refused work and where we had done regular pruning and storm resiliency work to try to figure out if there was a measurable change where we did storm resiliency work, and which circuits performed exceedingly well and which didn't have as well of results and which underperformed.

So that review was put in place. We did get results back from the consultant. However, the pandemic happened between then and we have not had an opportunity to sit

down with the consultants to review the report with them.

But preliminary findings were that the storm resiliency program did have a benefit in the areas that it was done. And it was a big enough benefit for the cost that Unitil could continue with a 10-year program, but would need to re-evaluate whether or not this would be beneficial on single-phase portions of lines. So a preliminary analysis of that on three-phase, it was giving a beneficial result related to the numbers of interruptions that we're seeing reduced.

Does that help answer your question?

Q. A little bit. But if we look at Page 20 -- can you give me one second, please?

(Pause)

Okay. So this shows the results of the program. Now, you keep referring to a 10-year program. And I think I heard that you said before the 10-year -- is the 10 years up in 2021? Or is it in 2025, and that's why we're looking at 2015 to 2019 here?

A. (Sankowich) This chart on Page 20 is historical performance for this system. It is not particularly to the storm resiliency program. It does include the circuits that underwent, but it does not exclude circuits that did not undergo.

And the second part of the question is the 10-year program that began in 2012, so final year should be in '22.

Q. And that's the storm resiliency program that's on a 10-year path?

A. (Sankowich) Correct.

Q. Okay. But this chart that shows the impact on duration of minutes customers are out and on the frequency, how many times a year they experience an outage, includes the storm resiliency results and all the other things that you're doing; right?

A. (Sankowich) Correct. Yeah. This includes all of the vegetation management work on the storm resiliency. Also includes regular pruning. It includes all outages, not just vegetation management-related outages and all, you know, reliability improvement

programs.
Q. Okay. So I'm -- Mr. Letourneau, did I see your hand up?
A. (Letourneau) Yes. I also wanted to point out that that reliability chart does take into account normal exclusions. So major weather events, major storm events which the SRP is -- you know, has a significant impact on our major storm events, would be excluded from that chart. So it doesn't always necessarily measure every single tree-related outage except for that we have it. It actually removes a large percentage of anything that meets that major event date per the IEEE standard.
Q. Okay. On Page 31 of Exhibit 2, I think it says that the Company's goal for duration was 147.45 minutes. And the table on Page 20 or the graph on Page 20 shows that since 2015, the duration has gone from 112.37 minutes to 82.53 minutes.
So why is the goal so high, and why are we spending money if we've been under that goal for a long time?

A. (Letourneau) So I'm trying to find the reference to the page, the original page you stated.
Q. Page 31, where it says what the goal is? Is that --
A. (Sankowich) It's under Section 2, Reliability Goals. It says, "The UES Capital system reliability goals for 2019 has been set at 147.45 SAIDI minutes."
Q. Where are you? On what page is that? Is that Page 31?
A. (Sankowich) That is the top of Page 31.
Q. Thank you.
A. (Sankowich) Is that the one you're referencing?
Q. Yes.
A. (Letourneau) Yeah. So these goals that are stated here in this section, engineering does an analysis every year and looks at our -- essentially our SAIDI history year over year, and, you know, basically does some calculations internally to set the goal up by Company. So this particular one that you've identified, Commissioner Bailey, as Sara just

pointed out, is for just the UES Capital system. And I think the previous graph that was shown was the total system reliability. So that would be across both Capital and Seacoast. And I believe it also includes our total electric reliability, which also brings in our reliability from Massachusetts. So that --

Q. Okay. So let's look at Page 21 then, which is the Capital graph. And you started in 2015 with 122 minutes for SAIDI, and you're down to 103 minutes for SAIDI in the Capital region. And the goal -- the stated goal is 147 minutes?

A. (Letourneau) I see -- yeah, I see SAIDI at 103.

Q. Yup.

A. (Letourneau) And you said the goal was 147? Is that what you just looked at?

Q. Yes.

A. (Letourneau) Yup. And I'm sorry. What was your question?

Q. Well, the question is how much money do we need to spend? And if you achieved the goal

in 2015, you're under the goal in 2015, either the goal needs to be changed or you're spending too much money. Which is it?

A. (Letourneau) Well, like I said, the goal is adjusted every year based on our history. And, you know, I don't know if -- again, engineering develops this particular report, and they do an analysis and they go back in time. So every year they're going back and looking at our particular goals that we set and where we ended up, and then we always select a target based on that history.

And so some years we meet that target and other years we don't meet that target. And it just so happens that you're selecting 2019. 2019 was the best record reliability that we ever had as an organization, and so it just was an incredible year.

And a lot has to do, yes, with our tree-trimming program and with our capital spending and projects that we're doing with reliability, in regard to the liability. But a lot has to do with the number of storms that we have that don't meet exclusionary

criteria. So those are those small, little thunderstorms that come through, and they never reach that exclusive number. And so when we have a bunch of those little storms and they do not meet the exclusionary criteria, they get added into our normal day in and day out SAIDI.

In 2019, in terms of weather, we had an extremely good weather year except for when we did have bad weather, it affected our systems significantly enough so that it became an exclusionary event. So our reliability last year was, again, was a record across all three of our regions, Capital, Seacoast and in Massachusetts.

So that's telling me that we just had a very good year in terms of those small scale events in weather so it was just a good weather year.

Q. Can you look at Page 21.

A. (Letourneau) Page 21?

Q. Yes.

COMMISSIONER BAILEY: I see you, Ms. Sankowich. I'll get to you in a second.

BY COMMISSIONER BAILEY:
Q. So you say 2019 was the best year ever, but look at 2016.
A. (Letourneau) And again, this is -- when I say it's the best, I was speaking to just our entire system SAIDI across our 105,000 electric customers. So from that perspective, the individual companies may not have had their best year. You may have Capital that had a really good year in 2016, but then the other two regions may have had bad years. And so this year, 2019, if you looked across the entire spectrum, the three companies both had -- all three companies had such good reliability, that it ended up for 105,000 customers, our system reliability was the best that we've had in at least as far back as our data went.
Q. Okay. I can see -- if you go to Page 20, that's the -- the system --
A. (Letourneau) 21, yes. Twenty, yeah, that's the system number.
Q. Okay.
A. (Letourneau) So you can see that we had

82.53. And the year you picked, 2016, was a good year, you're right, but it wasn't the best. We must have had another Company that year that had a worse year. This year was the year that all three came together. Excuse me.

Q. So this graph on Page 20 includes Unitil systems that are not New Hampshire?

A. (Letourneau) Again, I can take that as a record request. The engineers put these graphs together, and I wasn't involved in the data analysis for this. So I'd have to ask. I'm reading really quick here what they have. It looks like it is. This is just New Hampshire. So I take that back because it says the following chart has SAIDI and SAIFI for UES. So they must take out Massachusetts.

Q. Okay. So, Ms. Sankowich, do you have something you want to add to this right now?

A. (Sankowich) Yes. I just wanted to follow up on your question about, you know, spending to drive down the reliability. Again, as Ray pointed out, this doesn't include the storm

response. Those are taken out. So a lot of tree-related work is related to the storm response, so you're not going to see the effect of that in this graph. So --

Q. How else are we supposed to measure it?

A. (Sankowich) That's why we hired the consultants to take a look at it from a holistic, you know, what the customer experiences as an outage as opposed to just, you know, what our reliability metrics are saying. So, you know, a customer may experience an outage, and that might be exclusionary in this chart, but they still experienced that outage.

So that's why we used our OMS system, as well as our customer information system, to really capture everything that the customer is experiencing, not just, you know, the actual ones that affect us from a reliability measurement standpoint.

Q. All right. I have some more questions about this, but I think Commissioner Giaimo had a follow-up he wanted to insert.

INTERROGATORIES BY COMMISSIONER GIAIMO:

Q. I just want to make sure I understand. Can you compare and contrast the size of the Capital district versus the Hampton-Exeter area? Is it -- are they comparable? It would just help better understand the chart on Bates 20.

A. (Letourneau) Yes. The Seacoast area has approximately 45,000 customers. The Capital region has approximately 30,000 customers. And interestingly enough, just in observation, those two regions couldn't be more different in terms of weather. You know, the Seacoast will be getting a heavy wet snow event or rain event, and the Capital region is getting 12 inches of powder. Or the Seacoast is getting a bunch of winds right off the ocean, and Capital is not seeing anything. So they're very different in their -- even though they're only 50 miles apart, their weather experience are quite dramatically different.

Q. Okay. And you're confident saying that Bates 20, where it says Unitil Energy Systems, that does not include Fitchburg?

A. (Letourneau) Yes, I'm confident.

COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: All right. Thank you.

Thank you, Commissioner Bailey.

BY COMMISSIONER BAILEY:

Q. Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner, I think Mr. Demmer may have also had his hand raised.

All right, Mr. Demmer. We can't hear you. We can't hear you.

MR. DEMMER: Sorry. Mine was just basically clarification based on the Capital system is based on a five-year rolling average which some of the years have dropped off. So that's part of why it's not exactly transparent and why it's so high is the five-year rolling average on the graph?

WITNESS LETOURNEAU: I believe that's true. But, I mean, our goals aren't set on a five-year average, but they're set -- some -- you know, again, I don't know the math behind it, Kurt. But the engineers do that. But that's correct. They do use a

moving average to select their targets every year.
BY COMMISSIONER BAILEY:
Q. Okay. So if we go back to the chart on Page 20, that's the New Hampshire system average for SAIDI and SAIFI. Is there a goal for SAIFI? Can people hear me?
A. (Letourneau) Sorry. I was on mute there.
There is a goal for -- yes, there always is a goal for SAIFI. We establish a goal of SAIDI, and then they back into the SAIFI and the CAIDI. So we set a goal for all three and track that on a weekly basis throughout the year.
Q. Do you know what the goal is for the year?
A. (Letourneau) For 2020?
Q. Well, for 2019. Yeah, for 2020 or for 2019. I mean, the goal changes every year?
A. (Letourneau) Yes. Yeah, the goal changes every year. Again, you know, we're constantly striving to get to a certain point. But the goal -- our trend over the last 10 years has been down, so we're constantly tightening up that target

internally. We have a system goal and then we have, you know, regional goals, that each of the managers is trying to reach their regional goal. But then for the system, everybody's involved in the system goals. So we do have goals.

Q. Okay. What's the regional goal for SAIDI for 2020, the New Hampshire regional goal?

A. (Letourneau) That might take me a minute.

Q. I'm going to ask you for the same thing for SAIFI and CAIDI.

A. (Letourneau) So, for 2020, the system goal is 118 minutes for SAIDI.

Q. A hundred eighteen?

A. (Letourneau) hundred eighteen. For Capital, the SAIDI goal -- again, this is just SAIDI -- is 144 minutes. For our Seacoast, the SAIDI goal is 114 minutes.

Q. Okay. Can I ask you why -- is the Seacoast goal 114 minutes because --

A. (Letourneau) Yes.

Q. -- the Seacoast is already better than the Capital?

A. (Letourneau) Yes. But as I stated earlier,

they use a trending line to look at their reliability. And so Seacoast has had better reliability in the past, and so we continually -- again, we're seeking to have continuous improvement with our reliability, and we continually move that graph as we see necessary, continually trying to find improvements.

Q. Okay. So you say that the Capital goal is 144. And the Capital on Page 21, Capital region SAIDI, the results, except for 2017, were well under 144.

A. (Letourneau) Under 144...

Q. Do you see that?

A. (Letourneau) On Page -- on what page are you on again?

Q. Twenty-one.

A. Twenty-one. Yeah, got it.

Q. It's the results for the Capital --

A. (Letourneau) Yes.

Q. -- region. And if you look at SAIDI, every year except for 2017 is well under 144.

A. (Letourneau) Yes. Looks like 2017 we are at 155.

Q. Right.
A. (Letourneau) And so that seems to set the trend line. And then they went to -- and again, this is showing five years. I don't know if the engineers are using 10 years of data. But I know if you go back, you know, the previous five years, it's quite a bit higher. But I do know the target is brought down. You know, it has been brought down because our trend line has always been going down even though we do have these flipped.
Pardon me?
Q. Is this -- as Mr. Demmer pointed out, is this a five-year rolling average, these numbers? So in 2015, the five-year average for SAIDI was 122 minutes?
A. (Letourneau) I don't believe this is a rolling average. I believe this is the actual performance of those -- of that -- of -- you know, our system is actual and by region is actual. I don't believe it's a rolling average. Those are the actual SAIDI and SAIFI numbers that we achieved that particular year. The target may be

established year-to-year using a rolling average. That's what I was referring to.
Q. Okay. And then if we go to the next page, that's the Seacoast system. And those numbers are much lower. And you said that the goal for the Seacoast is 114 minutes, and you've been under 114 minutes every year since 2015.
So if the goal is 114 minutes for SAIDI, are we spending too much money on this program?
A. (Letourneau) Where are you seeing -- I'm sorry. I didn't see the Seacoast chart in here.
Q. Page 22.
A. (Letourneau) Page 22?
Q. Yes.
A. (Letourneau) Page 22. Oh, yes. I have it.
So the SAIFI for Seacoast has been running around -- sorry. SAIDI --
Q. Yeah.
A. (Letourneau) -- has been running right around a hundred and change until 2019, where we came back underneath. You know, again, we

had a very good year.
Q. Yeah. But it's all -- all those years are under your goal of 114?
A. (Letourneau) Again, they are. But I think if you looked at how we do the math and calculate the target, you have to go back. You know, the last five years have been very good for us. You go back 10 years, 5 years prior to this, you'll see quite a bit higher numbers. Again, the engineers have a methodology. And I apologize. I was not the witness involved in preparing these charts. I just know how they do it. And I believe they do use 10 years of data to create the target.

You know, there is some subjectivity to the target as well. It's not a straight math calculation. They do include various things in that.
Q. Well, I don't want to denigrate the fact that you achieved your goal. That's awesome. But at some point we need to think about the cost benefit. And there was some -- I looked at something. Let me see if I can find it in my

notes.
A. (Sankowich) Again, I'll point out that this chart does not show the effects of a major storm or -- so, you know, any of the reliability work done to show -- to improve our response time in storms is not shown on this chart. So it's just the regular maintenance work.
Q. Okay. Is there a way that you can think of that we can look at the impact on storms from all the work that you're doing?
A. (Letourneau) Yes. In fact, Sara has alluded to the fact that we hired a third-party consultant to come in and evaluate that exact question, to make sure that the trimming that we are doing, including the SRP, is providing us with the benefit that we think it's providing us. So that is -- again, we know that when we have major events, large storms, we know that we're going to need outside resources to repair damage and restore customers.
We want to try to prevent as much of that damage as we can prior to the storm

moving in, which is why we have the SRP, or at least minimize the damage. Therefore, we won't need as many crews. Our duration will be shorter. We will be able to, you know, restore service to our customers as quickly as possible, you know, return everything, you know, public safety-wise, et cetera.

And so that's kind of the goal of the SRP. And we had evidence internally where we've, you know, had storms in the vicinity of a circuit that we just did SRP on. And Sara has done some analysis on that, which I think, I believe that was presented before.

But we're now bringing in a consultant to review a bunch of data from our outage management system on the various storms that we have had in our system, the number of troubles that we've experienced, to try to demonstrate that the SRP is having that exact intended effect and it is cost-effective to do.

A. (Sankowich) I can explain to you how we have made a new chart which would be what you were looking for, I think.

Basically, you know, we wanted to predict what the outages would have been without the storm resiliency program so you can measure how effective that has been. So, as Ray talked about, when we have storms, if we are avoiding outages, we're trying to figure out how many outages did we avoid. It's very difficult to prove that we avoided, you know, an outage because it didn't occur.

So what we do -- what we did in this study was we took the outages that happened on the portions of the circuit that did not have SRP programs but were adjacent spatially, so they were receiving the same wind and weather conditions. And we looked at how many outages were occurring per mile on those areas against the neighboring areas which had storm resiliency program work done, and then they came up with a figure for how many outages, you know, would have been avoided based on the conditions of all the other areas that didn't see work.

And so then that was done for all of those circuits that we've done work on since

2012, and you can compare the year before work done and successive years after to see how well that investment holds over time and how much outages you're avoiding in that time frame.

So basically we've been making that chart that you see on Page 20. But you're having a floating line of where reliability would have been without doing that storm resiliency work, based on all outages, not just for major events excluded. So there was two tables: One for all of the outages and then one for exclusionary out of there.

So that's what we will be finalizing once that report is completely finished. We've got -- you know, we went through all of the stages of gathering this data and working with the vendor, asking questions about are they understanding this information correctly. We're just really waiting for the final result to be completely wrapped up once we gave them some clarifying information on misunderstandings or interpretations of data.

Q. And we don't have that in this filing; right?

A. (Sankowich) Correct. You know, I have a preliminary version of it, but it's not completed for filing. But we should be able to provide it shortly once it gets reviewed. We have to set up a meeting with the vendor.
Q. Okay. And Mr. Letourneau, if I went through the same questions regarding SAIFI and CAIDI, would the answers be similar?
You're on -- you're still on mute.
A. (Letourneau) I'm sorry. I didn't understand your question, Commissioner Bailey.
Q. If we looked at the goals for SAIFI and we looked at the tables on Pages 20 through 22 for SAIFI, would the results be similar? Are you doing as well on SAIFI with meeting your goals or exceeding the goals as you are with SAIDI?
A. Well, SAIFI and SAIDI are, you know, fairly well intertwined. We do measure them separately because, you know, we -- SAIFI is a measure of frequency. And so if we're seeing an increase in our SAIFI, ultimately we'll see an increase in SAIDI. So to measure the difference is looking at, again,

frequency.

And it's not -- right now, about somewhere around 50 percent of outages are tree-related outages, which means that, you know, we have another 50 percent of lots of other things: Failing equipment, birds, motor vehicle accidents, et cetera. So the purpose of having us measure this reliability, this is -- that chart -- those charts that you're looking at are measuring our day in and day out reliability. They're not really measuring the storm type of reliability.

Sara's program that she has for the SRP and what she just described was really looking at when we have those storm events, how our system is performing during those major storm events. Because those events are when our customers are really probably most apprehensive. Most anxiety that we have with municipal officials, with customers, is when we have these major storms coming in. And when power goes off, people want to know, you know, how quickly is it going to be on.

And so the SRP was originally designed for specifically that purpose, which was we know we're going to have damage. You can't totally avoid damage. This is New England, and there are lots of trees. But if we can minimize it, instead of having 50 broken poles, we might only have 10. And so we'll be able to restore hopefully quicker than everybody else and have less occurrences in frequency.

So, again, the measure of the day in and day out reliability is frequency, yes. You want to see your safety numbers come down which will translate to SAIFI -- SAIDI, assuming your CAIDI, which is the duration. So that's how quickly your linemen are getting to the scene, how quickly can they make it safe, how quickly can they do something temporary, get customers off, sectionalize. Those are the things that we train our linemen in, to try to pick up as many customers as we can while we're finalizing repairs, et cetera. All of those things play into all of these numbers. And

in operations, that's, you know, one of our primary goals is reliability.
Q. Okay.
A. (Letourneau) Don't know if that answered your question.
Q. I think what we need to do is figure out a way to measure the impact of duration of storm-related outages, I guess, because it looks like the reliability, if you exclude the major storms, is where it needs to be. Would you agree with that?
A. (Letourneau) I would agree with that statement. You know, we're very, very pleased with where our reliability is. Our system is continually improving. There's a lot of things that the engineering folks are doing, you know, installing multiple fuse locations, reclosers, sectionalizing devices and, you know, smart devices that talk to each other. All of those things are improving day in and day out reliability, so that when we do have an outage, we're impacting a smaller number of customers, or we're pinpointing exactly where the problem

is and we know where to patrol. So we're minimizing -- we're doing all of those things that can minimize patrol time.

It's the storm stuff that I agree that if -- again, Sara specifically brought this in, specifically because of last year. We had a hearing before the Commission last year where I think we were discussing this very thing, and it was clear then that we needed to provide some background and some data and some evidence that we can all hang our hats on that this is doing exactly what we think it was designed to do, and that's what I hope this consultant report is going to show.

Q. Okay. Can we look at Table 15 on Page 18? And I think what this -- are you there, Ms. Sankowich, Mr. Letourneau?

A. (Letourneau) Yes.

Q. And I think what this table is showing is how you evaluate the projects that are proposed for next year and the impact that they will have on reliability. Is that --

A. (Letourneau) That is correct. That is correct.

Q. Okay. So if we look at the first project, we're going to replace some reclosers on Main Street in Chichester. It's going to cost $37,815. How did you determine that that's going to save customer -- 439 customer interruptions a year?

A. (Letourneau) So the way that the engineers develop this table is they look at past outages, outages that have occurred on the system and how by a system improvement eliminate that outage.

And so when they identify this project, they'll say if I had this project, if it was completed and in place and then we had a similar outage, then we would have saved 439 interruptions and 46,125 customer minutes saved. So that's how this table was really put together.

Q. And so the customer minutes saved, just going to open up the calculator, of 46,125 minutes, if you divide that by 439 interruptions, that's 105 minutes per customer?

A. (Letourneau) So that would be a CAIDI of 105. So that means when -- there must be 439

customers served off of in this location. And so that if we have this device, we would save 439 -- those 439 customers would avoid an outage. And on an annual basis, that's 46,125 minutes.

For example, if you had another location where, say you had some issues with, I don't know, squirrels. And every time a squirrel came in, it tripped a recloser offline. So they might say, well, that's happened four times last year. If I had a fuse saver in line and I installed that, that project would cost this much, but then it would save me. These four outages wouldn't happen anymore. So that's how they develop the customer minutes.

So it's different for each one of these. Each one of these would have a different -- because it's based on past history, you know, how long it took us to restore it, how long it took us to respond and get there and fix the problem, and then again, looking at if that event occurred again in the future with this Capital improvement, that outage would

not have occurred, and it would save this many customer minutes.

Q. Okay. And why is that project ranked as the best project on this list of 11?

A. (Letourneau) This doesn't seem to be showing it, but I think they do a -- they do a calculation that is dollars per customer minutes saved or something along those lines. And so this must have been either the most economic one to do -- and again, I apologize. This is not my testimony. This is vice-president Kevin Sprague and his folks do this. But that's -- I'm pretty sure this is how they do this table is they rank it based on dollars and customer minutes saved.

And so if you look at Page 14, there's a chart that they start throwing all the projects in. And when they get to that knee in the curve, they don't go any further because they know that, you know, that you're at that point that you talked about earlier, point of diminishing returns. So they rank all the projects on, you know, cumulative cost versus cumulative customer minutes

saved. And so they do the same calculation to rank these projects.
Q. And so all of these 11 projects are before the knee.
A. (Letourneau) Correct. Yeah. That is correct.
Q. Okay. So let's look back on Page 18, the project that is, just by way of example, No. 5. And it says the project cost is $33,670, but there is a cumulative that's much bigger than that.
A. (Letourneau) So the cumulative is just from the project. All it does is it adds the previous 10 projects. And so they are just showing you the cumulative number as you move down the table.
Q. Oh, so...
A. (Letourneau) So that's why the first number -- yes.
Q. So the cumulative cost is just the running total of all the projects?
A. (Letourneau) Correct.
Q. Okay. I see that. Okay. All right. Thank you. That's why it's -- I was going to ask

you, is it coincidence that 630,397 on Project 11 is the same as the proposed total --
A. (Letourneau) Oh --
Q. -- but I got it.
A. (Letourneau) -- yes, that would explain that.
Q. Okay. So the 11th project, that's the most expensive project, $312,497 --
A. (Letourneau) Yes.
Q. -- is a more expensive project than all the others, and it -- the customer minutes saved are smaller than the second project.
A. (Letourneau) Customer minutes saved, yes. But, again, it's a dollar -- you know, it's customer minutes saved per dollar or dollars per customer minutes saved. I can't remember what they use in terms of their ranking.
Q. But it's an attempt to look at the cost benefit.
A. (Letourneau) Yes. Precisely. That's exactly what the metric is for is the cost benefit.
Q. Okay.
A. (Letourneau) And if you can do something cheaper and you get obviously more benefit,

it's less cost, that's the project we want to do.

Q. Okay. All right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BAILEY: That's all the questions I have, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay Commissioner Giaimo.

MR. EPLER: Madam Chair, if I can just interrupt for a moment. I didn't want to interrupt the line of questioning. I just do want to point out that this report was filed in a separate docket, which is why I don't have Kevin Sprague, vice-president of engineering, available here today, because it wasn't anticipated that we would get into this level of questioning on this.

I can certainly make him available at another time because I think these are important questions. And we can have a more thorough discussion of the goals that we're discussing here and how they're derived and how the projects are ranked and so on.

So I certainly don't want Commissioners to feel that we can't answer

these questions. We just, unfortunately, don't have the absolutely correct person here to respond to that.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Commissioner Bailey, how would you like to proceed on this?

COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Mr. Epler, can you remind me of what the purpose of the other docket is?

MR. EPLER: The other docket, we filed an actual -- actually, this report that you're seeing here, Exhibit 2, vegetation management program and a reliability report. We file it every year in that other docket.

And then what happens in the current docket before you today is the reconciliation, so you see where the dollars are going.

So on Friday, we had an opportunity to sit with Staff for a short period of time and to kind of review some areas of questioning. And Staff indicated that they had some questions concerning the derivation of the dollars associated with the vegetation

management program, so that's why Ms. Sankowich is here today. And I also asked Mr. Letourneau to be here, because if there was going to be more in-depth questioning on vegetation, that they would be able to respond to that.

But again, my apologies. I just didn't anticipate that there would be questions on reliability -- as many questions as you have on reliability. And we're certainly happy to make our staff available to respond to that.

COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Maybe it's my misunderstanding. We're going to approve the vegetation management and the reliability enhancement program in a different docket, and this docket is just reconciling the cost difference between what we collected in rates last year and what we will be collecting in rates going forward?

MR. EPLER: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BAILEY: Okay. I apologize then. So maybe I asked these questions in the wrong docket.

MR. EPLER: No apologies necessary. I mean, to the extent that we're able to assist in your understanding, that's fine. I just did want to point that out, that there is this other docket. And if you'd like to have a hearing in that or ask data requests, absolutely we can do that.

COMMISSIONER BAILEY: All right. Thank you, Mr. Epler. I appreciate the clarification.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: All right. Commissioner Giaimo.

COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: Okay. Thank you.

BY COMMISSIONER GIAIMO:

Q. I think my first question is for Ms. Glover. And then we'll do a free-for-all; whoever feels comfortable answering certainly can.

Ms. Glover, you were -- I believe you were talking with Commissioner Bailey, and Commissioner Bailey had mentioned that, to her astonishment, that the RNS was going up from 129 -- or going to 129.76 from 119.94 per kilowatt year.

I thought I heard you say -- I guess my question here is, and let me know if I heard you right, that the revenue requirement went up 10 percent, but the load went down 5 percent, which explains why the RNS went up approximately 15 percent; is that right?

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Can you see, Ms. Glover?

A. (Glover) Yes. Sorry. I was trying to get myself off mute.

That's correct. I looked at the -- basically what I did was I took a comparison of what ISO puts out for their revenue requirement between 2019 and the most recent 2020, and I just did a straight calculation of what the revenue requirement total is currently versus what the 2019 rate was. And yes, the revenue requirement went up 10 percent and the New England loads went down 5 percent.

Q. And --

A. (Glover) That's a straight calculation to get that RNS rate where they calculate -- they add up the -- they add up the loads and

divide -- or they add up the revenue requirements and divide by the New England load.
Q. Okay. That's great. That's what I thought you were doing.
A. (Glover) Yes.
Q. And I understand there would be caveats. But is it fair to say we could expect something similar next year, that revenue requirements could go up and load be down, specifically in light of the pandemic?
A. (Glover) I would say that's a fair assumption.
Q. Okay. Thank you.
A. (Glover) You're welcome.
Q. I'm sorry. I apologize. I forget who was talking about the residential C&I program -- or I'm sorry, the residential DR program. But I remembered -- I thought I heard -- and Ms. Glover, is that you again?
A. (Glover) That is me, yes. I got some information from Energy Efficiency to be able to hopefully to respond to some questions.
Q. Oh, okay. Okay.

A. Yes.
Q. Well, I think you used the terminology that the residential program -- and this is the term I thought I heard you say -- did not get off -- "did not get off the ground" this past year.
A. (Glover) Right.
Q. What about this year? Will it get off the ground this year?
A. (Glover) Well, the goals that were initially set for this program, as I understand it, was there was a C&I goal only, and that was run in 2019.

In the 2020 filing that they made in February, under that Docket DE 17-136, they did have a 2020 goal, an initial goal in there, where the residential sector was 500 customers and .9 megawatts. That has since been updated, and I don't know if that was through a filing. I don't know where they are in their five-year -- I don't even know if there are even five-year plans anymore in Energy Efficiency. I've been away from there for so long.

But I was told this past week that that goal from 500 customers and .9 megawatts went down to zero, and that is because they were unable to get a residential program off the ground. And that is in large part due to the Wi-Fi thermostats because Google has not been able to -- I guess they're auditing the Nest thermostats for cyber security. And then the other piece of equipment they were going to implement was battery, and they were looking for an implementation vendor that they could set up that would work with manufacturers, who were willing to work with a large group of program administrators to make it worth their while to engage with us and develop a program.

Q. So we're still a couple years out. Fingers crossed?

A. (Glover) I'm not that familiar with that area, so maybe. Maybe you know more about that than I do.

Q. Okay. You also said that -- I think you were referring to the C&I program, that there may be an event today. Did I hear that right?

A. (Glover) Yes. I asked this morning if they were going to be calling an event. And as of this morning, I was told they were planning on calling an event. I don't know since this morning if that actually happened.
Q. Okay. That's fair. Did you think it would be fair to say that if there wouldn't be an event today -- and for the record, it's basically the third day of 90-degree days, so we're kind of in the midst of a heatwave, for lack of a better term -- that if it doesn't happen now, it probably wouldn't happen?
A. (Glover) If it -- I haven't seen the weather for tomorrow. But if it's supposed to be like today, I would say an event would be imminent.
Q. Okay.
A. (Glover) If the weather is not going to be like today tomorrow, then, yeah, probably not.
Q. Okay. So the expectation, though, is that this -- the Company is under the belief that this could be one of the -- this could be one of, if not, the peak day of the year and has

made efforts to activate the C&I so as to mitigate its capacity tag.
A. (Glover) Yes.
Q. All the benefits that flow through that.
A. (Glover) Yes.
Q. Okay. Thank you for that update.
A. (Glover) You're welcome.
Q. Okay. All right. I had a couple questions about things -- I'm sorry. Let me get the right screens going. Couple questions about things that I don't think have been really touched upon but were in testimony.

The HQ Phase 2 agreement, that's set to expire in October 2020. So will next year be the last year costs and revenues associated with that transmission project will be reconciled?
A. (Glover) I didn't hear the second part of that. The HQ will be expiring, yes, this year.
Q. So this year. So there will be a couple of months that will need to be reconciled next year; is that right?
A. (Glover) Those should be done by the end of

this year. Yeah, the rights expire October 31st, and I would expect that it would only take maybe November through December, the end of the year, to be done with those.

Q. Okay. And that would not be reconciled in this docket -- in the equivalent of this docket next year?

A. (Glover) Oh, now I understand your question. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. (Glover) We will have the actuals next year, yes. Correct.

Q. Okay. Has the Company ever done an analysis on the whole to see if the ratepayers are better or worse off having not divested their Phase 2 commitments? Has it cost money or made money over the years?

A. (Glover) I don't know the answer to that question.

Q. Okay.

A. (Glover) I don't know the answer to your question about whether it has made money or lost money.

Q. Okay. On Page 59 of Exhibit 1, there is, on Line 13, net metering credits.
Can you explain the net metering credit, what that means and why it's appeared to have doubled?
A. (Debski) Linda, do you want to take that or me?
A. (McNamara) I'm having trouble finding the reference. Page 59?
Q. I'm sorry. It's actually -- it's Page -- it's the Page 58 of 163, and it has a Bates number -- (connectivity issue) -- Bates number 78 maybe, if that makes sense?
A. (McNamara) Doug, why don't you handle that one then -- (connectivity issue)
(Court Reporter interrupts.)
A. (McNamara) I just wanted to verify the line reference. We were looking at the Line 15, $84,000 and $179,000.
Q. Yes. That was the line at issue.
A. (Debski) Well, those credits are specifically for the new regime net metering customers. So basically every customer that's been connected under net metering since, I think,

2017 is a new regime customer. And every year we do connect new customers. So it's continually continuing to grow.

And the credits include, you know, default service for customers on default service, transmission charges and 25 percent of distribution charges. To the extent that default service charges increase or transmission charges increase, which is what we've seen, the net metering credits will increase accordingly. And, you know, since there's customer growth as well, it's a combination of those two factors.

Q. Thank you. And I guess my question is, is it fair to surmise from this that net metering should almost double?

A. (Debski) I haven't really taken a look at the rates that back up those credits. I think double would be an exaggeration at this point. Yeah, I would say probably less than double.

Q. Okay. So the change --

A. (Debski) On an annual basis, yeah.

Q. Okay. Because just based on straight

numbers, not knowing what's necessarily behind them, going from 84 to 179, increasing by 94,000, seems like a doubling. And it sounds like the number -- the rates we're talking about haven't varied greatly. So I would just think that this would be an indication of participation is expected to double, but it sounds like I can't make that conclusion.

A. (Debski) Not without looking at what happened to the transmission rate and the default service rates and those numbers up.

Q. Yeah. But my understanding is the default service rates have generally gone down and the transmission rates have gone up. If it's a wash -- well, what I'm hearing is you're not -- you're not ready to say it's about to double. So, okay. All right.

A. (Debski) Well, we can certainly provide the numbers that go into that if it's, you know, necessary. I think doubling -- doubling might be an exaggeration for the growth of net metering customers from year to year.

Q. Okay. I appreciate that fact.

COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: And if you want to reserve that as a record request, I guess, Madam Chair, that would be information I would like to know, but -- well, it shouldn't slow down any of this.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Mr. Debski, how long do you think it would take to submit that response as a record request?

WITNESS DEBSKI: I think that one would probably take a while to prepare. I'd say more than a week.

COMMISSIONER GIAIMO: And under that case, I'm fine going without that information at this time.

I think that gets to my questions, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank you.

And I don't have any questions left that haven't already been answered.

So back to you, Mr. Epler, if you have follow-up.

MR. EPLER: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Let me start out by -- hopefully you can hear me -- just pointing out that there are several filings, I think, based on the questions we've received from the Commission that are of interest here. We file an annual report of our major storm cost reserve and the status of that. And in that report, there's also a report of the storms that occurred during the year. That's one filing. And the current docket for that is DE 20-023. And then we do another filing -- and that's filed towards the end of February.

And then we have the filing that you're looking at that has the vegetation report and the reliability report. And that's also filed the end of February. The current docket is DE 20-027.

And then we have this current docket that the hearing is in today, which is the reconciliation, and we filed that in April.

And based on the questions, it may be beneficial next year when we have the hearing to actually bring in all these

reports and we can bring in all the witnesses, because there is some overlap in terms of your questioning to be able to ask questions and to have the witnesses available, you know, to respond to questions about storms, cost of storms, reliability, how we plan for that, the effect of the tree trimming, and then to actually see the costs and to see how they're run through each year. So that's something that the Commission may want to consider because certainly you don't want to have kind of a false stop; you know, go so far with questioning, but then you can't really question because we don't have the right people. So there may be a benefit of trying to combine that in the hearing next year.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY MR. EPLER:

Q. As far as specific questions, and this is for either Mr. Letourneau or Ms. Sankowich, and referring back to the vegetation report, at Page 11, there was some discussion early on about the ability to send line and tree crews

to neighboring utilities to assist with their restoration.

Is it correct that there's a benefit when we do that, in that if we have contracted for a line or a tree crew to come onto our system to help storm restoration, when we send them to another utility, is there a benefit -- a cost benefit for doing that?

A. (Letourneau) There can be if the entities traveled from some distance. Typically you pay what is called mobilization costs. So to get those crews onto your system, you would pay for that mobilization. Sometimes it involves, you know, sleeping in a hotel for a night if they're coming from far enough, or sleeping on your system, et cetera, before the storm begins.

But then, if they are released to another regional utility, or any utility for that matter, and perform restoration there, the demobilization costs -- so those costs to send those crew back -- would be borne by the accepting utility. So we do definitely save

money if we can do that.

And that is actually a goal that we do when we start releasing crews. The goal is always to release the crews that came from the farthest first to try to, you know, pass those costs on elsewhere. If we can -- if we can avoid that cost, we try to do that. It is not always possible, but we certainly try to do that.

Q. Ms. Sankowich, one of the -- is it correct that one of the reasons for the increase in the number of hazard trees that -- (connectivity issue)

(Court Reporter interrupts.)

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Let's go off the record for a minute until Mr. Epler returns.

(Discussion off the record)

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Back on the record. Without objection, we'll strike I.D. on Exhibits 1 and 2. I believe we don't have a record request.

And any other matters we need to address before parties sum up?

[No verbal response]

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Seeing none, Ms. Ross, would you like to start?

MS. ROSS: Staff does not object to the proposed rates. They appear to be calculated correctly, so we support the filing.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank you.

And Mr. Epler.

MR. EPLER: Thank you. I have nothing to add at this point. Just would direct the Commission to the approvals requested in our petition. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTIN: Okay. Thank you, everyone. We will take the matter under advisement, and the hearing is adjourned.

(Hearing adjourned at 3:30 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

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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.

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