

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DE 21-030

UNITIL ENERGY SYSTEMS, INC.

Request for Change in Rates

**Procedural Order Re: Motion to Appoint Special Commissioners
and Request for Hybrid Hearing**

On December 6, 2021, Unitil Energy Systems, Inc. (Unitil) filed a motion requesting the appointment of one to two special commissioners to ensure that the hearings presently scheduled on February 7, 8, 11, 15, and 16, 2022 are conducted by a full three-member Commission. No response to Unitil's motion has been filed.

In its motion, Unitil noted that it is likely that Commissioner Carleton Simpson will have to recuse himself in this matter and that Commissioner Pradip Chattopadhyay may also recuse himself. Unitil stated it is requesting the February 2022 hearings to be conducted by a full Commission pursuant to RSA 363:17, which provides that no hearing, other than in accident cases, may be conducted by a single commissioner if a party whose interests will be affected makes a timely written request for a hearing by the full commission "or a majority thereof."


Although Unitil has requested these hearings to be conducted by a three-member commission, a quorum of the Commission will be sufficient. *See Pub. Serv. Co. of N.H.*, 69 NH PUC 522, 531, n.9 (1984) (citing RSA 363:17 and RSA 363:16 in noting that presence of quorum of Commission at hearings was sufficient, regardless of any timely request for full Commission to sit). Attorney Anne Ross has been sworn in as a Special Commissioner, so that a quorum of the Commission, but not necessarily a full three-member Commission, will be available to conduct the February 2022 hearings in this matter. Accordingly, Unitil's motion to appoint special commissioners is GRANTED in part.

Due to a scheduling conflict, however, the February 16, 2022 hearing has been cancelled. Instead, a hearing has been scheduled on Monday, February 14, 2022. The hearings in this matter are now scheduled on February 7, 8, 11, 14, and 15, 2022, starting each day at 9:00 a.m.

On January 10, 2022, Unutil filed a request to have these hearings conducted using a hybrid hearing format due to safety concerns, given rising COVID-19 infections, and to save travel costs for out-of-state witnesses. No objections to Unutil's request were filed, and good reason for a hybrid hearing format has been provided. Therefore, a hybrid hearing format will be used for the February 7, 8, 11, 14, and 15, 2022 hearings, which otherwise will be conducted in accordance with the hearing guidelines issued on November 18, 2021. Those who wish to participate in or observe the hearing remotely via the web may obtain access through the Commission's hearing calendar at <https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Calendar-Remote.html>.

When a hybrid hearing is held, remote participation is not limited to the requestors; all participants are welcome to participate remotely. Consistent with the hearing guidelines previously issued in this docket,¹ it is requested that other participants advise the Commission in advance as to whether they intend to participate remotely or in person.

So ordered, this twenty-first day of January, 2022.


Daniel C. Goldner
Presiding Officer
Chairman

¹ See https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2021/21-030/LETTERS-MEMOS-TARIFFS/21-030_2021-11-18_NHPUC_HEARING-GUIDELINES.PDF.

Service List - Docket Related

Docket# : 21-030

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