

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DE 21-020

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
d/b/a EVERSOURCE ENERGY AND
CONSOLIDATED COMMUNICATIONS OF NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND
COMPANY, LLC d/b/a CONSOLIDATED COMMUNICATIONS**

Joint Petition to Approve Pole Asset Transfer

ORDER OF NOTICE

On February 10, 2021, Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy (Eversource) and Consolidated Communications of Northern New England Company, LLC d/b/a Consolidated Communications (Consolidated) filed a joint petition requesting that the Commission approve Consolidated's transfer of certain utility pole assets to Eversource pursuant to a Settlement and Pole Asset Purchase Agreement (Agreement). In addition, the petition requested that the Commission approve Eversource's use of the Regulatory Reconciliation Adjustment (RRA) mechanism¹ to recover the costs associated with its purchase of Consolidated's interest in the utility pole assets. The petition and subsequent docket filings, other than any information for which confidential treatment is requested of or granted by the Commission, will be posted to the Commission's website at

<https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2021/21-020.html>.

Eversource and Consolidated each own 50 percent of approximately 343,098 utility poles located in Eversource's service territory. Consolidated also owns 100 percent of approximately 3,844 utility poles in Eversource's service territory, to which Eversource has attached electric

¹ The RRA mechanism was established in the settlement agreement filed in Eversource's last rate case in Docket No. DE 19-057. The Commission approved the settlement agreement, as modified, in Order No. 26,433, which was issued on December 15, 2020 and revised on December 16, 2020.

facilities. Under the Agreement, Consolidated would sell its interest in both sets of utility poles (the Transferred Poles) so that Eversource would own 100 percent of the Transferred Poles. Consolidated does not propose to transfer any ownership interest in its “dual poles,” as those poles are currently under review by the Commission in a separate docket and are not part of this proceeding.

Further, Consolidated would assign to Eversource its other rights in the Transferred Poles, such as its rights to license pole attachments and collect attachment fees, its licenses to erect poles within public highways, and easements and/or licenses relating to the construction, operation, and maintenance of poles on private property. The Agreement also would resolve all disputes between Eversource and Consolidated, including a dispute over Consolidated’s responsibility for certain vegetation management costs that Eversource has paid since 2018.

Eversource has requested that the Commission approve its use of the RRA mechanism to recover the incremental property tax expenses and incremental vegetation management expenses associated with its purchase of the Transferred Poles, which Eversource has estimated for 2021, 2022, and 2023. It proposes adding a new component to the RRA mechanism for recovering the revenue requirement estimated for 2021, 2022, and 2023 for the purchase, inspection, and replacement of the Transferred Poles.

The filing raises, inter alia, issues related to whether the proposed sale of the Transferred Poles and related rights and interests, the terms of the sale, and other terms of the Agreement, are in the public good and should be approved pursuant to RSA 374:30; whether Eversource’s acquisition of the Transferred Poles and related rights and interests will result in safe and adequate service pursuant to RSA 374:1; whether the estimated costs associated with Eversource’s purchase of Consolidated’s interest in the Transferred Poles and related rights and

interests were appropriately calculated, and the recovery of those costs will result in just and reasonable rates, as required under RSA 374:2 and RSA 378:5 and :7; and whether Eversource's use of the RRA mechanism to recover the estimated costs associated with its purchase of Consolidated's interest in the Transferred Poles and related rights and interests is appropriate. Each party has the right to have an attorney represent the party at the party's own expense.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED, that, consistent with Governor Christopher T. Sununu's Emergency Order #12, the Commission will hold a web-enabled remote prehearing conference, pursuant to N.H. Admin. R., Puc 203.15, on April 2, 2021 at 10:00 a.m., at which each party will provide a preliminary statement of its position with regard to the petition and any of the issues set forth in N.H. Admin. R., Puc 203.15. Members of the public who wish to access the prehearing conference may do so [by clicking here](#). **If you have any difficulty obtaining access to this remote event, please notify the Commission by calling (603) 271-2431 as soon as possible.**

Parties will be provided with additional instructions prior to the prehearing conference; and it is

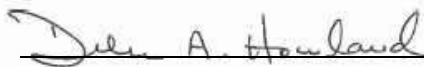
FURTHER ORDERED, that, immediately following the prehearing conference, Eversource, Consolidated, the Staff of the Commission, the Office of the Consumer Advocate, and any intervenors hold a web-enabled remote technical session to review the petition; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that pursuant to N.H. Admin. R., Puc 203.12, Eversource and Consolidated shall notify all persons desiring to be heard at this hearing by publishing a copy of this order of notice on their websites no later than one business day after the date of issue. In addition, the Executive Director shall publish this order of notice on the Commission's website no later than one business day after the date of issue; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that, consistent with N.H. Admin. R., Puc 203.17 and Puc 203.02, any party seeking to intervene in the proceeding shall file with the Commission a petition to intervene with copies sent to Eversource and Consolidated and the Office of the Consumer Advocate on or before March 30, 2021, such petition stating the facts demonstrating how its rights, duties, privileges, immunities, or other substantial interests may be affected by the proceeding, consistent with N.H. Admin. R., Puc 203.17. Pursuant to the secretarial letter issued on March 17, 2020, which is posted on the Commission's website at <https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Secretarial%20Letters/20200317-SecLtr-Temp-Changes-in-Filing-Requirements.pdf>, any party seeking to intervene may elect to submit this filing in electronic form; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that any party objecting to a petition to intervene make said objection on or before April 2, 2021.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this eighteenth day of March, 2021.



Debra A. Howland
Executive Director

Individuals needing assistance or auxiliary communication aids due to sensory impairment or other disability should contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, NHPUC, 21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10, Concord, New Hampshire 03301-2429; 603-271-2431; TDD Access: Relay N.H. 1-800-735-2964. Notification of the need for assistance should be made one week prior to the scheduled event.

Service List - Docket Related

Docket#: 21-020

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