

DT 03-002

VERIZON NEW ENGLAND d/b/a VERIZON NEW HAMPSHIRE

Petition to Include the Conway Exchange in the
Local Calling Area of the Jackson Exchange

Order Granting Opportunity to Poll Citizens

O R D E R N O. 24,199

August 15, 2003

On January 10, 2003, the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (Commission) received a petition from Gene G. Chandler to expand the local calling area of the Jackson exchange to include the 447 Conway exchange (Petition).

On April 21, 2003, the Commission entered an Order of Notice scheduling a hearing on the Petition to determine whether a community of interest exists and whether a poll should be conducted pursuant to the applicable rule, Puc 410.05. Pursuant to Puc 201.05, the Commission waived the traffic study required by Puc 410.03 because (1) RSA 378:17-a,II requires the Commission to consider the likely increase in the number of calls between exchanges, especially where public school district boundaries indicate an increase in traffic is likely to occur if the request is granted, and (2) a traffic study, which examines existing traffic patterns, cannot accurately measure or predict future traffic increases.

Prior to the hearing, Verizon provided information that the proposed local calling expansion would not result in an

increase for the customers in the 383 Jackson exchange, but would result in an increase for the customers of the 447 Conway exchange. This is because adding Jackson customers to the Conway exchange increases the number of lines in the Conway local calling area thereby causing Conway to move into a rate group which has a higher rate than that currently paid by Conway customers. Expanded calling to the 383 Jackson exchange would cost the 447 Conway billed customers an additional \$1.16 a month for unlimited residential service and \$4.38 a month for unlimited business service.

The public hearing was held on May 19, 2003 in the Town of Jackson. At the hearing many customers spoke in favor of the Petition. In addition, the Commission received several letters urging the Commission to approve the Petition. No customers present at the hearing expressed opposition to the Petition; however, the Commission received one letter from a customer in the Conway exchange opposing the Petition.

Some attendees requested that the Commission investigate whether or when, absent the Petition, the Conway exchange would be reclassified into the next higher rate group due to line growth. If the Conway exchange were to be reclassified any time in the near future, they suggested delaying action on the Petition so that the expansion would not be the trigger of higher rates for customers in the Conway exchange.

The Commission's investigation indicates that, absent the addition of the 383 Jackson exchange to its local calling area, the number of lines in the Conway exchange is not increasing at a rate that would result in the reclassification of the Conway exchange any time in the foreseeable future.

After carefully considering the relevant factors set forth in Puc 410.05(b) in light of the testimony and letters received during the hearing process, we determine, in accordance with Puc 410.05(c), that the requested change in the extended area service is necessary to create an extended area service which offers affordable rates; does not jeopardize competition; is consistent with state and federal laws; and impacts positively on the affordability, accessibility and efficient delivery of services. Accordingly, we will conduct a poll of all billed customers in the 383 Jackson and 447 Conway exchanges in accordance with Puc 410.06(b).

In order to insure maximum effective participation, the polling ballot will be designed, distributed and tabulated by the Commission staff. The ballot question shall include a statement of the increased rates necessitated by the expanded local calling area. Because rates will increase in the 447 Conway exchange, customers in both the 383 Jackson and 447 Conway exchanges shall be polled. Pursuant to Puc 410.07, the poll shall be considered conclusive if ballots are returned by 25 percent or more of the

billed customers in the Jackson exchange. The outcome of a conclusive vote will be determined by a simple majority of the returned ballots from the combined 383 Jackson and 447 Conway billed customers, and in the event of a tie vote, the Petition will be denied. The ballot shall be conducted according to the following schedule:

Ballot sent by Commission September 15, 2003
Ballot returned by October 6, 2003
Ballot tabulated by October 20, 2003

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED, that a poll be conducted of the 383 Jackson and 447 Conway billed customers to vote on the addition of two-way local calling between the 383 Jackson and the 447 Conway exchanges based on the schedule outlined above; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the ballot specify local rate increases for all affected classes of service; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that Verizon provide the Commission with mailing labels for the billed customers in the 383 Jackson and 447 Conway exchanges by August 22, 2003.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New
Hampshire this fifteenth day of August, 2003.

Thomas B. Getz
Chairman

Susan S. Geiger
Commissioner

Nancy Brockway
Commissioner

Attested by:

Michelle A. Caraway
Assistant Executive Director