

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

IN RE: PASCOAG UTILITY DISTRICT : **Docket No. 4991**
2020 DEMAND SIDE MANAGEMENT :

**COMMISSION’S FIRST SET OF DATA REQUESTS
DIRECTED TO PASCOAG
(Reallocation of Funds)
(August 19, 2020)**

Please reply no later than August 26, 2020, if possible.

- 1. What other options did Pascoag consider to increase participation in the 2020 Demand Side Management (DSM) Programs in addition to what is proposed in the July 1, 2020 filing? For options that were considered and rejected, please explain the basis for rejection.**

Answered by Desarae Dolan:

Energy audits became our primary focus in regards to the DSM program, when the State of Rhode Island shut down in March and in-home energy audits were suspended. We first took a look at all of the programs in our DSM plan and there weren't any obvious, better solutions to increase participation for them. Certain appliances couldn't be found at local stores. There was disruption in the supply chain for many vendors. Even if customers wanted equipment installed, they were hesitant to have someone in their home or had a difficult time finding a company to install it unless it was an emergency. The commercial lighting projects that were planned came to a grinding halt. For the Appliance, HVAC/Water Heating and Commercial Lighting Programs there wasn't much we could do that would change the reality of the situation. Increasing incentives for those programs wouldn't increase participation if they couldn't purchase the product or install it and it seemed like customers were generally waiting to see how everything panned out before spending money. We still advertised the programs but it didn't seem like it was doing much. We were hopeful that the programs would get back on track once the state reopened and to a degree they have. Residential Energy Star Offering rebate applications are beginning to come in more steadily and we've had a few HVAC rebates as well. The lighting project at Ashton Court is going forward this fall and St. Joseph's Church is in the middle of a lighting project currently.

We decided to focus on home energy audits because we had a solution for this program-remote home energy audits. Energy New England began their remote home energy audits program in April and it was gaining traction with electric utilities in Massachusetts. They were getting positive feedback from customers and found that the customers were far more engaged in the experience because they had to be more hands on than they would be for an in-person audit. The customer would bring their cellphone with a flashlight or additional lighting into the attic and a ruler or tape measure. If they had blown-in insulation, they would measure the depths with the ruler or by comparing the height relative to the 2x6 floor joists to

determine the R-value. If it was batt style insulation, the R value is printed on the product and it typically comes in standard depths. The customer would have the video call with the energy auditor and could point the camera at the vents and recessed lighting and they could determine whether it was properly vented or insulated by looking at it together. Typically when an energy auditor conducts an in-home visit, the homeowner doesn't accompany them into the attic. Remote home energy audits give the homeowner a hands on educational experience about properly insulating and venting their house among other things. Energy New England also planned to schedule a 30 minute in-person follow up with each customer to complete direct installs and verify anything they felt they needed more information on when they were allowed back into homes. Although this solution might not be for everyone, we felt it was something we could be proactive about during this uncertain time period.

Unfortunately, our customers can sometimes be slow at adopting new technology or programs. We would normally be out at community events speaking to customers one on one to encourage the use of a program that was underperforming but we haven't been able to do that so we had to rely on more traditional means of advertising. When advertising failed to increase energy audits or weatherization incentives, we thought that increasing the weatherization incentive might help. Customers might be more inclined to take advantage of remote home energy audits if they knew they wouldn't have such big, upfront costs to contend with when weatherizing their home during a time when the job market is unreliable. Burrillville's unemployment rate for July was 9.9%, compared to 3.5% at the same time last year. Customers are uncertain about the future and struggling financially and this would help lower upfront costs while also saving them cooling and heating costs in the near future.

2. Given that Pascoag DSM spending to date for 2020 is significantly below budget, would Pascoag object to reallocating a portion of 2020 DSM funds to further reduce the payable balance the DSM program has to the District for the LED streetlight project?

a. If Pascoag does object to such reallocation, why?

Answered by Desarae Dolan:

We have no objection to reallocating a portion of 2020 DSM funds, at the end of the year, to further reduce the payable balance the DSM program has to the District for the LED streetlight project. However, we would not want to include the RGGI funds dedicated to increasing home energy audits and weatherization among our residential customers. Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (RIOER) has previously provided grant money for the LED street lighting project and we don't believe it's fair to have them contribute additional funds to this project above and beyond what they've done already. We would want RIOER to be onboard with how the RGGI funds are being spent.

- b. If Pascoag would not object to such a reallocation, what amount would Pascoag recommend be reallocated? Please explain.**

Answered by Desarae Dolan:

We would like to see how the programs progress through the Fall and then make a recommendation in Pascoag's 2021 Full Year Budget filing in November.