

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Public Utilities Commission

Minutes of Open Meeting Held July 22, 2015

Attendees: Chairperson Margaret Curran, Commissioner Herbert DeSimone, Commissioner Paul Roberti, Cindy Wilson-Frias, Sharon Colby Camara, Alan Nault and Luly Massaro.

Chairperson Curran called the open meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. in the first-floor hearing room of the Public Utilities Commission. A quorum was present.

Competitive Telecommunications Service Providers Dockets

The following companies submitted revisions to their existing tariffs. The Division filed a recommendation that the tariff filings are allowed to go into effect without suspension:

- 3597 – ACN Communications Services, Inc. (tariff filing 7/9/15)
- 2426 – Teleport Communications America, LLC (tariff filing 7/7/15)
- 2618 – AT&T Corp. (tariff filings 6/30/15 & 7/1/15)
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- 2262(A6) – SBC Long Distance, LLC (7/9/15)
- 2262(Q2) – Affinity Network, Inc. (tariff filing 7/10/15)
- 2262(P2) – NOSVA Limited Partnership (tariff filing 7/10/15)
- 2262(O2) – NOS Communications, Inc. (tariff filing 7/10/15)

After review, Commissioner DeSimone moved to allow the tariffs go into effect without suspension. Commissioner Roberti seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed. **Vote 3-0.**

4571 – Providence Water Supply Board – Providence Water filed on July 13, 2015, a Motion Regarding PUC’s Rule 2.10. PUC Rule 2.10 governs abbreviated filing requirements for non-investor owned utilities. Providence Water seeks a waiver from the requirement of Rule 2.10(c)(2), Rule 2.10(c)(3), Rule 2.10(d)(1), Rule 2.10(d)(4) and Rule 2.10(d)(5). Rule 2.10 governs abbreviated filing requirements for non-investor owned utilities. No objection was filed to Providence Water’s motion. After review, Commissioner DeSimone moved to approve Providence Water’s motion. Roberti seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed. **Vote 3-0.**

The PUC noted that Bristol County Water Authority filed an objection to the PUC’s procedural schedule and expedited timeframe to review the filing. PUC agreed to hold BCWA’s objection in abeyance. The PUC did not set a suspension deadline on Providence Water’s filing and for this reason, it does not need to be considered at this time. While the procedural schedule reflects a completion date for hearings of August 31, 2015, the PUC is not required to make a decision on that date if it does not have sufficient information. Therefore, no ruling is needed at this time.

3569 - The Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid – National Grid filed on June 24, 2015 to amend the Optional Telephone and Web Page Payment Provision

and the Optional Credit Card Provision Tariffs. Specifically, National Grid seeks to amend the Third Party Vendor Fees for the residential payment transaction fee from \$2.00 to \$2.25 per transaction for effect August 1, 2015. Chairperson Curran reiterated that this cost is a pass through and there is no basis to deny the filing. Commissioner DeSimone moved to approve National Grid's tariff filing. Commissioner Roberti seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed. **Vote 3-0.**

The PUC discussed the Rules Governing the Acceptance of Credit Card by Utility Companies. Chairperson Curran found the charges to be a discouragement for ratepayers to pay their bill. If the separate convenience fee is a hindrance on paying bills, then it should be considered a cost of doing business to the utility. She queried whether the rules made sense in these days of modern time. Commissioner DeSimone did not support socializing the costs to all ratepayers. He supported the users of credit cards to pay the convenience fee where there are other methods of payment available. Commissioner Roberti offered the following issues to take into account: 1) the competitive business environment clearly allows for this service to pay by credit card and mass adoption of use of credit card is allowable; 2) uncollectibles: giving the customer more options to pay will impact the level of uncollectible balances to the utility, 3) fraudulent issues: giving entities the potential for breach of data information, payment by credit card is a better option than payment by check; 4) allocation of costs: what is the cost advantage to process credit card payments to payments received by mail? The PUC will be seeking additional cost information from the utilities in this docket in order to assess whether the rules should be amended, repealed, or remain in effect.

The open meeting adjourned at 10:37 A.M.