

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

CASE NUMBER 19-1270-TF

INVESTIGATION INTO WASHINGTON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE,
INC.'S TARIFF FILING FOR RATE DESIGN CHANGES AND
A CHANGE IN RATE SCHEDULES TO BE EFFECTIVE ON
SERVICES RENDERED BEGINNING JUNE 17, 2019

June 28, 2019
9:30 a.m.

112 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont

Scheduling Conference held before the Vermont
Public Utility Commission, at the Susan M. Hudson
Conference Room, People's United Bank Building, 112 State
Street, Montpelier, Vermont, on June 28, 2019, beginning
at 9:30 a.m.

P R E S E N T

BOARD MEMBERS: Anthony Roisman, Chairman
 Margaret Cheney
 Sarah Hofmann

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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BY: RONALD A. SHEMS, ESQUIRE

1 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Good morning. This
2 is a scheduling conference in Case Number 19-1270-TF,
3 the Public Utility Commission's investigation into
4 the petition of Washington Electric Cooperative for
5 rate design changes and the change in rate schedules
6 effective on services rendered beginning June 17,
7 2019. My name is Anthony Roisman. I'm the Chair of
8 the Vermont Public Utility Commission. Commissioners
9 Cheney and Hofmann are with me today as well as
10 Commission staff. Let's start with appearances.

11 MR. PORTER: Jim Porter on behalf of the
12 Department of Public Service.

13 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: And Mr. Shems.

14 MR. SHEMS: Ron Shems on behalf of
15 Washington Electric.

16 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: And I see no other
17 potential parties in the room. Do either of you have
18 any reason to believe we're going to have other
19 parties? Have you heard anything?

20 MR. PORTER: The Department does not.

21 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Okay. All right. We
22 have a proposed schedule. Does the Department have a
23 response to the proposed schedule?

24 MR. PORTER: We worked with the
25 Petitioner and support the schedule.

1 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: The schedule has some
2 TBDs in it. Have you all worked out what you think
3 those dates are?

4 MR. PORTER: I'll certainly defer to the
5 Petitioner for public hearing. Obviously we defer to
6 the Commission as far as the timing of that.

7 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Well we need 12 days,
8 I believe that's what our deputy clerk tells us, to
9 give the notice before the public hearing.

10 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: But let me ask
11 you, Mr. Shems, in terms of getting notice to your
12 customers what's your billing cycle to get this as a
13 bill stuffer on your notices -- on the WEC bills?

14 MR. SHEMS: Our bills go out in batches
15 of approximately one-third three times a month.

16 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: Okay. So how
17 much lead time do you need to make sure everybody got
18 an actual notice before a public hearing?

19 MR. SHEMS: One month plus maybe a week
20 or two to set it up for the next month.

21 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: So realistically
22 we're not going to see -- if there are intervenors,
23 we won't see any intervenors until the discovery
24 period in this schedule for discovery on the petition
25 has closed. That doesn't seem right to me.

1 MR. PORTER: I would suggest I think
2 that if we get a date roughly for a public hearing,
3 that we might then maybe adjust some of the other
4 dates in the schedule.

5 MR. SHEMS: We have given notice of the
6 rate design proceeding on our web site, in prior
7 billing cycles, and also at our annual meeting in May
8 which is very well attended, and so it's out there
9 that people know about it. I think we've gotten a
10 couple public comments, but no one's really kind of
11 come out of the woodwork saying they are concerned
12 about this.

13 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: But that notice
14 obviously could not have said when the public hearing
15 was because you didn't know.

16 MR. SHEMS: It would, all the substance,
17 everything except the date for the public hearing.

18 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: The other idea
19 is, you know, we've now gone to this thing where we
20 do deadlines for motions for intervening after the
21 public hearing and this is really a factor from
22 siting cases not necessarily from rate cases. We'll
23 take it under advisement, but would anybody have any
24 objection to us moving the motion to intervene before
25 the public hearing?

1 MR. SHEMS: Before the public hearing?

2 MR. PORTER: I'm sorry. Do you mean
3 having the motion to intervene come after the public
4 hearing?

5 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: Come before the
6 public hearing.

7 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Come before the
8 public hearing.

9 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: It will be
10 different than the siting cases.

11 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Mr. Shems represents
12 that his customers are aware of this proceeding even
13 if they don't know the public hearing date yet. If,
14 unlike a siting case, we don't think that the public
15 needs to have a public hearing in order to know
16 whether they want to intervene, we could set an
17 intervention date long before we have a public
18 hearing.

19 MR. PORTER: The Department wouldn't
20 object to that. I can't remember when we have had a
21 member of the public intervene in a rate design case.

22 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: Rate design,
23 right.

24 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Well this does
25 involve some significant shifts that I'm not urging

1 or even hoping, much less suggesting, that there
2 should be intervention, but -- and I take it the
3 public information that you have already provided is
4 information that is available that lets people know
5 that you have got these plans to basically change the
6 distribution of some -- you change some features that
7 have been there for a while.

8 MR. SHEMS: Correct. Correct. You know
9 I'll add in addition to the notices we've already put
10 out, we formulated this rate design proposal through
11 a number of focus groups and number of outreach
12 sessions with our members, and so there's pretty
13 widespread knowledge of this, and we also have a
14 monthly publication and articles explaining this time
15 and time again. So this is pretty well known in the
16 Washington community.

17 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: So if we set an
18 intervention date, that's something that we could
19 also publicize in these various ongoing mechanisms
20 that you have to reach out to your members?

21 MR. SHEMS: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: All right. So we're
23 going to set an intervention date and it will
24 probably be a date that precedes when the public
25 hearing is held. How long after the petitions to

1 intervene, if any are filed, do you want to respond
2 to those?

3 MR. SHEMS: 14 days.

4 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: So, Mr. Shems, do
5 you think you could do it any faster than 14 days
6 just because we're on the clock here?

7 MR. SHEMS: Sure. 10.

8 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: You would like 14
9 days. We'll note that.

10 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: I heard 10. Do I
11 hear 7? Okay, and we'll -- if that happens, we'll
12 give a relatively short time for reply and of course
13 we'll decide the petitions to intervene promptly.

14 If when all those dates are done we
15 still need to allow some discovery by an intervenor
16 if we have an intervenor, we might want to adjust
17 this first round of discovery and push it out a
18 little bit. Are you -- let's assume for a moment
19 that the spaces between discovery when Petitioner
20 responds to discovery and when the Department files
21 its testimony, discovery on the Department, et
22 cetera, you all are comfortable with that time span,
23 in other words, the amount of time between those
24 events are okay for both of you. Yes?

25 MR. PORTER: Yes.

1 MR. SHEMS: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Okay. So the only
3 thing that could conceivably change is that start
4 date -- the end date for discovery on the Petitioner
5 and the start date for when everything else after
6 that happens, but the time span is okay.

7 We have a problem with the evidentiary
8 hearing on the 7th of October. We may want to push
9 it out a week or so. Are there some dates following
10 that week that are problematic for either of you that
11 we need to take account of or can we just go ahead
12 and pick a time fairly quickly because we have a
13 deadline?

14 MR. SHEMS: I checked dates with my
15 clients, but that was only through September. They
16 are fine with the week of October 7th. I didn't
17 check beyond that, but I'm not aware of anything.

18 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: All right. If you
19 know of something that either the week of the 14th or
20 even, if necessary, the week of the 21st that's a
21 problem, just let us know. It's just that the 7th,
22 that week, isn't going to work for us.

23 MR. PORTER: I don't see any problems
24 two or three weeks after that date.

25 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: So the other

1 thing sometimes in rate design we actually have the
2 company come in and do a workshop and let everybody
3 ask questions, and is there any reason WEC isn't
4 willing to do that?

5 MR. SHEMS: We'll be happy to.

6 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: And are there any
7 dates between say now and the end of July that are --
8 some of you may think about vacations. I'm not a fan
9 of vacations, but --

10 MR. PORTER: Me neither.

11 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: -- are there times in
12 July that we shouldn't schedule this if we want to do
13 it as early as July?

14 MR. PORTER: For the Department, if we
15 were going to have a workshop, there's certain people
16 I would want to have here and I cannot tell you their
17 schedules here, but I'll find out.

18 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Why don't the two of
19 you talk and give us some idea about dates and some
20 time after the 15th of July when a workshop might
21 work. Does that work for the staff?

22 MS. POPPITI: Sometime between mid July
23 and beginning of August would be the best timing for
24 us.

25 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: So just give us a

1 couple of dates.

2 MR. SHEMS: Okay.

3 MS. POPPITI: We would expect a
4 presentation from the company and probably, you know,
5 -- and then some time for questions and such. So
6 either a morning or afternoon, not an all day affair.

7 MR. SHEMS: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Anything else? Do
9 you all have any thoughts on a briefing schedule?
10 How long after the close of the evidentiary hearing
11 do you want -- we'll do simultaneous briefs
12 obviously. How long after the close of the hearing
13 for the first briefs?

14 MR. SHEMS: I'm anticipating, based on
15 the work that we're doing with the Department, that
16 at least between the Department and Washington
17 Electric it's not going to be contested. If that
18 remains the case, I think a couple weeks for
19 briefing. If it is contested, we may need some more
20 time.

21 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: If there are
22 interventions afterwards, we're going to have to have
23 a new scheduling conference and a lot of things might
24 change, but, okay, so two weeks.

25 MR. SHEMS: Does that make sense to you?

1 MR. PORTER: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: And if it's not
3 contested, I assume we'll need -- we won't need a
4 second round of briefing. Okay.

5 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: The other thing
6 is we did talk about the public hearing and how much
7 notice you need to get it on the bills. We probably
8 should actually try to narrow down at least a week
9 we're going to put the public hearing in. So you're
10 saying a month, Mr. Shems, a month and a week?

11 MR. SHEMS: Well I would say a week or
12 two to gear up and then the notices would go out in
13 the batches of one-third over the course of the
14 month.

15 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Can you explain why
16 is it a week or two to --

17 MR. SHEMS: It takes a little bit of
18 time to set up the template. I'm sure we could do it
19 in less than two weeks, but with vacation schedules
20 and stuff over the summer I just want to make sure we
21 have time to set it up correctly.

22 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: And will WEC provide
23 the venue?

24 MR. SHEMS: Sure.

25 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: All right. So --

1 MS. POPPITI: Week of August 5th? Does
2 that work for you? July is a long month.

3 MR. SHEMS: That might work. I'll have
4 to call my client now and see where the billing cycle
5 is for July and if there's changes in time to catch
6 all three cycles.

7 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: All right.

8 MR. SHEMS: It's right up to July now.

9 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: So you'll get back to
10 staff and let them know that.

11 MR. SHEMS: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: You can just call on
13 the phone.

14 MR. SHEMS: Who should I call?

15 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Call Andrea, and when
16 you call tell her the location so that our deputy
17 clerk will then be able to prepare the newspaper
18 notices that we put out for that.

19 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: So, Mr. Porter,
20 and we would actually ask that the Department before
21 the public hearing do the information session.

22 MR. PORTER: Sure.

23 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: Thank you. Half
24 an hour before we do the public hearing. The
25 Department's been doing an information session that I

1 think in a lot of cases has been very helpful.

2 MR. PORTER: Half hour or this case
3 probably --

4 MS. POPPITI: Prefer an hour.

5 MR. PORTER: That's fine. I'm not sure
6 how well attended it will be. Some I think we can
7 definitely need an hour or two, but not this one, but
8 that's fine.

9 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: If possible, if you
10 can get back to us on these pending items before the
11 4th of July break, that would be helpful.

12 MR. SHEMS: I'm going to try to do so
13 this afternoon.

14 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: That would be
15 great.

16 MR. SHEMS: What number should I call?

17 MS. POPPITI: Just the main number and
18 ask for Andrea Poppiti. I don't know my direct
19 number.

20 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: We never call
21 ourselves.

22 MR. PORTER: Okay.

23 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: You know that number?
24 828-2358. Anything else?

25 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: We're good.

1 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: So you have a few
2 things to get back to us on; some scheduling, open
3 dates, stuff like that.

4 COMMISSIONER HOFMANN: If you could
5 coordinate with Mr. Porter, that would be great.

6 MS. POPPITI: I will be out starting on
7 Monday. So if I'm not available, then just
8 communicate with the Clerk of the Commission.

9 MR. SHEMS: I'm out most of next week so
10 I'm really hoping to get it done this afternoon.

11 MS. POPPITI: Great.

12 CHAIRMAN ROISMAN: Okay. Thank you.

13 (Adjourned at 9:50 a.m.)
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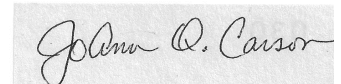
C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JoAnn Q. Carson, do hereby certify that I recorded by stenographic means the scheduling conference re: Case Number 19-1270-TF at the Susan M. Hudson Hearing Room of the Public Utility Commission, 112 State Street, Montpelier, Vermont, on June 28, 2019, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

I further certify that the foregoing testimony was taken by me stenographically and thereafter reduced to typewriting, and the foregoing 15 pages are a transcript of the stenograph notes taken by me of the evidence and the proceedings, to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties thereto or their Counsel, and I am in no way interested in the outcome of said cause.

Dated at Burlington, Vermont, this 30th day of June, 2019.



JoAnn Q. Carson

Registered Merit Reporter

Certified Real Time Reporter

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