

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Case No. 19-2956-INV

Investigation pursuant to Act 62 into the creation of an all-fuels energy efficiency program, expansion of energy efficiency utility programs and services, and funding options for those programs	
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Order entered: 08/09/2019

ORDER RE SCOPE AND SCHEDULE AND NOTICE OF WORKSHOP

Introduction

On July 11, 2019, the Vermont Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) opened this investigation in response to Section 2 of Act 62 (H.63) of the 2019-2020 Vermont legislative session. Act 62 requires the Commission to report to the Legislature on the Commission’s consideration of the creation of an all-fuels energy efficiency program, expansion of energy efficiency utility programs and services, and funding options for those programs. In this Order I establish the scope and schedule for the first set of comments and workshop.

Summary of Comments

The Commission established July 26, 2019, as the deadline for participants to file their comments on the goals, scope, structure, and schedule of this proceeding. Comments were filed by the Vermont Department of Public Service (“Department”), Sunrun Inc., Green Mountain Power Corporation (“GMP”), Efficiency Vermont, the City of Burlington Electric Department (“BED”), Vermont Gas Systems, Inc. (“Vermont Gas”), and the Clean Energy Group/Clean Energy States Alliance (“CEG/CESA”). Comments regarding scope and schedule are addressed below.¹

The Department states that this proceeding presents an opportunity to take stock of the current landscape of energy-related programs and policies affecting thermal, electric, and transportation energy consumption; to identify gaps and inefficiencies in program delivery for

¹ Substantive comments and recommendations were reviewed and will be considered in due course during this proceeding.

those sectors; and to make recommendations about how best to deliver energy services to Vermonters. To begin, the Department recommends identifying current programs, who delivers those programs, and how the programs are funded. This will enable the identification of gaps in services or funding. The Department volunteers to provide a summary of programs, delivery mechanisms, and current funding before the first workshop. The Department also recommends that the Commission define terms such as “electrification” and “efficiency” early in the proceeding to establish a shared baseline for discussion. Next, the Department recommends considering the expansion of efficiency utility programs and services consistent with Section 2(a)(2) of Act 62 and the appointment of one or more “all-fuels” utilities. Finally, the Department recommends that the Commission consider the funding questions posed in Section 2(a)(3)(A)(i) and (ii). The Department suggests that the identification of gaps in services or funding could be completed in time to be addressed in the Commission’s preliminary report required by Act 62, which is due on or before January 15, 2020.

Efficiency Vermont recommends that the schedule begin with a review and assessment of existing resources, programs, and policies that contribute to meeting state goals and requirements. Next, Efficiency Vermont recommends a gap analysis to identify any gaps in or barriers to existing resources, programs, and policies and then use these findings as the basis for recommendations in the Commission’s preliminary report. Efficiency Vermont suggests that the Commission should then investigate how and why existing resources, programs, and funding sources may not or cannot provide services to meet the state’s energy goals. Efficiency Vermont recommends that the use of refrigerants in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment should be considered in the proceeding.

BED recommends that the Commission examine whether there are market gaps in Vermont’s energy efficiency and clean energy programs that require additional program flexibility and new funding sources. Specific to its service territory, BED would like to discuss flexibility to use existing energy efficiency funds to support Burlington’s Net Zero Energy goal and the state’s climate and energy goals.

CEG/CESA’s comments focus on the topic of energy storage in Vermont’s energy efficiency programs. CEG/CESA recommends that this proceeding address the value of behind-the-meter energy storage, explore incentive mechanisms, consider how other states are

integrating storage into their energy efficiency programs, and consider implementation questions for Vermont. CEG/CESA suggests that energy storage should be addressed early in this proceeding and volunteers to give a presentation on this topic.

GMP notes that transportation and heating are the two leading sources of carbon pollution in Vermont. GMP suggests that the investigation review current in-state charters and programs, analyze those programs, and identify gaps in programs and strategies. GMP identifies the Massachusetts “Green Communities Act” as an example of pertinent information from another jurisdiction.

Scope and Schedule for First Comments and Workshop

Many of the participant comments on scope and schedule suggest that the appropriate first step in this proceeding is to identify current programs, services, policies, and funding sources, followed by an identification of gaps that may impede progress toward Vermont’s legislated goals. I conclude that this is a logical place to begin.

The first workshop will be convened on September 24, 2019. Topics that will be addressed at the first workshop include: (1) the current statutory policies and goals that guide Vermont’s energy programs; (2) the current portfolio of energy programs and services that are available to Vermonters; (3) the current source(s) of funds for these programs and services; (4) proposed definitions of terms such as “electrification” and “efficiency”; and (5) innovations in other jurisdictions’ energy program and service delivery models, goals, and funding sources.

In order to inform the workshop discussion, the Department is requested to summarize current programs, delivery mechanisms, and funding sources consistent with its offer. The Department’s summary, and any other participant comments addressing the topics above, are requested to be filed by no later than September 16, 2019.

Participants who wish to make a presentation on any of these topics at the workshop must submit their request to the Commission no later than close of business on September 16, 2019. Each request must identify the topic of the proposed presentation and the amount of time being requested for the presentation, keeping in mind that there will likely be questions from others in attendance, including the Commission. Participants are encouraged to coordinate their presentations so as to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Following the workshop, I will establish a deadline for further comments on the topics discussed, and on topics for the next workshop, which I have preliminarily identified as: (1) the strengths and weaknesses, or advantages and disadvantages, of current delivery mechanisms and funding sources; (2) gaps in current programs, services, and funding; and (3) preliminary recommendations to lawmakers.

Notice of Workshop

The first workshop will be held on September 24, 2019, from 9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at the Susan M. Hudson Hearing Room on the third floor of the People's United Bank Building at 112 State Street in Montpelier, Vermont. The workshop will be recorded by a court reporter.

SO ORDERED.

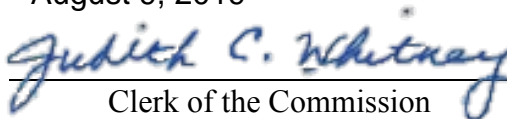
Dated at Montpelier, Vermont, this 9th day of August, 2019.



Thomas Knauer
Hearing Officer

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

Filed: August 9, 2019

Attest: 
Clerk of the Commission

Notice to Readers: This decision is subject to revision of technical errors. Readers are requested to notify the Clerk of the Commission (by e-mail, telephone, or in writing) of any apparent errors, in order that any necessary corrections may be made. (E-mail address: puc.clerk@vermont.gov)

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