

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Petition of Southern Vermont Cable)
Company for consent, pursuant to 30)
V.S.A § 109, to sell substantially all of its)
Vermont assets to Comcast of)
Connecticut/Georgia/Massachusetts/New)
Hampshire/New York/North Carolina/)
Virginia/Vermont, LLC, approval,)
pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 505, of such)
entity's abandonment of cable-television)
service in Vermont and revocation of its)
Certificates of Public Good)

Case No. 19-4845-PET

Petition of Comcast of Connecticut/)
Georgia/Massachusetts/New Hampshire/)
New York/North Carolina/Virginia/)
Vermont, LLC for a Certificate of Public)
Good, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §§ 503 &)
504 and Vermont Public Utility)
Commission Rule 8.200, to own and)
operate the cable-television systems in)
Vermont currently owned and operated by)
Southern Vermont Cable Company)

PREFILED TESTIMONY OF
CAROL FLINT

ON BEHALF OF THE
VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

March 4, 2020

Summary: Ms. Flint's testimony provides the Department's analysis of Comcast's service quality as the acquiring entity in this transaction. Ms. Flint describes public comments filed and discusses certain applicable criteria such as public, educational and governmental programming, prohibition of discrimination, consumer complaints and problems, hours and location of operation and consumer policies, and ultimately makes recommendations regarding Comcast's service quality metrics and reporting.

Ms. Flint Sponsors the Following Exhibit:

Exhibit DPS–CMF–1 Comcast Service Quality Report, Quarter Ending December 31, 2019

Direct Testimony
of
Carol Flint

1 **Q1. Please state your name and occupation.**

2 A1. My name is Carol Flint. I am Director of the Consumer Affairs and Public Information
3 Division (“CAPI”) at the Vermont Department of Public Service (“Department”).
4

5 **Q2. Please describe your educational background and experience.**

6 A2. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree with a focus in Sociology from Norwich University
7 (Vermont College), Northfield, Vermont. I joined the Department as the CAPI Director
8 in February 2016. Previously, I served as Executive Director for BROCC—Community
9 Action in Southwestern Vermont, beginning in 2014. Prior to that, I worked at Capstone
10 Community Action for over 20 years, most recently as its Program Director for Family
11 and Community Support Services.
12

13 **Q3. Have you previously testified before the Vermont Public Utility Commission**
14 **(“Commission”)?**

15 A3. Yes. I have provided testimony previously in Dockets 8701 and 8881, and Case Nos. 17-
16 1238-INV, 17-3112-INV, 17-3232-PET, 18-0409-TF, 18-0726-INV, 18-0974-TF, 18-
17 3231-PET, 19-1270-INV, 19-3167-TF and 19-3537-TF.
18

19 **Q4. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

1 A4. My testimony provides the Department's analysis of Comcast of Connecticut/
2 Georgia/Massachusetts/New Hampshire/New York/North Carolina/Virginia/Vermont,
3 LLC's ("Comcast") service quality as the acquiring entity in this transaction. I discuss
4 certain applicable criteria such as public, educational and governmental ("PEG")
5 programming, prohibition of discrimination, consumer complaints and problems, hours
6 and location of operation, and consumer policies. I also describe public comments filed
7 in this proceeding and ultimately make recommendations pertaining to Comcast's service
8 quality metrics and reporting.

9
10 **Q5. Will Comcast provide a reasonably broad range of PEG programming pursuant to**
11 **30 V.S.A. § 504(b)(3)?**

12 A5. Yes. Both Southern Vermont Cable Company ("SVCC") and Comcast hold contracts
13 with Brattleboro Community Television ("BCTV") for the provision of PEG access. A
14 review of BCTV's programming schedule indicates a diverse offering, which includes
15 concerts, music festivals, art shows and other cultural programs, as well as local meetings
16 such as town government and educational programs about a broad range of topics
17 including investing, designing and building your own modular home.

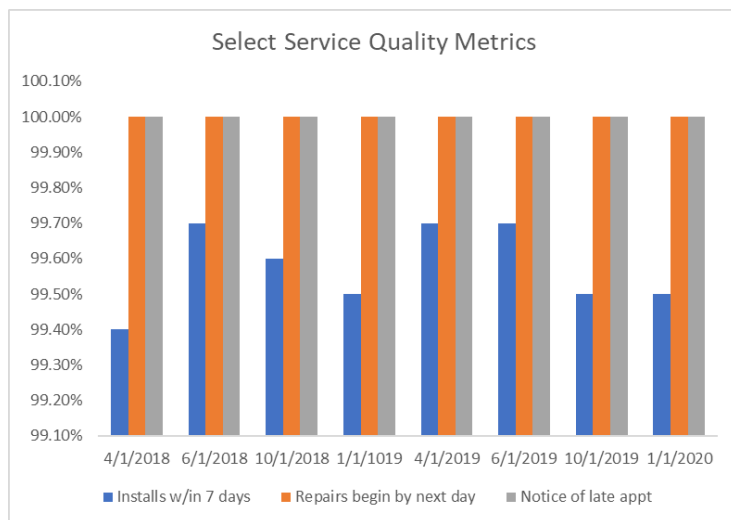
18
19 **Q6. Does the Department have any concerns about either SVCC or Comcast having**
20 **discriminated among customers of basic service against 30 V.S.A. §504(b)(4)?**

21 A6. The Department does not have any reason to believe that either company has or will
22 discriminate against any customer in the provision of basic cable service. For the 2019

calendar year, there were no instances of discrimination complaints made against either company.

Q7. Has Comcast demonstrated that it has a competent staff that can provide adequate and prompt service and will respond quickly and comprehensively to customer and Department complaints and problems pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 504(c)(3)?

A7. Yes. Comcast responds to complaints, inquiries or problems from CAPI staff promptly and within the required response time period. Comcast has shown that it meets or exceeds service quality metrics, as demonstrated in its Service Quality Report filed for the quarter ending December 31, 2019 (Exhibit DPS-CMF-1). The below chart, “Select Service Quality Metrics,” demonstrates that Comcast provides exceptional customer service for the metrics for Installs W/In 7 Days, Repairs Initiated by The Next Day and Notice of Late Appointments.



1 **Q8. Will Comcast provide a local office and a toll-free telephone number to receive**
2 **complaints and requests for repairs pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §504(c)(4)?**

3 A8. Yes. Comcast provides a toll-free number and other methods to receive complaints or
4 requests for repairs or installations. The company’s business hours seem reasonable and
5 convenient. The nearest local office for those customers currently served by SVCC is in
6 Greenfield, Massachusetts.

7
8 **Q9. Are Comcast’s rules and policies reasonable for line extensions, disconnections,**
9 **customer deposits and billing practices pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 504(c)(5)?**

10 A9. The company asserts that its policies are consistent with applicable rules, laws and tariffs.
11 Daniel M. Glanville, Comcast (“Glanville”) pf. at 18. CAPI’s experience indicates that
12 the company is responsive to its inquiries and responsible about addressing any
13 regulatory concerns.

14
15 **Q10. What is the Department’s position regarding Comcast’s policies for customer**
16 **complaints and problems as it relates to Commission Rule 8.214(B)(6)?**

17 A10. The company asserts that it provides notices to its customers according to federal law and
18 Vermont regulation. Glanville pf. at 22. Comcast provides courtesy copies of these
19 notices to the Department’s CAPI division. This is helpful because CAPI staff respond to
20 questions and inquiries from Comcast customers. CAPI’s experience indicates that the
21 company has worked diligently to improve customer service. This effort is demonstrated
22 by fewer complaints against the company for cable and cable bundled services in 2019

(fewer than 300) versus 2018 (over 400).

Q11. Please describe the public comments filed and/or expressed in this proceeding.

A11. Two individuals filed comments with the Department and the Commission. Several individuals also filed public comments directly with the Commission, some of whom also spoke at the public hearing held by the Commission on February 3, 2020 in Putney, Vermont. At the public hearing, 13 people spoke about costs and service offerings, Comcast's introductory pricing and packages, worry about poor customer service quality from large corporations and continued availability and signal quality for public access channels. Two individuals spoke positively about Comcast.

Public comments filed with the Commission were thematically similar to comments made at the public hearing. Issues raised specifically regarding Comcast included concerns about its potential monopoly status, the types of service offered, rates and rate increases, notably poor customer service, below the line fees, customer service being limited to electronic options, lack of customer service responsiveness, concerns about costs and waste for required cable boxes, requests to honor current service offerings and wanting to preserve their static IP address. Issues raised regarding the sale of SVCC to Comcast include support for local companies, desire for profits from the sale to be allocated to Vermont customers, reliability, requests for an alternate small-scale provider and requests for customer service benchmarks and standards. One commenter indicated that he wanted "Comcast to purchase Southern Vermont Cable Co. We need to be

1 included in the 21-century technology.” Many commenters praised SVCC’s customer
2 service.

3
4 **Q12. Does the Department have any recommendations that address customer service**
5 **concerns?**

6 A12. Yes. The Department recommends that, during the transition period, Comcast monitor its
7 overall customer service performance in Vermont in relation to all Federal
8 Communications Commission and current service quality performance and customer
9 service standards and ultimately develop and file with the Department a quarterly service
10 quality report specific to SVCC customers.

11
12 The Department also recommends that for the first full quarter following completion of
13 the transition of all SVCC customers to Comcast systems, Comcast provide an integrated
14 service quality report to be filed with the Department.

15
16 Finally, the Department recommends that, within six months of any order approving the
17 joint petition, Comcast work with CAPI to revise the company’s service quality plan.

18 The Department recommends the following new service quality metrics:

- 19 (1) Timely issuance of refunds and credits, measured as a percentage calculated by the
20 number of customers that received a refund or credit by the next billing cycle divided
21 by the number of customers due to receive a credit or refund for that billing cycle;
22 (2) Number of outages greater than 24 hours, that are either known by the company or

1 reported by customers to the company; and

2 (3) Number of credits provided to customers for outages of greater than 24 hours in
3 duration.

4

5 **Q13. Does this conclude your testimony?**

6 A13. Yes.