

Village of Hyde Park Electric Department
Response dated 12/17/2020
Case No. 20-0703-PET
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Submitted by ePuc

State of Vermont
Public Utility Commission
Judith C. Whitney
Clerk of the Public Utility Commission
112 State Street, 4th floor, Montpelier, VT 05620-2701.

Dear Ms. Whitney,

The Village of Hyde Park Electric Department (“HPE”) responds to the Commission’s directive to file a report on (1) how lifting the moratorium has affected their disconnection numbers, (2) how many of their customers have made use of VCAAP funding, and (3) what percentage of their customers who have arrearages are actively participating in, or seeking to participate in, discussions about repayment plans.

The following report comes directly from the employee who deals with customer service and is filed beyond the deadline due to computer failures and repairs.

1. how lifting the moratorium has affected their disconnection numbers,

It has had no real effect. The moratorium was lifted on October 15, there has only been 60 days of collection opportunity since the moratorium was lifted. During that 60-day period 2 notices have sent, as designed to do, the updated emergency disconnect rules are working very effectively for the benefit of the consumer. The benefit to the consumer with the moratorium being lifted October 15 was that they were more aware of the VCAAP program and took action as the additional federal unemployment funds ran out it got more consumers in the 60 days or older bracket and they were able to utilize the VCAAP program. Those consumers that were always behind and at risk of disconnect are still behind and at risk of disconnect, they tend to not take action until you arrive to remove the meter, then they find assistance through various agencies. Advocating to the legislature to release more funding to community assistance agencies such as United Way, Council on Aging, and Community Action programs throughout the State will benefit the entire state as a whole. Emergency fuel assistance for Electric as a secondary heat source would be beneficial. I recently had a conversation with a ratepayer who is not able to have their fuel tank filled as it is out of compliance, this means they are either filling it on their own or using electric space heaters. Going five or more miles one way to fill a ten-or-fifteen-gallon fuel

can is adding expenses to their budget and emission to the atmosphere by unnecessary travel for heating fuel. We need our consumers to get assistance and the only way for them to get assistance is by risk of disconnection, twisted, but a reality for program eligibility. Reinstating the moratorium will leave consumers with no means to get assistance through the winter as they have in past years. What is going to happen to consumers in the long run if they can skip paying anything on their electric bill for the winter and they are past due 4 months now and weren't eligible for VCAPP assistance if they have another 4 months of not paying? Not all low-income households were eligible for VCAAP as they weren't all eligible for unemployment either and have continued to work,

2. how many of their customers have made use of VCAAP funding,

37 Electric customers – 6 did not have qualifying arrears until we were able to review them a second time.

3. and, what percentage of their customers who have arrearages are actively participating in, or seeking to participate in, discussions about repayment plans.

Since we have been advocating for use of the VCAAP program it hasn't really changed/increased.- typically 1% or less take advantage of the repayment plans. My expectation is that we will have more requests for payment plan in January and February as the winter advances.

Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Carol Robertson

Carol Robertson
General Manager
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