



Stowe Electric Department
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March 1, 2021

Ms. Holly Anderson, Clerk
Vermont Public Utility Commission
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2701

Re: Case No. 20-0703-PET Vermont Legal Aid Request for Moratorium on Utility and Telecommunications Shutoffs During the State of Emergency

Dear Ms. Anderson:

The Town of Stowe Electric Department (“Stowe”) offers the following responses to the questions contained within the Vermont Public Utility Commission’s (“Commission”) December 22, 2020 Order. As a public power utility owned by its ratepayers, Stowe is committed to supporting its customers during these difficult times. Stowe continues to communicate with all ratepayers with past due utility bills and provide them with information on how to access financial assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stowe now offers our response to the five (5) questions presented by the Commission in its December 22, 2020 Order:

(a) The magnitude of customer balances that are more than 60 days past due, the number of customers with balances that are more than 60 days past due, and how these data compare with the same time period in 2020 (broken out into residential and non-residential customers)

The total customer accounts that are more than 60 days past due equals 190 accounts totaling \$264,001.46. Stowe’s billing system does not allow for an easy comparison between commercial and non-commercial accounts, and Stowe staff would have to track each account by rate class to determine whether the account is held by a commercial or

residential customer. The total past due as of 01/31/2021 is \$374,126.23 and the total past due as of 01/31/2020 was \$89,723.36.

(b) The number of customers with whom the utility has interacted to set up a payment agreement between the date of the issuance of this Order and March 1, 2021

Throughout the State of Emergency and Commission's moratorium, Stowe has informed customers about repayment plans and funding sources. Stowe received 97 applications for VCAAP payments that allowed for a total assistance to our customers of \$79,668.44. Stowe remains focused on informing customers about enrolling in payment plans and utilizing available funding sources to cover their arrearages.

(c) The number of payment agreements entered into between the date of the issuance of this Order and March 1, 2021

As of the date of this filing, Stowe has not enrolled any customer with an arrearage into a payment plan.

(d) The number of payment agreements successfully adhered to by the customer between the date of the issuance of this Order and March 1, 2021

Stowe has not had any customer agree to a payment plan.

(e) Comments on whether the moratorium should be extended beyond March 31, 2021

Stowe reiterates two points made in our September 17, 2020 filing: 1) extending or reinstating the moratorium on disconnections will make it difficult for customers to successfully pay off their past due balances; and 2) Stowe will follow the standard disconnection policy and the disconnection procedures in Rule 3.304 (winter disconnection) unless the Commission extends the moratorium on or after March 31, 2021.

Stowe experienced a notable response from its customers after the Commission lifted the moratorium on disconnections. This included additional VCAAP applications and follow-up calls with customers regarding how they can catch up on past due balances.

However, since the Commission reinstated the moratorium, Stowe experienced an interruption in communication with our customers about arrearages and entering into payment plans. Stowe believes that lifting the moratorium after March 31, 2021 will allow staff to communicate effectively with customers about arrearages and make it easier for our customers to manage their arrearages. Stowe does not anticipate disconnecting any customer during the covid-19 pandemic; however, our standard disconnection policy allows for transparent communications with our customers regarding payment of their utility bills.

Stowe appreciates the work done by Commission staff and Department staff during these difficult times - in particular, the effort that made the VCAAP program successful. Stowe looks forward to continuing to help the State of Vermont ease financial strain on Vermont families.

Dated at Stowe, Vermont, this 1st day of March, 2021.

Town of Stowe Electric Department

By: /s/ MNL
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