

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Case No. 24-0969-TF

Tariff filing of Woodstock Aqueduct Company for a change in rates, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 225, effective for service rendered on or after May 16, 2024	
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Order entered: 05/14/2024

**ORDER OPENING INVESTIGATION, SUSPENDING RATE INCREASE,
AND NOTICING SCHEDULING CONFERENCE**

I. INTRODUCTION

On April 2, 2024, Woodstock Aqueduct Company (“Woodstock Aqueduct”) filed revised rate schedules and tariff documents with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) reflecting a proposed 109.82% increase in Woodstock Aqueduct’s overall revenue. The tariff changes are proposed to take effect on a service-rendered basis commencing May 16, 2024.

The Vermont Department of Public Service (“Department”) was notified of this tariff filing via the Commission’s electronic case management system, ePUC, at the time of Woodstock Aqueduct’s filing. Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 225, the Department must investigate the justness and reasonableness of a proposed change to a rate schedule immediately upon receipt of notice of the change.

Between April 16, 2024, and April 29, 2024, the Commission received three comments from members of the public and one comment from the Town of Woodstock Selectboard (the “Selectboard”). The comments generally express concern with the amount of the requested rate increase and Woodstock Aqueduct’s historic investment in its system infrastructure. The Selectboard also states that the Town of Woodstock is actively seeking to acquire the water system and requests that the Commission suspend the effective date of the requested tariff changes.

On May 2, 2024, the Department filed comments recommending that the Commission suspend the effective date of Woodstock Aqueduct’s tariff changes; open an investigation into Woodstock Aqueduct’s tariff filing, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 226; and set a date for a scheduling

conference. In its comments, the Department explained that an investigation is necessary “[d]ue to the magnitude of the rate increase, the length of time since [Woodstock Aqueduct’s] last tariff investigation, and the complexity of issues driving the rate increase.”¹

II. DISCUSSION

Section 225 of Title 30 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated requires the Commission to open an investigation into a tariff filing if the Department does not recommend that the Commission accept the proposed changes. In this case, the Department has recommended that we open an investigation into Woodstock Aqueduct’s tariff filing. Accordingly, we do so, and we provide notice of a scheduling conference to establish a schedule for the investigation.²

Additionally, 30 V.S.A. § 226(a) provides that “upon six days’ notice to the company affected, the Commission may suspend a rate change until it makes a final determination on the request for a rate change.” Under 30 V.S.A. § 227(a) “[i]f the Commission orders that a change shall not go into effect until final determination of the proceedings, it shall proceed to hear the matter as promptly as possible and shall make its determination within seven months from the date that it orders the investigation.” The Commission concurs with the Department that a suspension is necessary because of the scale of the rate increase, the length of time since Woodstock Aqueduct’s last rate increase, and the complexity of issues driving the requested rate increase. Further, nothing in Woodstock Aqueduct’s filing indicates that the request must go into effect on May 16, 2024, for the company to continue providing adequate and efficient service during the pendency of this case. Therefore, we suspend the requested rate increase until we make a final determination on the request.

Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §§ 20 and 21, Woodstock Aqueduct will be responsible for court reporter costs incurred by the Commission during this proceeding and will be billed back.

¹ Department Comments at 2. Woodstock Aqueduct’s last rate increase was approved in Case No. 8462 and resulted in a 20.249% overall increase to Woodstock Aqueduct’s revenue effective July 1, 2015 (almost 9 years ago).

² The parties are reminded of Commission Rule 2.225(A), which requires, “[t]he parties must make all reasonable efforts to reach agreement on, and jointly file, a proposed schedule as early as possible and no later than three days before a scheduling conference. If the parties cannot agree on all scheduling matters, they should make separate filings that indicate what scheduling matters all parties have agreed to and what matters are in dispute.”

III. ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED by the Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) of the State of Vermont that:


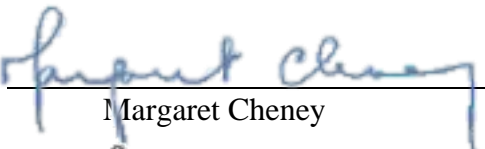
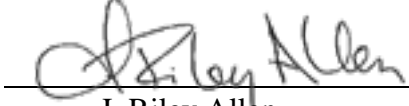
1. Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 225, the Commission opens an investigation into the justness and reasonableness of Woodstock Aqueduct Company’s (“Woodstock Aqueduct”) proposed tariff revisions as filed with the Commission on April 2, 2024.

2. Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §§ 226(a) and 227(a), the Commission suspends Woodstock Aqueduct’s proposed tariff revisions. The Commission will proceed to hear the matter as promptly as possible and will make its determination within seven months from the date of this Order.

3. Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 8, Elizabeth Schilling is appointed to serve as the hearing officer to conduct the proceedings in this matter.


4. Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §§ 10 and 11(a)(2), a scheduling conference will be held in this matter on May 17, 2024, commencing at 11:00 A.M., via GoToMeeting videoconference. Participants and members of the public may access the scheduling conference online at <https://meet.goto.com/970806349>, or call in by telephone using the following information: phone number: [+1 \(571\) 317-3116](tel:+15713173116); access code: 970-806-349. Participants may wish to download the GoToMeeting software application in advance of the hearing at <https://meet.goto.com/install>.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont, this 14th day of May, 2024.

 _____)) PUBLIC UTILITY
Edward McNamara)	
_____)	
 _____)) COMMISSION
Margaret Cheney)	
_____)	
 _____)) OF VERMONT
J. Riley Allen)	

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

Filed: May 14, 2024

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)

PUC Case No. 24-0969-TF - SERVICE LIST

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