

**THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DT 16-872

CONSOLIDATED COMMUNICATIONS HOLDINGS, INC.

**Joint Petition for Findings in Furtherance of the Acquisition of
FairPoint Communications, Inc. and its New Hampshire Operating Subsidiaries
by Consolidated Communications Holdings, Inc.**

ORDER OF NOTICE

On December 29, 2016, Consolidated Communications Holdings, Inc. (CCHI) and FairPoint Communications, Inc. (FCI) filed a Joint Petition for Findings in Furtherance of the Acquisition of FairPoint Communications, Inc., and its New Hampshire Operating Subsidiaries by Consolidated Communications Holdings, Inc. (Joint Petition).

The Joint Petition requests that the Commission make the required findings under RSA 374:30, II, and any other applicable statutory provisions, to permit CCHI and FCI to consummate their merger and acquisition transaction. As a result of that proposed transaction, Consolidated Communications, Inc. (CCI), a wholly-owned subsidiary of CCHI, would become the 100% owner of FCI, which in turn is the owner of Northern New England Telephone Operations, LLC d/b/a FairPoint Communications-NNE (FairPoint) and Northland Telephone Company of Maine, Inc. (Northland). Both FairPoint and Northland are incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) in New Hampshire, and both are deemed to be "excepted local exchange carriers" under RSA 362:7, I (c). FairPoint also retains certain obligations under federal and state law as a Regional Bell Operating Company.

The Commission will review the proposed merger and acquisition transaction described in the Joint Petition under RSA 374:30, II to determine whether the utility to which the transfer is proposed to be made is technically, managerially, and financially capable of maintaining the

obligations of an ILEC as set forth in RSA 362:8 and RSA 374:22-p. These obligations include the provision of basic telephone service throughout the ILEC's franchise territory at rates that are generally capped for a defined period of time, as well as obligations that arise pursuant to the Commission's authority under the federal Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and obligations related to the provision of services to competitive local exchange carriers, interexchange carriers, and wireless carriers, regardless of technology.

The Joint Petition and subsequent docket filings, other than any information for which confidential treatment is requested of or granted by the Commission, will be posted to the Commission's website at <http://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2016/16-872.html>.

The Joint Petition raises, *inter alia*, issues related to whether the proposed merger and acquisition transaction effectively will result in the transfer of FairPoint and Northland to a utility that has the technical, managerial, and financial capability to maintain the obligations of an ILEC as set forth in RSA 362:8 and RSA 374:22-p.

Each party has the right to have an attorney represent the party at the party's own expense.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED, that a Prehearing Conference, pursuant to N.H. Code Admin. Rules Puc 203.15, be held before the Commission located at 21 South Fruit Street, Suite 10, Concord, New Hampshire, on February 1, 2017 at 1:00 p.m., at which each party will provide a preliminary statement of its position with regard to relevant matters and any of the issues set forth in N.H. Code Admin. Rules Puc 203.15; and it is

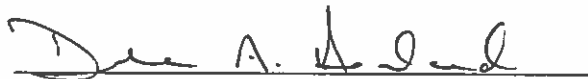
FURTHER ORDERED, that, immediately following the Prehearing Conference, CCHI, FCI, Commission Staff, and interveners hold a Technical Session to review the Joint Petition and other relevant matters and to develop a procedural schedule for the proceeding; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that pursuant to N.H. Code Admin. Rules Puc 203.12, CCHI shall notify all persons desiring to be heard at this hearing by publishing a copy of this Order of Notice no later than January 23, 2017, in a newspaper with general circulation in those portions of the state in which its operations are conducted, and with publication to be documented by affidavit filed with the Commission on or before January 27, 2017; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that consistent with N.H. Code Admin. Rules Puc 203.17 and Puc 203.02, any party seeking to intervene in the proceeding shall submit to the Commission seven copies of a petition to intervene, with copies sent to the Office of the Consumer Advocate and all parties listed on the Commission's service list for this proceeding, on or before January 27, 2017, such petition stating the facts demonstrating how its rights, duties, privileges, immunities, or other substantial interest may be affected by the proceeding, as required by N.H. Code Admin. Rules Puc 203.17 and RSA 541-A:32, I (b); and it is

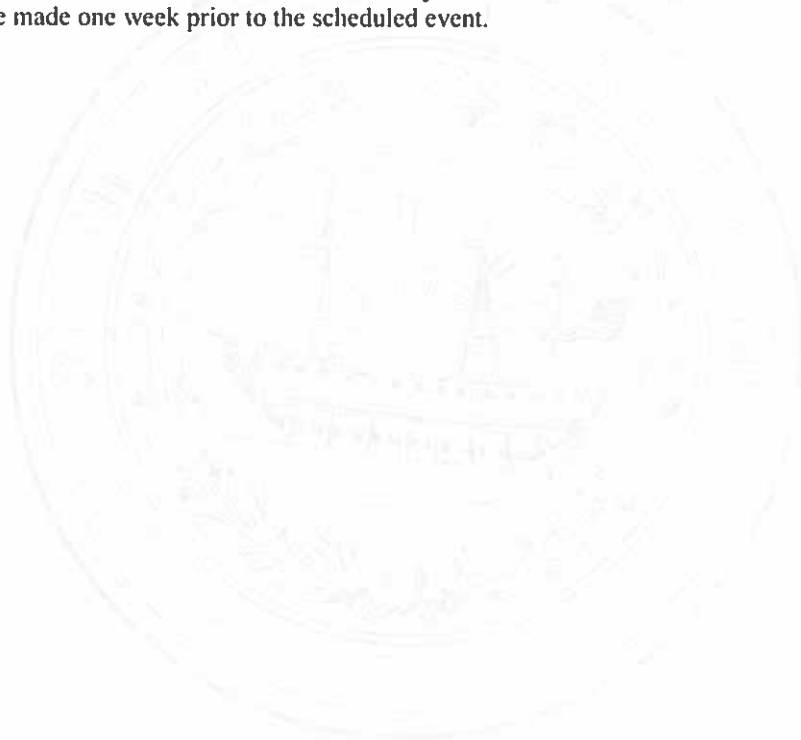
FURTHER ORDERED, that any party objecting to a petition to intervene make said objection on or before February 1, 2017.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this seventeenth day of
January, 2017.



Debra A. Howland
Executive Director

Individuals needing assistance or auxiliary communication aids due to sensory impairment or other disability should contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, NHPUC, 21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10, Concord, New Hampshire 03301-2429; 603-271-2431; TDD Access: Relay N.H. 1-800-735-2964. Notification of the need for assistance should be made one week prior to the scheduled event.



SERVICE LIST - EMAIL ADDRESSES - DOCKET RELATED

Pursuant to N.H. Admin Rule Puc 203.11 (a) (1): Serve an electronic copy on each person identified on the service list.

Executive.Director@puc.nh.gov
amanda.noonan@puc.nh.gov
bmetge@fairpoint.com
david.wiesner@puc.nh.gov
lisa.m.cleveland@puc.nh.gov
michael.ladam@puc.nh.gov
mike.shultz@consolidated.com
mreed@fairpoint.com
ocalitigation@oca.nh.gov
pmchugh@fairpoint.com
pphillips@primmer.com
robert.meehan@fairpoint.com
sgeiger@orr-reno.com

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FILING INSTRUCTIONS:

- a) Pursuant to N.H. Admin Rule Puc 203.02 (a), with the exception of Discovery, file 7 copies, as well as an electronic copy, of all documents including cover letter with:**
- DEBRA A HOWLAND
EXEC DIRECTOR
NHPUC
21 S. FRUIT ST, SUITE 10
CONCORD NH 03301-2429
- b) Serve an electronic copy with each person identified on the Commission's service list and with the Office of Consumer Advocate.**
- c) Serve a written copy on each person on the service list not able to receive electronic mail.**