

DE 01-042

PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Petition for Approval of Interim Low-Income Electric  
Assistance Program

Order Establishing Procedural Schedule

O R D E R    N O.    23,677

April 13, 2001

**APPEARANCES:** Gerald M. Eaton, Esq. for Public Service Company of New Hampshire; MaryAnn Manoogian for the Governor's Office of Energy and Community Services; New Hampshire Legal Assistance by Alan M. Linder, Esq. for the Save Our Homes Organization; Gallagher, Callahan & Gartrell, P.A. by Seth L. Shortlidge, Esq. for Granite State Electric Company; Office of Consumer Advocate by Kenneth the Staff of the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission.

**I.    PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On November 1, 2000, the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (Commission) entered Order No. 23,573 in Docket No. DR 96-150, adopting with certain modifications the recommendations of its Low Income Working Group (LIWG). The LIWG was established to advise the Commission on the development and implementation of a statewide Energy Assistance Program (EAP) that would provide support for low-income customers once the state's electric industry is opened to retail competition pursuant to the Electric Industry Restructuring Act, RSA 374-F.

Among the recommendations of the LIWG was that, if the service territory of a particular utility is opened to

retail competition prior to the adoption of the statewide EAP, the utility be required to implement a company-specific Interim Electric Assistance Program (IEAP) to provide assistance until the advent of the EAP. Pursuant to the Restructuring Settlement Agreement approved with modifications by the Commission in Docket No. DE 99-099 and subsequently approved with additional modifications by the Legislature, it is expected that the service territory of Public Service Company of New Hampshire (PSNH) will be opened to retail competition on May 1, 2001.

Accordingly, and noting that it anticipates that its systems will not be able to accommodate a statewide EAP until early 2002 at the soonest, on February 16, 2001 PSNH filed a proposed IEAP and petitioned the Commission for its approval. The Commission opened this docket to consider PSNH's petition.

The Commission entered an Order of Notice on April 3, 2001, scheduling a Pre-Hearing Conference and directing that any petitions to intervene be filed on or before April 9, 2001, with any filings in opposition due the following day. The Order of Notice contained a tentative procedural schedule to govern the remainder of the docket and directed PSNH to provide public notice of the Pre-Hearing Conference, which was accomplished as required.

The Commission received timely intervention petitions from the Governor's Office of Energy and Community Services (GOECS), Granite State Electric Company (GSEC), the Save Our Homes Organization (SOHO) and, jointly, Concord Electric Company (CEC) and Exeter & Hampton Electric Company (E&H). The Office of Consumer Advocate advised the Commission on April 4, 2001 that it would be entering an appearance on behalf of residential ratepayers.

The Pre-Hearing Conference took place as scheduled on April 9, 2001. The Commission considered all then-pending intervention petitions, the Parties and Commission Staff (Staff) made preliminary statements of their positions and, following the Conference, the Parties and Staff met for a technical session.

## **II. INTERVENTION PETITIONS**

At the Pre-Hearing Conference, the Commission took up the intervention petitions of GOECS, GSEC and SOHO. Noting the lack of any opposition to these petitions, they were granted. After the Pre-Hearing Conference, the Commission received a timely joint intervention petition from CEC and E&H. There were no filings in opposition to the CEC/E&H petition. Therefore, we will also grant the CEC/E&H petition.

## **III. PRELIMINARY POSITIONS OF THE PARTIES AND STAFF**

**A. Public Service Company of New Hampshire**

PSNH noted that its proposed IEAP is similar to the interim programs being offered by the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative and GSEC. PSNH indicated that it proposes a 40 percent reduction in delivery service charges for eligible customers, defined as customers with incomes at 150 percent of the federal poverty level or lower. The Company requested a May 1, 2001 start date for its IEAP.

**B. Save Our Homes Organization**

SOHO indicated that it is generally supportive of PSNH's proposal as well as the proposed effective date of the program, but that it wished to obtain certain clarifications from PSNH.

**C. Office of Consumer Advocate**

OCA stated that it is also generally supportive of the proposed IEAP, but is concerned about overcollections because PSNH's projected IEAP expenses are well below the sums available for the program, 1.2 mils per kilowatt-hour, through the systems benefits charge imposed on PSNH ratepayers. OCA also raised the possibility of streamlining the eligibility verification process by "piggy-backing" the IEAP with the Lifeline program offered to low-income telephone customers.

**D. Governor's Office of Energy and Community Services**

GOECS expressed support for PSNH's proposal, indicating that it would be seeking certain clarifications of PSNH's costs and proposed administrative procedures.

**E. Staff**

Staff indicated that it was supportive of PSNH's proposal but shared OCA's concern about overcollection. Staff also noted that it was concerned about the amount of administrative expenses proposed by PSNH.

**III. PROCEDURAL SCHEDULE**

In the Pre-Hearing Conference Order, we set forth a proposed procedural schedule. The only objection to the proposed schedule was raised by SOHO, which requested two additional days for the submission of data requests to PSNH. PSNH indicated that it did not object to SOHO's request. The procedural schedule, as modified by SOHO's request, is as follows:

Data Requests by Staff and Intervenors	April 13, 2001
PSNH Data Responses	April 18, 2001
Testimony by Staff and Intervenors	April 20, 2001
Merits Hearing	April 24, 2001

We conclude that the proposed procedural schedule is consistent with the public good and therefore approve it to

govern the remainder of the proceedings in this docket.

**Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby**

**ORDERED,** that the procedural schedule outlined above  
is APPROVED.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New  
Hampshire this thirteenth day of April, 2001.

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Douglas L. Patch  
Chairman

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Susan S. Geiger  
Commissioner

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Nancy Brockway  
Commissioner

Attested by:

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Thomas B. Getz  
Executive Director and Secretary