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Department of Commerce Division of Public Utilities

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Action Request Response

To: Public Service Commission of Utah

From: Utah Division of Public Utilities

Artie Powell, Director

Doug Wheelwright, Utility Technical Consultant Supervisor

Eric Orton, Utility Technical Consultant

Date: June 16, 2020

Re: **Docket No. 19-057-25**, Informational Filing of Dominion Energy Utah Concerning the Transponder Replacement Program and Request for a Waiver of Applicable Commission Rules

Recommendation (No Action)

The Division of Public Utilities (Division) recommends that the Public Service Commission of Utah (Commission) take no action at this time regarding this Quarterly Transponder Replacement Progress Report (Report) filed by Dominion Energy Utah (Dominion) on May 19, 2020.

Issue

On May 19, 2020, Dominion submitted its Report. Also, on May 19, 2020, the Commission issued an Action Request to the Division with a due date of June 18, 2020. The Commission directed the Division to review the Report for compliance and make recommendations. This memorandum is the Division's response to the Action Request.

Background

On October 1, 2019, Dominion submitted its application to the Commission requesting a waiver of certain Commission rules. Both the Office of Consumer Services (Office) and Division filed comments that led to settlement discussions with Dominion. On November 14, 2019, the three parties filed a joint settlement stipulation (Stipulation) “resolving issues related to Dominion Energy Utah’s transponder replacement program.” On December 10, 2019 Commission approved the settlement stipulation

On February 21, 2020 Dominion submitted its first filing to comply with paragraph nine of the settlement Stipulation directing it to provide quarterly updates regarding the status of the transponder replacement program. This is the second quarterly update report following the Commission’s order.

Discussion

In its order, the Commission approved the terms and conditions contained in the settlement stipulation, one of which specifically stated that Dominion’s transponder replacement program be completed by September 30, 2020. As part of the process to ensure that this deadline was met, the Commission directed Dominion to “provide quarterly updates about the status of the transponder replacement program and the extent of the estimated meter reads on its system.” At the completion of the transponder replacement program, Dominion is also required to “file a final status report with the Commission notifying the Commission and Parties that the program is complete.”

Dominion is also required to provide documentation showing the progress it is making on its commitment to solve the problem of aging estimated meter reads. The estimated meter reads were continuing to accumulate for some customers and Dominion committed to solve the problem and refund the customer’s money in some cases.

The current filing is the second of the above-mentioned quarterly reports and shows both: 1) the progress and status of the transponder replacement program and 2) the extent of six-month-old

(or older) estimated meter reads on its system. Dominion provided two exhibits supporting its position that it has complied with the terms and conditions found in paragraphs six through nine of the stipulation. Each one is addressed below.

- The condition in paragraph six relates to Dominion's commitment to complete the transponder replacement program by September 30, 2020 and it is expecting to meet this deadline. Exhibit six represents that 92.26% of the transponders have been replaced at quarter-end, leaving 7.63% to be replaced before the end of this September. At its current average of just over 20,000 replacements a month, Dominion should be able to complete replacing the transponders prior to its deadline.
- The condition in paragraph seven relates to refunding money to customers who have bills with six months or more estimated meter reads and who also file complaints with the Division. The first quarterly filing showed that there were nine customers who received refunds from Dominion based on this criterion. Dominion refunded a total of \$1,192.05 to these customers.
- Exhibit 5 includes the number of monthly meter-read estimates through April 2020. This exhibit shows, among other things, that the number of meter-read estimates over six months old has continued to drop off significantly. In its Action Request Response filed on March 23, 2020 the Division stated, "If this trend continues the Division expects that there will be virtually no meter read estimates over six months old by the next quarterly report." The Division's estimation was inaccurate. According to the current exhibit there were still ten customers who had estimated reads 6 months old or older.
- The condition in paragraph eight relates to Dominion's requirement to pay the ordered penalty to the Commission. This payment was made on January 13, 2020.

- The condition in paragraph nine relates to the required quarterly update filings showing the progress of the transponder replacement program and the filing of “a final status report” when it’s completed. The current filing is in fulfillment of that requirement.

Conclusion

The Division has reviewed Dominion’s Quarterly Transponder Replacement Update filing and accompanying exhibits and has determined that it is in line with the Commission’s order and provides the requisite information as directed. Since this filing is informational and no action is requested, the Division recommends the Commission take no action at this time.

Cc: Kelly Mendenhall, Dominion Energy Utah
Michele Beck, Office of Consumer Services