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UTAH 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

Chris Parker, Director

Brenda Salter, Assistant Division Director

Abdinasir Abdulle, Utility Technical Consultant Supervisor

Paul Hicken, Technical Consultant

Date: December 13, 2023

Re: **Docket No. 23-035-49**, In the Matter of Rocky Mountain Power's 2024 Strategic Communications and Outreach Action Plan and Budget for Demand Side Management (DSM).

Recommendation (Approval)

The Division of Public Utilities (DPU or Division) recommends that the Public Service Commission (PSC or Commission) approve Rocky Mountain Power's (Company) 2024 Strategic Communications and Outreach Action Plan and Budget for Demand Side Management.

Issue

On November 7, 2023, the Company filed with the Commission its Annual Strategic Communications and Outreach Action Plan and Budget for Demand Side Management for January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024, (2024 Plan). The Company proposes a \$1.5 million budget, and the expenses associated with the 2024 Plan were included in the Company's forecast of expenses in the DSM Forecast Report filed November 1, 2023, in Docket No. 23-035-31. The Company requests an order approving the 2024 Plan with an effective date of January 1, 2024.

Division of Public Utilities

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The Commission issued an Action Request to the Division on November 7, 2023, to review the filing and make recommendations to the Commission by December 7, 2023. In addition, the Commission issued a Notice of Filing and Comment Period on November 13, 2023, requesting interested parties submit comments by December 13, 2023. This memorandum is the Division's response to the Commission's Action Request and Notice of Filing and Comment Period.

Background

On June 11, 2009, in Docket No. 09-035-36, the Commission issued an Order approving the implementation of an outreach and communications program in Utah for the Company's energy efficiency and peak management programs (Campaign) for a period of three years.¹ The intent of the Campaign was to increase awareness and participation in the Company's energy efficiency and peak reduction programs. Since that time, the Company has sought and received approval from the Commission for outreach and communications plans on an annual basis in separate dockets.

Discussion

Rocky Mountain Power's marketing and communication outreach efforts continue to have a positive impact on both residential and business customers. In 2023, customer surveys conducted by Escalent, an independent third-party marketing firm, showed more than half of residential and over 60% of business customers recalled seeing communication on energy efficiency from the Company. Interest in energy efficiency and financial savings remains high and all surveyed customers look to the Company as a credible source of energy efficiency information.

The annual surveys conducted by Escalent indicate that the Home Energy Savings programs received customer satisfaction ratings of 8.6/10 consistently throughout 2023. Additionally, over 90% of customers felt energy conservation programs were important, and 58% of customers reported changes to their actions to reduce energy consumption. Likewise, the Wattsmart Business program received high customer satisfaction ratings of 8.8/10 for 2023. About 93% of business customers believe it is important for utility

¹ Utah PSC, Docket No. 035-36, Order Approving Program with Conditions. June 11, 2009.

companies to offer energy conservation programs, especially demand response programs. In the past year about 39% of business customers report making changes to save energy.²

The 2024 Campaign strategy is to use research to continually approve awareness efforts for energy efficiency to support Wattsmart programs and energy conservation in general.

Specifically, the Company identifies the strategy going forward is as follows:

- Continue to advertise and promote Wattsmart choices to empower customers with options to save energy and money.
- Increase targeted media channels to include email, TV, social networking, online, radio, and print with focus on conservation and efficiency.
- Inspire the next generation of energy users by offering in classroom energy efficiency education to 200 classrooms in 2024.
- Give customers the tools to manage their energy usage by offering detailed energy insight reports and information about low and no-cost strategies, programs, and incentives.
- Engage customers online by directing customers to website content on Wattsmart.com and RockyMountainPower.net.
- Continue to research, evaluate, and measure success with annual program evaluations, and by measuring overall awareness and program participation and engagement.³

The proposed budget for 2024 of \$1.5 million is consistent with past Campaign budgets and also complies with the budget amount of \$1.5 million set in the 09-035-36 docket of June 11, 2009. The Division notes that the 2024 Campaign is comparable to previous years with a slight increase to the Wattsmart School Curriculum program and a slight decrease to Creative/Production/Planning programs. The budget forecasts seem to be effectively accomplishing the goals of the program.

² Rocky Mountain Power's Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan and Budget for 2024, p.3-4.

³ Rocky Mountain Power's Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan and Budget for 2024, p.5.

Conclusion

Based on its review of the Company's filing, the Division concludes that the Company's 2024 Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan and Budget for DSM complies with the Commission's order in Docket No. 09-035-36, to promote energy saving programs and encourage participation through various media campaigns. The Division recommends approval of the filing.

cc: Michael Snow, Rocky Mountain Power.
Michele Beck, Office of Consumer Services.
Service List.