



State of Utah
Department of Commerce
Division of Public Utilities

FRANCINE GIANI CHRIS PARKER
Executive Director Director, Division of Public Utilities

GARY HERBERT
Governor

SPENCER J. COX
Lieutenant Governor

Comments

To: Utah Public Service Commission
From: Utah Division of Public Utilities
Chris Parker, Director
Artie Powell, Manager
Doug Wheelwright, Utility Technical Consultant Supervisor
Eric Orton, Utility Technical Consultant
Date: December 3, 2019
Re: **Docket No. 19-057-T05, Application of Dominion Energy Utah for Approval of Modifications of Tariff Sections 2.01, 4.01 and 5.01.**

Recommendation (Approval)

The Division of Public Utilities (“Division”) recommends the Public Service Commission of Utah (“Commission”) approve the application of Dominion Energy Utah (“DEU”) to alter the due date on which ratepayers are required to make a request for service with DEU.

Issue

DEU proposes to change some of the deadlines set forth in Sections 2.01, 4.01, and 5.01 of its tariff giving its ratepayers time to make a decision after the Commission issues its order in the current General Rate Case. Were these dates not to change, ratepayers would need to make decisions before they know what rates will be applicable to them as the rates will not be effective until on or after March 1, 2020.

Background

On July 1, 2019, DEU filed a general rate case recommending changes that are to be effective on or after March 1, 2020. Assuming that the Commission approves some changes, this may cause a timing conflict for sales ratepayers that are determining whether they want to change to the TS class or TS ratepayers that are determining if they want to change to a sales class.

On November 18, 2019 DEU filed its request to modify three tariff sections specifically delaying the date certain ratepayers must finalize a request for service. On that same day the Commission issued its Action Request to the Division requiring it to investigate this filing. On November 18, 2019, the Commission issued its Notice of Scheduling Conference specifying November 26, 2019 as the date for this conference. The order following this Scheduling Conference stated that comments are due December 4, 2019 with reply comments due December 12, 2019, and a hearing on the matter scheduled on December 19, 2019. These are the Division's comments.

Discussion

For ratepayers that may want to change to transportation service, the current tariff states that "A fully executed contract and any other requirements must be received by the Company by February 28th of the same year." This date is before the effective date of any changes that may be approved in the current general rate case. The conflicting dates would increase the probability that ratepayers may not know whether they qualify for switching, or want to switch, to a given rate class until after they are required to make a decision and commitment. To resolve this timing problem, DEU proposes to extend the deadlines to give these ratepayers additional time to make informed decisions following the outcome of the General Rate Case.

Additionally, the Division is aware that most of the ratepayers that are moving to transportation service are smaller users, (based on volume) when compared to the top tier users in the transportation class. It seems reasonable to the Division that those small users changing rate classes may not have a measurable impact on the DEU's system. The requirement to notify DEU of a change in service by a specific date may be more focused on a procedure applicable to larger use ratepayers, rather than the smaller low volume ratepayers.

Conclusion

Utility ratepayers should have the best information available in order to make the most informed decisions regarding their utility service. The effective date for any new rates that may be ordered in the current General Rate Case will be past the time when ratepayers would be required to make a decision to change service. This condition is not in harmony with the public interest and Division objectives. Therefore, the Division supports DEU's proposed tariff changes giving these ratepayers slightly more time to make informed decisions for their effective rates. The proposed changes are just, reasonable, and in the public interest.

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