

- BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF UTAH -

Modification of Dominion Energy Utah's
Tariff to the Manual Meter Reading Charge

DOCKET NO. 21-057-T04

ORDER

ISSUED: June 14, 2021

On May 12, 2021, Dominion Energy Utah (DEU) filed an application ("Application") with the Public Service Commission (PSC) requesting approval to modify Section 2.02 of its Utah Natural Gas Tariff No. 500 ("Tariff"), effective June 11, 2021.

On May 14, 2021, the PSC issued a Notice of Filing and Comment Period requesting comments by May 26, 2021, and the Division of Public Utilities (DPU) filed comments May 20, 2021. The PSC subsequently sought reply comments by June 4, 2021 and DEU filed reply comments on June 3, 2021.

THE APPLICATION AND FILED COMMENTS

The Application proposes to modify Tariff Page 2-3 by adding language stating that customers who fail to provide DEU access to DEU's meter devices for maintenance activities will be subject to a \$20 per month manual meter reading fee. DEU states that in spite of repeated attempts during its recent Transponder Replacement Program (TRP), it has been unable to replace 37 transponders due to access issues. DEU is also concerned that customers with difficult-to-access meters may fail to provide access for possible future maintenance work.

According to DEU, existing Tariff language requires customers to provide access to DEU; however, DEU's remedy when access is denied is limited to discontinuation of service. Rather than immediately starting shut-off procedures for customers who fail to provide access, DEU proposes to impose a \$20 monthly fee on the customers as an interim step. DEU believes

that the imposition of the fee will encourage customers to provide access, without the immediate threat of discontinuance of service. In a rare case where the fee does not prompt a customer to provide access within a reasonable period of time, DEU states it could start shut-off procedures under other sections of the Tariff.

DPU states DEU's proposed Tariff modification is reasonable and recommends the PSC approve it with the following conditions: (1) require DEU to make a final attempt to replace the transponders before enacting the charge; and (2) limit application of the \$20 charge to five months at which time the disconnection procedure under Tariff Section 7.02 should be pursued. DPU also states that DEU's term "difficult-to-reach" is not clearly defined in the Application.

In reply, DEU agrees with DPU's recommendations. Pertaining to a five-month limitation on the charge, DEU commits to file with the PSC to remove the language proposed in this docket on or before November 1, 2021. DEU also states it will communicate with the affected customers that access to the meter is required and denial of access could result in an additional charge of \$20 per month. DEU clarifies that "difficult-to-reach" pertains to twelve meters located in buildings that either have no occupant or the owner is difficult to contact, and six meters that are behind locked gates.

DISCUSSION, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

DEU has completed nearly all of its planned transponder replacements as part of DEU's TRP. Thirty-seven (37) transponders remain that have not been replaced because DEU has been unable to access the meters. Both DEU and DPU believe that DEU can encourage the remaining 37 customers to provide access to DEU's measurement equipment without the immediate threat

of discontinuance of service, by assessing a \$20 monthly fee until access is provided. DPU proposes, however, to cap the \$20 monthly fee to five months, at which time, DEU should begin shut-off procedures.

Based on our review of the Application, filed comments, DPU's recommendation, and DEU's commitments, we find and conclude DEU's proposed Tariff change, as modified by DPU, is justified and is a reasonable approach to help ensure completion of the TRP. We further find that the five-month limitation on the \$20 monthly assessment on customers who deny access to meters is necessary and reasonable.¹

Accordingly, we approve the Application and modifications to Tariff Page 2-3, as further modified by DPU's proposed conditions, and direct DEU to file a petition to modify the Tariff to end the \$20 monthly assessment we approve here, on or before November 1, 2021. We also direct DEU to communicate with the affected customers before implementing the charge authorized in our Order. In that regard, we find that an effective date of July 1, 2021 will give DEU time to circulate such communications, and provides a reasonable opportunity for the affected customers to avoid such charge.

¹ We appreciate and respect the negotiation and consensus that has been reached here between DEU and DPU. However, this approval of a tariff with limited scope should not be construed as our intention to create a general right for customers to continue receiving utility service while denying a utility reasonable physical access to meters. Every situation is fact specific, but we reiterate and emphasize each customer's responsibility to provide reasonable meter access to a utility, and that a customer who does not provide that reasonable access generally can be considered to have forfeited the right to receive utility service.

ORDER

Based on the foregoing, we:

1. Approve the Application and the proposed changes to Tariff Section 2.02, as further modified by DPU, and as explained in our Order, effective July 1, 2021;
2. Direct DEU to file modified Tariff pages reflecting the decisions in this Order that will become effective on July 1, 2021, on or before June 21, 2021;
3. Direct DEU to file modifications to its Tariff, Section 2.02 related to expiration of the fee we are approving, as committed to in its Reply comments and as explained above, on or before November 1, 2021; and
4. Direct DEU to make a final attempt to reach the 37 customers before July 1, 2021 to make arrangements to replace the transponders, and notify them of the implications of this Order and its effective date.

DATED at Salt Lake City, Utah, June 14, 2021.

/s/ Yvonne R. Hogle
Presiding Officer

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Approved and Confirmed June 14, 2021, as the Order of the Public Service

Commission of Utah.

/s/ Thad LeVar, Chair

/s/ David R. Clark, Commissioner

/s/ Ron Allen, Commissioner

Attest:

/s/ Gary L. Widerburg
PSC Secretary
DW#319088

Notice of Opportunity for Agency Review or Rehearing

Pursuant to Utah Code Ann. §§ 63G-4-301 and 54-7-15, a party may seek agency review or rehearing of this written order by filing a request for review or rehearing with the PSC within 30 days after the issuance of the order. Responses to a request for agency review or rehearing must be filed within 15 days of the filing of the request for review or rehearing. If the PSC fails to grant a request for review or rehearing within 30 days after the filing of a request for review or rehearing, it is deemed denied. Judicial review of the PSC's final agency action may be obtained by filing a Petition for Review with the Utah Supreme Court within 30 days after final agency action. Any Petition for Review must comply with the requirements of Utah Code Ann. §§ 63G-4-401, 63G-4-403, and the Utah Rules of Appellate Procedure.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I CERTIFY that on June 14, 2021, a true and correct copy of the foregoing was delivered upon the following as indicated below:

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