

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DE 23-073

STATEWIDE LOW-INCOME ELECTRIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

2023-2024 Program Administrative Budgets

COMMENCEMENT OF ADJUDICATIVE PROCEEDING AND NOTICE OF HEARING

During August 2023, Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy (Eversource), Unitil Energy Systems, Inc. (UES), Liberty Utilities (Granite State Electric) Corp. d/b/a Liberty (Liberty), the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC) (collectively, the Utilities), and the New Hampshire community action agencies (CAAs), filed their petitions, with updates, for approval of their budgets for administering the statewide low-income Electric Assistance Program (EAP) for the 2023-2024 program year. The petitions and other docket filings, other than any information for which confidential treatment is requested of or granted by the Commission, are available on the Commission's website at <https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2023/23-073.html>.

I. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this docket is to review the Utilities' and CAAs' budgets for the 2023-2024 upcoming EAP program year (October 1, 2023-September 30, 2024). The EAP was established by prior orders of the Commission and by statute. RSA 374-F:3, V(a). *See also* Order No. 23,980 (May 30, 2002). The EAP is funded by the system benefits charge, which is paid by all ratepayers as required by RSA 374-F:3, VI, and RSA 374-F:4, VIII(c). The EAP program is administered by the CAAs, the New Hampshire Department of Energy (DOE), and the Utilities, as regulated by the Commission.

On July 31, 2023, and August 1, 2023, the Utilities made their original EAP budget filings with the Commission. On August 1, 2023, the DOE filed a letter regarding certain software-related expenditures the DOE expected to make on behalf of the CAAs.¹ On August 2, 2023, the CAAs made their original EAP budget filing, followed by an updated CAA filing made on August 4, 2023. On August 15, 2023, the Office of the Consumer Advocate filed its letter of participation in this proceeding.

Subsequently, in Docket No. 22-043, the Commission issued an Order *nisi* approving certain modifications to the EAP programming structure for the upcoming 2023-2024 EAP program year. *See* Order No. 26,870 (August 9, 2023). As part of the directives of Order No. 26,870 to implement these changes, the Utilities submitted revised EAP budgets to the Commission, and compliance Tariff pages reflecting changes in the EAP discount structures. (UES made its revised EAP budget filing on August 17, 2023, with a compliance Tariff filing on August 22, 2023; Liberty made its revised EAP budget filing on August 23, 2023, with a compliance Tariff filing on the same day; Eversource filed a revised EAP budget filing on August 15, 2023, without a companion Tariff filing).

II. ISSUES PRESENTED

The Utilities' and CAAs' budget filings present the following issues: whether the proposed EAP budgets for the 2023-2024 program year are consistent with RSA 374-F:4, VIII (a) and (c) and are reasonable, and whether the Utilities' compliance Tariff filings accurately reflect the programmatic changes approved in Order No. 26,870. As part of this review, the Commission will consider administrative expenditures by the Utilities and the CAAs, including spending on software and other ancillary items used

¹ The DOE's software-related letter to the Commission is available here: https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2023/23-073/LETTERS-MEMOS-TARIFFS/23-073_2023-08-01_NHDOE_LETTER-EXPENDITURE-SOFTWARE.PDF

in EAP administration. Accordingly, an adjudicative proceeding will be convened to address these issues, with a hearing scheduled for September 21, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. The Commission requests that the DOE and any other parties file a statement of position regarding the EAP budget filings by September 15, 2023.

The Commission will be conducting any hearings scheduled in this matter in person. The Commission will consider requests to use a hybrid format to permit remote participation by a specific individual. Such requests will be granted only if the Commission determines a sufficient reason is provided for why an individual is unable to attend in person. Any party requesting a specific individual be permitted to participate remotely must file a written request with the Commission's Clerk's Office no later than fifteen days prior to the prehearing conference or hearing date. If the Commission determines that one or more individuals will be permitted to appear remotely, then individuals in the Commission's hearing room, including the Commissioners, will be broadcast on a web-enabled platform.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED, that an adjudicative proceeding be commenced for the purpose of reviewing and resolving the foregoing issues pursuant to RSA Chapter 541-A, RSA 374-F:4, VIII (a) and (c), Order No. 26,870, other applicable Commission Orders, and the Commission's procedural rules; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the Commission will hold a hearing in this matter at its offices located at 21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10, Concord, New Hampshire, on September 21, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. Three hours shall be allotted for this hearing; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that any entity or individual may petition to intervene and seek to be admitted as a party in this proceeding; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that, consistent with N.H. Admin. R., Puc 203.17 and Puc 203.02, any entity or individual seeking to intervene in the proceeding shall file with the Commission a petition to intervene with copies sent to the service list, on or before September 1, 2023; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that any party objecting to a petition to intervene make said objection on or before September 8, 2023; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that parties shall file any proposed exhibits, written testimony, motions, or other documents intended to become part of the record in this proceeding with the Commission. Pursuant to the secretarial letter issued on March 17, 2020, which is posted on the Commission's website at <https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Secretarial%20Letters/20200317-SecLtr-Temp-Changes-in-Filing-Requirements.pdf>, all Commission rules requiring the filing of paper copies are suspended until further notice. Parties may elect to submit any filing in electronic form unless otherwise ordered by the Commission. Filings will be considered filed as of the time the electronic copy is received by the Commission; and it is


FURTHER ORDERED, that routine procedural inquiries may be made by contacting the Commission's Clerk's Office at (603) 271-2431 or ClerksOffice@puc.nh.gov. All requests to the Commission should be made in a written pleading filed with the Commission. Unless otherwise authorized by law, *ex parte* communications are prohibited; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, under N.H. Admin. R., Puc 203.12, the NH Electric Utilities shall notify all entities and individuals desiring to be heard at this hearing by publishing a copy of this order of notice on their websites no later than two business days after the date of issue, such publication to be documented by affidavit filed with the Commission on or before September 8, 2023. In addition, the Clerk shall publish

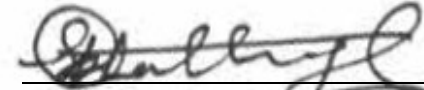
this order of notice on the Commission's website no later than two business days after the date of issue; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that any hearings in this matter shall be conducted in accordance with the attached hearing guidelines.

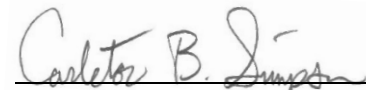
So ordered, this twenty-fifth day of August, 2023.



Daniel C. Goldner
Chairman



Pradip K. Chattopadhyay
Commissioner



Carleton B. Simpson
Commissioner

Service List - Docket Related

Docket#: 23-073

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