

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**DE 26-018**

**LIBERTY UTILITIES (GRANITE STATE ELECTRIC) CORP. d/b/a LIBERTY**

**Petition to Approve Vegetation Management Program Rate Adjustment**

**COMMENCEMENT OF ADJUDICATIVE PROCEEDING  
AND NOTICE OF HEARING**

On March 16, 2026, Liberty Utilities (Granite State Electric) Corp. d/b/a Liberty (Liberty) filed a petition requesting that the Commission approve its proposed vegetation management program (VMP) rate of \$0.00054 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for the period of May 1, 2026 to April 30, 2027. In support of its petition, Liberty filed the combined direct testimony of Liberty Utilities Service Corp. employees Heather Green and Robert Garcia (Direct Testimony). All docket filings, other than any information subject to confidential treatment, are available on the Commission's website at

<https://www.puc.nh.gov/VirtualFileRoom/Docket.aspx?DocketNumber=DE%2026-018>.

**I. BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

As explained in the petition, Liberty's VMP consists of cycle trimming, removal of high-risk trees, emergent or unplanned work, public outreach and education, and related support. Petition at page 1. In Order No. 28,135 (April 24, 2025), the Commission approved a settlement agreement that permits Liberty to recover \$2,500,000 annually in base rates for VMP spending, with the possibility of recovering an additional \$500,000, for a total of \$3,000,000.

By March 15 of each year, Liberty must submit a reconciliation filing, the purpose of which is to reconcile Liberty's actual VMP expenses in a given calendar year (CY) with its

authorized budget through an adjustment to its VMP rate. *See* Docket No. DE 24-044, Order No. 26,998 at 5 (April 30, 2024).

Attachment 4 of the Direct Testimony shows that, in CY 2025, Liberty spent a total of \$548,140 more than the base plan amount, of which only \$500,000 is recoverable. Direct Testimony at Bates page 40. Liberty is proposing a VMP rate of \$0.00054 per kWh, which it calculated by dividing the sum of any over/under collections for the prior period and amounts recoverable or refundable for the program year by the forecasted kWh deliveries for the subsequent 12-month period beginning May 1, 2026. Direct Testimony at Bates pages 19; Attachment 4, Bates page 42.

According to Liberty, if this proposed VMP rate is approved, the average Default Energy Service residential customer using 650 kWh per month would see a monthly bill increase of \$0.35 or 0.19 percent. Petition at page 2; Direct Testimony at Bates page 20. Although not mentioned in either its petition<sup>1</sup> or cover letter, Liberty has requested the Commission to issue an order by April 24, 2026 to allow distribution rate changes to be made effective for service rendered on and after May 1, 2026. Direct Testimony at Bates page 19.

## **II. ISSUES PRESENTED**

The filing presents, *inter alia*, the following issues: whether Liberty's VMP activities during CY 2025 were consistent with authorized VMP goals and parameters; whether Liberty accurately accounted for the CY 2025 costs of its VMP; whether Liberty appropriately calculated the prior period under collection and proposed VMP rate; and whether the proposed VMP rate, if

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<sup>1</sup> Puc 203.06(a) requires "all requests for commission action shall be made in the form of a pleading". In the future, Liberty should endeavor to include all requests of the Commission in the petition, and not only in the supporting documents.

approved, would be just and reasonable, as required by RSA 374:2, RSA 378:5, and RSA 378:7. Accordingly, an adjudicative proceeding will be convened to address these issues.

The Commission will be conducting the hearing scheduled in this matter in person. The Commission will consider requests to conduct hearings using a hybrid format to permit remote participation by a specific individual only if the Commission has determined that a sufficient reason has been provided for why that individual would be unable to attend in person. Any party requesting that a specific individual be permitted to participate remotely should file a written request with the Commission's Clerk's Office as soon as possible. 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 347:2, RSA 378:5, RSA 378:7, and the Commission's procedural rules; and it is

**FURTHER ORDERED**, that the New Hampshire Department of Energy is requested to file its position regarding Liberty's petition, including the reasons for this position, on or before April 13, 2026; 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. Each party has the right to have an attorney represent the party at the party's own expense; and it is

**FURTHER ORDERED**, that, consistent with RSA 541-A:32, Puc 204.08, and Puc 203.06, any entity or individual seeking to intervene in the proceeding shall file with the

Commission a petition to intervene with copies sent to Liberty and any other parties on the service list, on or before April 13, 2026. The petition shall state the facts demonstrating how the petitioner's rights, duties, privileges, immunities, or other substantial interests may be affected by the proceeding, consistent with Puc 204.08; and it is

**FURTHER ORDERED**, that any party objecting to a petition to intervene make said objection on or before April 14, 2026; and it is

**FURTHER ORDERED**, that the 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 by April 13, 2026. 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

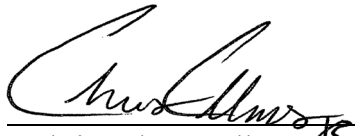
**FURTHER ORDERED**, that routine procedural inquiries may be made by contacting the Commission's Clerk's Office at (603) 271-2431 or [www.puc.nh.gov/about-us/contact-us](http://www.puc.nh.gov/about-us/contact-us). All requests to the Commission should be made in a written pleading filed with the Commission.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

**FURTHER ORDERED**, that pursuant to Puc 204.04, Liberty shall notify all entities and individuals desiring to be heard at this hearing by publishing a copy of this order of notice on its website 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 April 8, 2026. 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 the Commission will hold a hearing in this matter at its offices located at 21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10, Concord, New Hampshire, on April 15, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.; and it is

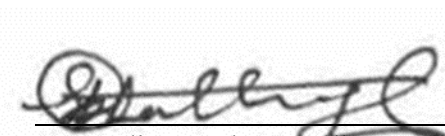
**FURTHER ORDERED**, that any hearings in this matter shall be conducted in accordance with the attached hearing guidelines.

So ordered, this first day of April 2026.



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Christopher J. Ellms,  
Chairman



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Pradip K. Chattopadhyay  
Commissioner



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Mark W. Dell'Orfano  
Commissioner

Individuals needing assistance or auxiliary communication aids due to sensory impairment or other disability should contact the NHPUC, 21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10, Concord, New Hampshire 03301-2429; 603-271-2431; TDD Access: Relay N.H. 1-800-735-2964. Notification of the need for assistance should be made one week prior to the scheduled event.

## Service List - Docket Related

Docket#: 26-018

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