

APPROVED



Legislative and Regulatory Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2020

Committee Directors:

P	Jon Elwell, Enosburg	P	Meredith Birkett, Johnson
----------	----------------------	----------	---------------------------

Other Directors present:

P	John Morley III, Orleans	P	Penny Jones, Morrisville	P	Bill Humphrey, Lyndonville
P	Tom Petraska, Ludlow	P	Mike Sullivan, Hardwick		

X indicates attendance in person, P indicates attendance by phone.

Alternates present:

--	--

Others present:

Ken Nolan, VPPSA	Melissa Bailey, VPPSA	James Gibbons, BED	Julia Leopold, VPPSA
------------------	-----------------------	--------------------	----------------------

Numbers in bold type correspond with agenda item numbers:

1. The meeting was called to order at 11:45 pm via Phone/Webex.
2. Melissa Bailey asked if there were requests for changes and/or modifications to the current agenda. There were not.
3. There was no public presence and therefore no comments were made.
4. Director Birkett moved to approve the minutes from the September 11 and November 13, 2019 and March 14, 2020 meetings and Director Elwell seconded the motion. The minutes for those three meetings were approved unanimously.
5. Julia Leopold provided an update on utilities' COVID response over the past two months. Staff have been holding weekly calls for the VPPSA members to discuss operational changes due to the pandemic. VPPSA members have been providing staff with data related to reductions in monthly retail sales. To date, VPPSA members have seen an average of 10% lower sales this spring as compared with last year.
6. Melissa Bailey provided an update covering topics under consideration currently by the Vermont Legislature. Ms. Bailey explained that the Legislature had been almost exclusively focused on topics related to the coronavirus pandemic and accompanying stay home order currently in effect. The topic that has been discussed at length by the Legislature and has potential implications for electric utilities is broadband deployment. Concern around the lack of universal broadband access



APPROVED

has been heightened due to the current need for workers and students to carry out their work from home. The Department of Public Service recently issued its Emergency Broadband Action Plan for public comment. The plan highlights the 23% of premises in Vermont that currently lack broadband access and recommends steps that can be taken to achieve universal access by 2024. The House Energy and Technology (HET) and Senate Finance Committee have been hearing testimony on the DPS' recommendations, potential sources of federal funding to increase broadband access, and the types of technologies that may be deployed in Vermont.

Ken Nolan informed the committee that he has been participating in a stakeholder group convened by HET Chair Tim Briglin. That group is considering the recommendations in the Emergency Broadband Action Plan and attempting to reach consensus on a path forward.

Ms. Bailey noted that this week some legislative committees were turning their attention back to pre-COVID bills. The Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee voted this week on the Energy Efficiency Modernization Act (S.337) that will enable Efficiency Vermont to expend up to \$6 million over the next three years on programs in the thermal and transportation sector for measures that have a nexus to electricity.

Ms. Bailey then updated the Committee on current regulatory proceedings at the PUC. A memo detailing active cases had been distributed in advance. The Efficiency Vermont Demand Resources Plan is proceeding, with a final budget determination expected this fall. The net metering biennial update has been put on hold and the PUC recently requested comments on whether its "All Fuels" proceeding should also be placed on hold. There was recently a web meeting held among utilities and the Department of Public Service related to proposed changes to the state's Disconnect Rule. Comments will be due on the DPS' proposal on July 1st.

Director Morley inquired whether there was guidance around the moratorium on utility disconnections currently in effect through June 1st. He noted that in order to disconnect customers for non-payment in June, notices would need to be mailed out very soon. Ms. Bailey responded that no such guidance had been received, though she expected that the moratorium may again be extended. Directors Birkett and Elwell noted that their utilities were feeling the financial impacts of the disconnect moratorium and wondered if policymakers had been discussing potential solutions. The Committee requested that staff submit a filing to the PUC on this topic.

The Committee then discussed the PUC's Low-Income Rate Investigation. The PUC has requested responses from utilities to an initial set of inquiries by June 1st. Participants discussed whether there is a need for low-income rates given the resources currently available to Vermonters to help pay electric bills. The Directors expressed concern about funding any low-income program through electric rates, given that this would generate rate pressure for all customers and provide a disincentive to businesses to locate in Vermont. The Directors prefer that any low-income rate be funded by state tax. Director Sullivan noted that low-income rates could be funded through a few on large net metering projects to reduce the revenue flowing out of Vermont. There was general support for this approach. Director Morley suggested that a low-income rate could be developed for Vermont's municipals and coops, since Green Mountain Power already has a low-income rate. Staff committed to providing a draft of a response to the PUC prior to filing it.

7. Julia Leopold provided an overview of VPPSA's activities under Tier 3 of the Renewable Energy Standard. VPPSA has received three rebate applications from auto dealers for purchases of electric vehicles under the state's EV rebate program. VPPSA and other distribution utilities are processing these rebates and being reimbursed by the state.

VPPSA staff have been in discussions with staff from other utilities and Efficiency Vermont regarding enhancing the programs and services available to low-income customers through Tier 3. Ms. Leopold explained some potential gaps in EVT services that the DU's could consider offering

APPROVED

low-income customers, including covering the cost of col climate heat pumps for customers replacing fossil fuel boilers or furnaces.

8. There was no Other Business.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Bailey

Melissa Bailey, Acting Secretary
Legislative & Regulatory Committee