

**THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DG 05-076

ORDER OF NOTICE

The Commission's order in *EnergyNorth Natural Gas, Inc., d/b/a KeySpan Energy Delivery New England*, Order No. 24,323 in Docket No. 03-160 (May 7, 2004) approved a settlement agreement regarding the EnergyNorth Natural Gas, Inc. 2003/2004 winter cost of gas filing. As part of the settlement, Staff and the parties recommended that the Commission open a docket to consider whether a low income customer bill assistance program for natural gas customers should be established. In *EnergyNorth Natural Gas, Inc., d/b/a KeySpan Energy Delivery New England*, Order No. 24,388 in Docket No. 04-152 (October 29, 2004), the Commission stated that it was reasonable to investigate the benefits of a low income assistance program for gas customers. The Commission recognized that such an investigation could not be completed in time to provide assistance to natural gas customers during the 2004/2005 Winter period, if it is determined such a program is merited, and that the Integrated Resource Plan and Gas Dispatch Investigation, Docket Nos. DG 04-133 and DG 04-175, were not scheduled to be completed until late March, 2005. Accordingly, the Commission concluded that a docket should be opened to address the matter at the start of the 2005 Summer period with recommendations to be presented to the Commission prior to the start of the 2005/2006 winter period.

By this Order of Notice, the Commission commences the investigation of the benefits of a low income assistance program for natural gas customers. EnergyNorth Natural Gas, Inc., d/b/a KeySpan Energy Delivery New England (KeySpan) and Northern Utilities, Inc.

(Northern), the two natural gas utilities serving customers in New Hampshire, are hereby made necessary parties to this proceeding.

The opening of this docket raises, inter alia, issues related to: (1) the benefits of a low income assistance program for natural gas customers; (2) the process for qualifying participants and how frequently will these participants' qualifications be updated; (3) who will be responsible for this should the programs be designed as a "state-wide" model or a "company-specific" model; (4) the existing low income programs (program designs, number of participants, budgeted costs) currently offered by Massachusetts affiliates of the two New Hampshire natural gas companies and are such existing programs appropriate to be offered in New Hampshire; (5) the effectiveness of the programs that have been offered by Massachusetts affiliates (i.e. in terms of achieving expected participants and achieving expected budget targets); (6) what parts, if any, of the Electric Assistance Program (EAP) program guidelines might be applied, or modified in some way, such that they are useful for application to the natural gas industry; (7) whether or not the initial program should be tested as "pilot" program or a full-scale program in program year one; (8) the appropriate size of the program for program year one (i.e. annual estimated number of participants that can be expected to participate); (9) the appropriate annual cost for the program; (10) whether the program should be a single year or multi-year program design; (11) over what geographic territory should the program be offered; (12) how should program results be measured and reported; (13) how should program costs be measured and reported (i.e. components of cost, frequency of filing reports); (14) how should program costs be recovered; and, (15) whether the program can be implemented in time for the upcoming winter period, for effect on November 1, 2005.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED, that a Prehearing Conference, pursuant to N.H. Admin. Rules Puc 203.05, be held before the Commission located at 21 S. Fruit St., Suite 10, Concord, New Hampshire on June 7, 2005 at 10:00 a.m., at which each party will provide a preliminary statement of its position with regard to the petition and any of the issues set forth in N.H. Admin Rule Puc 203.05(c) shall be considered; and it is

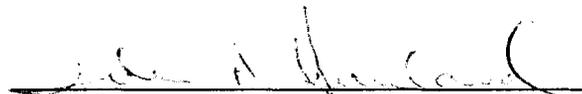
FURTHER ORDERED, that, immediately following the Prehearing Conference, the utilities, the Staff of the Commission and any Intervenors hold a Technical Session to review the issues raised by this the case and establish a recommended procedural schedule; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that pursuant to N.H. Admin. Rules Puc 203.01, KeySpan and Northern shall notify all persons desiring to be heard at this hearing by publishing a copy of this Order of Notice no later than May 17, 2005, in a newspaper with statewide circulation or of general circulation in those portions of the state in which operations are conducted, publication to be documented by affidavit filed with the Commission on or before June 7, 2005; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that pursuant to N.H. Admin Rules Puc 203.02, any party seeking to intervene in the proceeding shall submit to the Commission an original and eight copies of a Petition to Intervene with copies sent to KeySpan and Northern and the Office of the Consumer Advocate on or before June 2, 2005, such Petition stating the facts demonstrating how its rights, duties, privileges, immunities or other substantial interest may be affected by the proceeding, as required by N.H. Admin Rule Puc 203.02 and RSA 541-A:32,I(b); and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that any party objecting to a Petition to Intervene make said Objection on or before June 7, 2005.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this twelfth day
of May, 2005.



Debra A. Howland
Executive Director & Secretary

Individuals needing assistance or auxiliary communication aids due to sensory impairment or other disability, should contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, 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.