

Residential Ratepayers' Advisory Board

July 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes

***Present for the Board:***

Tom Moses, Chair  
Dana Nute, Vice Chair  
Claira Monier  
Ryan Clouthier  
James Garrity  
Matthew Kfoury

***Present for the OCA:***

D. Maurice Kreis  
Pradip Chattopadhyay  
James Brennan  
Christa Shute  
Jamie Breen

**Guest:** Steve Eckberg, Public Utilities Commission

**Guest Speakers:** Joe Purington, President of New Hampshire Operations; Kerry Britland, Director of Regulatory Affairs, and Warren Boutin, Director of Electric Service Support and Distributed Generation; all of Eversource Energy.

Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order No. 12 issued on March 23, 2020, this public body met electronically via WebEx.

Mr. Moses called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m. All Advisory Board members who were present, OCA Staff, and guests stated their names for the record by roll call.

**1. Minutes of April 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

Mr. Moses moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Nute seconded the motion. Board members agreed unanimously by roll call vote.

**2. Presentation by Eversource Energy**

Mr. Purington, Ms. Britland and Mr. Boutin provided background information about themselves to the Board. Mr. Purington spoke of steps Eversource is taking to manage through the pandemic, from its early onset until today, for employee protection to public safety. Ms. Britland spoke of the impact COVID-19 has had on the economy and customers since March. She noted that Eversource is making sure to fully engage and communicate with customers in various ways, which allows the utility to assist in helping customers get on payment plans, pay arrearages, and find the best plan for their budgets. Mr. Boutin, who interacts with competitive suppliers in Maine, New Hampshire and Connecticut, shared with the Board that residential electric usage is higher than commercial and industrial usage at this time due to the pandemic and people working from home, but as businesses are beginning to open, this trend is changing. He said Eversource is trying to work with businesses to save by making them aware that on August 1, the supply rate with Eversource will be going down. Mr. Boutin presented data suggesting that in 2019, Eversource customers relying on competitive energy supply overpaid more than \$19 million relative to what they would have paid by relying on Eversource-provided default energy service, the bulk of that (more than \$16 million) occurring in the residential sector. Mr. Boutin presented similar data for the first six months of 2020, stating that the total overpayment was in excess of \$12 million including \$9.9 million in the residential sector.

3. **Legislative Update**

The Board previously received a current list of House and Senate Bills prior to the meeting. Mr. Kreis elaborated on **SB 166** recently signed into law by the Governor. He stated that the adoption of this bill was good news for ratepayers as the changes clarify the rules for net metering in a manner that will facilitate the development of Community Power Aggregation (CPA) by interested municipalities. Mr. Kreis suggested that late summer and early fall is a good time for everyone associated with OCA to think about potential legislation for the next session and to let him know of any thoughts or ideas.

4. **Case Update**

The Board received a current Activity List prior to the meeting, Mr. Kreis further elaborated on the OCA's work in the following dockets:

- **DE 19-057 Eversource Energy** Rate Case
- **DG 17-198 Liberty Utilities** Granite Bridge
- **DG 20-013 Gas Utilities** Residential Low Income Assistance Program

5. **Any other topics or issues that the Board wishes to discuss**

Ms. Monier was curious as to why cable and broadband are not considered public utilities. Mr. Kreis explained that federal law governs these technologies (any state regulation thus preempted) and that Congress has opted not to regulate rates for either service. Due to the pandemic, Mr. Kreis noted that broadband issues and access to them have been brought to the forefront. Mr. Kreis informed the Board that the Commission has opened an investigative docket into disconnections for residential and commercial ratepayers, IR 20-089 (Investigation of the Effects of the COVID-19 Emergency on Utilities and Utility Customers). He noted that the Governor had, via Emergency Order No. 58, ended the utility disconnection moratorium as of July 15 and that participants in IR 20-089 were attempting to negotiate new parameters for disconnections in light of the pandemic. Mr. Moses congratulated Ms. Monier and Mr. Mailloux on their three-year reappointments to the Advisory Board, both expiring in July 2023. He expressed his thanks to them for their long and distinguished tenured on the Board as well as their continued service. Mr. Kreis noted that OCA is participating in stakeholder discussions leading up to the electric and natural gas utilities filing a 2021-2023 plan on September 1 for implementing the state's Energy Efficiency Resource Standard, which the Commission will begin considering in an adjudicative docket. He noted that the utilities were reporting a good news/bad news scenario about lighting, the good news being that most of the potential for consumers transitioning to energy efficient LED lighting has already occurred and the bad news being that the utilities will now need to turn to more expensive initiatives for energy efficiency. Mr. Kreis asked the Board if they had suggestions of a guest speaker for the October 19 meeting. Mr. Moses suggested Senator Chuck Morse come and speak about Pennichuck and taxation issues related to developer-contributed utility infrastructure. Mr. Moses asked the Board to let Mr. Kreis know via email if they have any other recommendations. Mr. Moses reminded the Board the next meeting will be on October 19.

Mr. Moses moved to adjourn. Mr. Nute seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously by the Board by roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 3:48 p.m.