

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
UTILITIES COMMISSION
RALEIGH**

DOCKET NO. E-35, SUB 51

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of
Application of Western Carolina University) ORDER SCHEDULING
for an Adjustment of Rates and Charges) HEARING AND REQUIRING
for Electric Service in North Carolina) CUSTOMER NOTICE

BY THE CHAIR: On March 9, 2020, Western Carolina University (WCU) filed an application with the Commission requesting authority to adjust its rates for retail electric service in its service area in Jackson County, North Carolina. WCU filed an amended application on June 24, 2020. WCU operates an off-campus electric distribution system that serves approximately 3,170 residential customers and 230 commercial customers. The present rates have been in effect since 2016, with annual purchased power adjustments.

In its application, WCU requests authority to increase its rates to produce additional overall annual retail revenues of approximately \$625,500, an increase of approximately 13.7% over current revenues. WCU states that since its last general rate case in 2015, it has made plant investments to, and sustained higher operating costs in, its electric distribution system.

In March 2020, Governor Roy Cooper issued a progression of Executive Orders that declared a State of Emergency in North Carolina to coordinate response and protective actions to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

On April 6, 2020, the Commission issued an Order declaring this proceeding to be a general rate case pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 62-137 and suspending the proposed rate increases for up to 270 days pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 62-134. In this Order, the Commission also provided that an order scheduling hearings and requiring customer notice would be issued at a later date.

On May 20, 2020, Governor Cooper issued Executive Order No. 141 easing some restrictions on business operations and mass gatherings and lifting the statewide stay-at-home order, but still limiting face-to-face meetings to no more than ten people and requiring social distancing between individuals of at least six feet. On June 24, 2020, Governor Cooper issued Executive Order No. 147, extending the limitations on indoor gatherings.

Based upon the foregoing and the entire record herein, the Chair finds good cause to schedule a remote hearing in this docket on September 10, 2020, to receive public

witness testimony regarding the Applicant's requested rate increase. The Chair will require the Applicant to mail notice of the pending application and hearing to its customers and to publish notice of the hearing. This remote hearing will be held via WebEx to allow members of the public to provide testimony by telephone. Members of the public who wish to testify at the remote hearing must contact the Public Staff on or before 4:00 p.m. on September 4, 2020, by email at WCUPublicHearing@psncuc.nc.gov, or by contacting the Public Staff's Consumer Services Division at 1-866-380-9816 to register their name, physical address, and contact information in advance of the hearing. Members of the public will be able to observe the hearing via a link that will be available on the day of the hearing on the Commission's website, www.ncuc.net. ***Only members of the public who register with the Public Staff in advance of the remote hearing will be allowed to testify during the remote hearing.***

Based on the record and the current state of uncertainty regarding future requirements to assist in preventing the spread of COVID-19, the Chair further finds good cause to schedule the hearing to resume on September 14, 2020, for the purpose of receiving expert witness testimony from the parties. The Commission will address the conducting of this portion of the hearing by forthcoming order, including, whether this portion of the hearing will be held remotely or in-person.

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED as follows:

1. That a remote hearing solely for the purpose of receiving the testimony of public witnesses in accordance with Commission Rule R1-21(g) regarding the application shall be, and is hereby, scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2020. The remote hearing will be conducted via WebEx. Only members of the public who register with the Public Staff in advance of the remote hearing will be allowed to testify during the remote hearing. The public witness testimony will be provided via telephone;

2. The hearing will resume on Monday, September 14, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. and continue as required for testimony and cross-examination of witnesses for WCU, the Public Staff, and other intervenors. The Commission will issue an order on or before August 14, 2020, setting forth the procedures for a remote expert witness hearing or confirming that the expert witness hearing will be held in the Commission Hearing Room;

3. That the test period to be used by all parties in this proceeding shall be the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2019, with appropriate adjustments;

4. That the Notice to Customers, attached hereto as Appendix A, shall be mailed with sufficient postage or mailed as bill inserts by WCU to all customers no later than 30 days after the date of this Order;

5. That WCU shall, at its own expense, publish in newspapers having general circulation in its service area, the Notice to Customers attached hereto as Appendix A, once a week for two consecutive weeks, the first notice appearing at least 30 days in

advance of the public hearing date set herein, with said notice covering no less than one-fourth of a page;

6. That WCU shall file an affidavit of publication and certificate of service on or before September 9, 2020;

7. That petitions to intervene in this proceeding shall be filed pursuant to Commission Rules R1-5 and R1-19 on or before Monday, August 10, 2020;

8. That each party shall file a statement with the Commission on or before Monday, August 10, 2020, consenting to the Commission holding the hearing by remote means, or a statement objecting to the same; and

9. That direct testimony and exhibits of intervenors and the Public Staff shall be filed on or before Thursday, August 20, 2020, and that the rebuttal testimony and exhibits of WCU, if any, shall be filed on or before Monday, August 31, 2020.

ISSUED BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION.

This the 17th day of July, 2020.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janice H. Fulmore".

Janice H. Fulmore, Deputy Clerk

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
UTILITIES COMMISSION
RALEIGH

NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS
DOCKET NO. E-35, SUB 51
BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on March 9, 2020, Western Carolina University (WCU) filed an application with the North Carolina Utilities Commission for authority to increase rates for electric service in its service area in Jackson County, North Carolina. On June 24, 2020, WCU filed an amendment to its application, which is on file with the Commission. WCU operates an off-campus electric distribution system that serves approximately 3,170 residential customers and 230 commercial customers.

In its application, WCU requests authority to increase its rates to produce additional overall annual retail revenues of approximately \$625,500, an increase of approximately 13.7% over current revenues. WCU states that, since its last general rate case in 2015, it has made plant investments and sustained higher operating costs in its electric distribution system.

WCU's existing and proposed rates are as follows:

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
<u>Monthly Residential Rates:</u>		
Customer Charge	\$8.89	\$12.00
Energy Charge		
First 750 kWh, per kWh	\$0.10279	\$0.11489
All usage over 750 kWh, per kWh	\$0.09279	\$0.10489
PPA estimated component, per kWh	\$0.00074	N/A ¹
<u>Monthly Commercial Rates:</u>		
Customer Charge	\$10.00	\$12.00
Demand Charge, per kW	\$4.40	\$5.10
(The Demand Charge rates, both existing and proposed, apply after the first 10 kW of demand. There is no charge for the first 10 kW.)		
Energy Charge		
First 750 kWh, per kWh	\$0.10279	\$0.11489
Next 750 kWh, per kWh	\$0.09279	\$0.10489
All additional usage, per kWh	\$0.07501	\$0.08474
PPA estimated component, per kWh	\$0.00074	N/A ¹

¹ For purposes of the application, recovery of total purchased power cost is accomplished through the base per kWh energy charge rates; therefore no "PPA estimated component" is included in the proposed rates.

<u>Monthly Area Light Rate:</u>	\$8.85	\$15.00
<u>Fee Schedule:</u>		
New Service	\$25.00	\$25.00
Business Hours Connection	\$25.00	\$25.00
Non-Business Hours Connection	\$75.00	\$75.00
Bad Check	\$25.00	\$25.00

Customers are also currently paying a purchased power adjustment of \$0.00074 per kWh and a purchased power experience modification factor of -\$0.00305 per kWh as granted by the Commission on February 17, 2020, in Docket No. E-35, Sub 50. The rates set forth above exclude the -\$0.00305 per kWh experience modification factor, as it is not affected by the proposed change in rates.

The Commission may consider additional or alternative rate design proposals that were not included in the original application and may order increases or decreases in the schedules that differ from those proposed by WCU. However, any rate structure considered will not generate more overall revenues than requested.

EFFECT OF RATES:

The average monthly residential bill for 1,000 kWh usage would increase from \$109.92 to \$124.39 (13.2%) after adjusting for purchased power charges.

PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC HEARING

The Commission has scheduled the application for public witness hearing beginning at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2020. The hearing will be conducted remotely via WebEx. Public witness testimony will be provided via telephone. A link to the WebEx hearing for public viewing will be available on the day of the hearing at www.ncuc.net. No in-person attendance will be allowed.

Members of the public who would like to testify **MUST REGISTER IN ADVANCE** of the remote hearing, no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, September 4, 2020, by contacting the Public Staff via email at WCUPublicHearing@psncuc.nc.gov or by calling 1-866-380-9816. When registering, provide your name, telephone number you will use to participate in the hearing, address, and the topic of your testimony. A member of the Public Staff will contact you with further instructions for providing your testimony. The hearing on September 10, 2020 will be solely for the purpose of receiving the testimony of public witnesses in accordance with Commission Rule R1-21(g). The Commission reserves the right to limit testimony at the public witness hearings pursuant to Commission Rule R1-21(g)(5).

Only individuals registered with the Public Staff by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, September 4, 2020, will be allowed to testify at the hearing.

OTHER MATTERS:

The details of the proposed new rates have been filed with the North Carolina Utilities Commission. A copy of the application and all filings in this matter are available for review by the public at the Office of the Chief Clerk, 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina. These materials, as well as pleadings, the prefiled testimony and exhibits of all parties, the transcripts of all hearings, briefs, and proposed orders, may be viewed as they become available on the Commission's web site at www.ncuc.net. Click on "Docket Search" and search for docket number E-35 Sub 51.

As stated above, the Commission has suspended the proposed rate changes and has scheduled the application for investigation and hearing. Persons desiring to present testimony for the record should appear at the remote public hearing. Persons desiring to send written statements to inform the Commission of their positions in the matter should address their statements to the North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4325 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300 and reference Docket No. E-35, Sub 51. However, such written statements cannot be considered competent evidence unless those persons appear at the hearing and testify concerning the information contained in their written statements. Customers can also email the Commission a statement about WCU's rate request via the Commission's website at www.ncuc.net/contactus.html. In either case, consumer statements will be placed in Docket No. E-35, Sub 51 and may be accessed by searching that docket number via the Commission's website.

Persons having an interest in the investigation and desiring to intervene in the matter as formal parties of record may file their petitions to intervene not later than August 10, 2020. These petitions should reference Docket No. E-35, Sub 51, and should be filed with the Chief Clerk of the North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4325 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300. All parties to this proceeding planning to present expert testimony must prefile their testimony and exhibits not later than August 31, 2020.

The Public Staff is authorized by statute to represent the consumers in proceedings before the Commission. Written statements to the Public Staff should include any information that the writer wishes to be considered by the Public Staff in its investigation of the matter. Such statements should be addressed to Mr. Christopher J. Ayers, Executive Director, Public Staff – North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4326 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300. Written statements may also be e-mailed to statements@ncuc.net.

The Attorney General is also authorized by statute to represent consumers in proceedings before the Commission. Statements to the Attorney General should be addressed to The Honorable Josh Stein, Attorney General of North Carolina, c/o Consumer Protection – Utilities, 9001 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-9001. Written statements may be e-mailed to utilityAGO@ncdoj.gov.

Written statements will be considered by the Commission in reaching its decision but do not receive the same consideration as testimony provided by public witnesses at a hearing.

Information regarding this proceeding can be accessed from the Commission's website at www.ncuc.net under the docket number of this proceeding (E-35, Sub 51).

This the 17th day of July, 2020.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janice H. Fulmore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "F".

Janice H. Fulmore, Deputy Clerk