

Minutes:

Stowe Electric Commissioners' Meeting

November 20, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. at Town of Stowe Electric Conference Room

Present:

BOARD MEMBERS: Richard ("Dick") Marron, Chairman (via telephone); Larry Lackey, Vice-Chairman; Heidi Scheuermann, Commissioner

STAFF: Ellen Burt, General Manager; David Kresock, Director of Operations; Kristin Winer, Controller; Matt Rutherford, Manager of Regulatory Compliance; Lily Burgess, Clerk of the Board

Guest: Douglas White, Ratepayer

Larry called the meeting to order at 8:11 a.m.

Approval of the October 29th, 2019 Meeting Minutes

On motion made and seconded, the minutes of October 29, 2019 were approved.

Regulatory Update

Investigation of Net-Metering Program: SED's informational filing of comments was submitted to the PUC on November 1st. The PUC posed several specific questions to the distribution utilities in an effort to evaluate the impact that net-metering has on their individual systems.

SED attempted to quantify this impact using the total capacity of 288 kW that is interconnected on its system in an average year. When considering the power supply costs, power supply benefits, and attributable staff time all associated with the net-metering program, SED calculated that this 288 kW block amounts to a revenue deficiency of \$32,755.21 per year which would correspond with a 0.27% rate increase. This 0.27% rate change would increase the utility bill of an average residential customer by \$3.39 per year.

Reply comments (by Renewable Energy Vermont, other environmental non-profits as well as State agencies) are due next week. All comments are public and available at ePUC.

Operations Report

Vermont was hit really hard on Friday, November 1st, when a windstorm blew through the State. SED had 28 separate incidences due to trees and downed lines.

The initial outage call came in just shortly after 3:00 am and all line crew personnel were dispatched immediately. Multiple outages in various locations were being repaired until around 10:00 am. The wind intensity then increased considerably again and the number of outages surged. At 12:24 pm SED lost the Mountain Line due to trees in two locations and both Houston and Lodge Substations had lost power. Approximately 1,680 of SED's 4,200

customers were without power at that point. At 12:41 pm, SED crews were able to back feed portions of the Mountain Road, restoring power to 483 customers. At 4:01 pm the Mountain Line was repaired and reenergized, restoring power to another 571 customers and at 6:10 pm the power of the remaining 355 customers on the Mountain Road was restored. The line crews continued to work through to the morning of Saturday, November 2nd completing repairs at the remaining locations affected by downed trees.

The Houston Farm area, off Edson Hill Road, suffered severe damage requiring two poles to be replaced. It took SED crews most of Saturday to repair that damage. Except for two customers (whose services required their electricians to do repair work) restoration of the remaining Stowe Electric customers still without power was completed that Saturday, at 9:18 pm. SED continued to find trees on lines for several days afterward.

Heidi reported on the Town's Emergency Response Protocol and that they currently have no designated Public Information Officer. Ellen reported that the office stays open during emergency and major outage situations and phone calls are answered by office staff. The office personnel also very actively posts outage updates on their public Facebook page, and uses Twitter to post to the website. David reported that Roger Hill alerted utilities of the oncoming windstorm. VELCO furthermore schedules emergency preparation calls before and during storm events. The Deep Thunder forecasting was discussed, as well as a program in development to allow for ice and snow loading forecasting on transmission lines, including an outage forecast.

VtOutages.org also reports the number of outages in the State by Utility and by County.

Other Business

White/Turek Property at 42 Upper Alger Road: Doug White's concerns regarding the underground line that runs through his property were first brought to SED's attention in July of 2016. Since that time, SED's staff has visited the property on at least 6 different instances, 2 of which were to discuss the matter with Doug White. Doug also met with SED's Commissioners in 2017 to present his case directly to them. Ed French and his staff at Stackpole & French provided a legal opinion on two occasions and contacted Doug's lawyer. SED's attorney has written two opinions regarding this issue, ultimately concluding that SED was granted a valid easement by Raymond Unsworth for that line in 1967 to serve his property, Alpine Knolls, which was to be subdivided and the easement covers Kartluke's at the end of Fairway Drive, the Harvey property as well as Mr. White's property. The two opinions were delivered to Doug White and his attorney, Peter Anderson. Mr. White disputes that SED has any easement beyond the 25 feet from the last pole. Two newer houses were later built down toward Cape Cod Road at the end of Fairway Drive, and was added on from the junction cabinet below Doug White's house. Doug stated that Leslie Kartluke's parents are the Harveys and that at the same time the underground wire was laid across the White/Turek property, the Kartlukes had a proper easement up what is now Fairway Drive. Martha Turek purchased the property in 1993 and the fundamental disagreement is that Doug White has claimed for several years that the primary underground that runs through his property is uneased. Doug disputes that there is a piece of paper stating that SED has any permission past 25 feet from the last pole on Lot 5. Doug stated that the easement did reference developed lots, especially Lot 5. The poles from Weeks Hill are all placed in this deed. Doug would like to see the work order or report that states that SED was energizing the underground line, as Doug feels that the underground line was energized without an inspection or paperwork.

SED attempted to resolve the issue a couple years ago by moving the underground line. The map with the red property lines and the white property pins where SED proposed to move the conductor to was discussed in detail. Doug White was not opposed to that solution. Based on where the property pins were, SED was planning to follow the pins right along the property line. SED would need easements for the 12.5 feet on each side of the underground line. Doug White has now a permit to build the garage, with an overhang of about 10 feet from the line, but 12.5 feet from the garage foundation. The garage is currently pinned out in the property. The distance between the house and the garage would be 20 feet. Doug would be supportive of a reduced Right-Of-Way, and would consider moving it to the parallel line, reducing the Right-Of-Way to 20 feet, instead of the customary 25 feet. The touching point for the neighbor would be the cedar tree hedge between the half acre lots. Doug stated that he was not willing to pay for moving the underground line.

Currently all three houses on Fairway Drive are being served by the underground cable running through Doug White's yard only. There are five additional lots that have been approved for construction, with an Ability-To-Serve.

Ellen asked Doug White that he provide SED with his plans, thoughts, requests and what he is willing to agree to, in writing, and Doug stated that would be fine. Doug also offered to speak with his neighbor, Tyler, about an easement as well. Ellen will then discuss this issue with the Commissioners. Ellen explained the utilities' cost-causer principle, and Doug reiterated that at this time he is not willing to pay for moving the line, since he feels there is a clear deed (and a disagreement over a lawyer's opinion), and because Doug has two title searches that did not find an easement for his property.

Doug stated he will provide SED with the building permit, and his written statement to forward to the lawyers for their review.

Doug White exited the meeting at 9:08 am

New Staff: Kristin Winer, SED's new controller, introduced herself and elaborated on her credentials and impressive background.

Capital Project Update: Ellen provided an update on the various Capital Projects and also the progress of the distribution study. The Tie Point for circuits 6 & 7 that was planned for completion in 2018 was deferred because of the delayed engineering design and the challenges obtaining the easements. It will be started first thing this spring, and SED's crew will also continue to work on the Main Street undergrounding project together with the Town, which will take all summer to complete.

Once the distribution study is completed this spring, the priority for the various other capital projects slated to be done on the 5-Year Capital Plan can be decided.

Broadband Connectivity Forum: Heidi thanked David and Matt for attending the Connectivity Forum that was organized by the Public Service Department, Heidi reported that the Forum was very interesting and that a lot of service providers participated. One of the issues discussed in detail was the power pole at West Hill Rd near Shaw's, which apparently is owned by Morrisville Water & Light. Unfortunately, Consolidated Communications is unable to proceed with the West Hill service until this pole has been replaced. It seems that Morrisville Water & Light was not informed that this power pole impacts this project, and needs to be moved.

VTrans is also discussing the possibility of changing this intersection by adding a traffic light with a third turning lane. This, however, would mean that the poles along Route 100 would also have to be moved to make room for a turning lane.

Heidi further reported that there does seem to be some activity up on the Mountain (American Tower Company) regarding capacity by Verizon and AT&T. Stowe Cable Systems will also be a big player as the project moves forward. Heidi stated that she just learned that 70% of Consolidated Communications customers do have the ability to upgrade their internet speed. Heidi mentioned that she only heard good things about Stowe Electric and she expressed gratitude that the Stowe Electric office remains open during big outage and emergency situations. Dave is working with SED's new system administrator Chris on an outage management system, which would further allow SED to communicate with customers during an outage situation by streamlining the process and push outage related notifications. The outage management system will also allow customers to report outages, a tree on the line or street-light out through on a Web Portal. Heidi mentioned that the school implemented a text notification system for real emergencies. People interested would have to opt-in.

The Board scheduled the next Commissioners' meeting for Wednesday, December 18th at 8:00 a.m. Ellen informed the Board that a Hydro expert, Bill French from Massachusetts, will be joining the meeting to report on the damage to the damn and the Mill during the flash-flood.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:37 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lily Burgess
Clerk of the Board