

ORDER NO. **17 481**

ENTERED NOV 27 2017

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
OF OREGON**

UM 1909

In the Matter of

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF
OREGON,

Investigation of the Scope of the
Commission's Authority to Defer Capital
Costs.

ORDER

DISPOSITION: STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ADOPTED AS MODIFIED

This order memorializes our decision, made and effective at our November 21, 2017 Regular Public Meeting, to adopt Staff's recommendation in this matter, modified to read as follows:

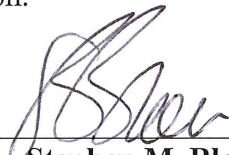
Approve Staff's request to open a docket to investigate the scope of the Commission's authority to defer capital costs for later inclusion in rates.

The Staff Report is attached as Appendix A.

Dated this 27 day of November, 2017, at Salem, Oregon.

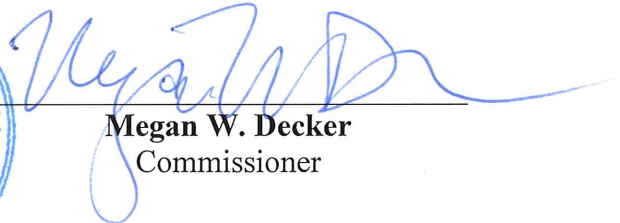


Lisa D. Hardie
Chair



Stephen M. Bloom
Commissioner





Megan W. Decker
Commissioner

A party may request rehearing or reconsideration of this order under ORS 756.561. A request for rehearing or reconsideration must be filed with the Commission within 60 days of the date of service of this order. The request must comply with the requirements in OAR 860-001-0720. A copy of the request must also be served on each party to the proceedings as provided in OAR 860-001-0180(2). A party may appeal this order by filing a petition for review with the Circuit Court for Marion County in compliance with ORS 183.484.

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ITEM NO. 3

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: November 21, 2017

REGULAR _____ CONSENT X EFFECTIVE DATE December 1, 2017

DATE: November 11, 2017

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Mitchell Moore 

THROUGH: Jason Eisdorfer and John Crider 

SUBJECT: OREGON PUBLIC UTILITY STAFF: Request to open a docket to investigate the Commission's legal authority to defer capital costs.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission) open a docket to investigate the Commission's legal authority to defer capital costs.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Commission has authority under ORS 757.259(2)(e) to defer capital costs for later inclusion in rates.

Applicable Rule or Law

ORS 756.515 provides the Commission with authority to investigate, upon its own motion, any matter relating to any public utility or telecommunications utility or other person.

Background

Under ORS 757.259(2)(e):

Upon application of a utility or ratepayer or upon the commission's own motion and after public notice, opportunity for comment and a hearing if any party requests a hearing, the commission by order may authorize deferral of the following amounts for later incorporation in rates:....(e)Identifiable utility

Request to investigate deferral of capital investment
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expenses or revenues, the recovery of refund of which the commission finds should be deferred in order to minimize the frequency of rate levels or to match appropriately the costs borne by and benefits received by ratepayers.

On July 29, 2016 Portland General Electric Company (PGE) filed an application docketed as UM 1791 to defer for later rate-making treatment the incremental revenue requirement associated with the Carty Generating Station (Carty) beyond what was approved in PGE's 2016 general rate case, UE 294. PGE stated in its filing that it had incurred significant cost overruns associated with "extraordinary events" that occurred after the Commission issued its Order No. 15-356 on November 3, 2015.¹ The revenue requirement for which PGE seeks a deferral consists of depreciation expense, a return on the associated capital costs, utility income taxes, and increases in revenue sensitive costs.

PGE's filing caused Commission Staff to begin investigating the Commission's authority to defer capital costs pursuant to ORS 757.259(2)(e). Although this issue was first considered in the context of PGE's request to defer the revenue requirement effects of PGE's Carty cost overruns, the Commission's authority to defer capital costs is an issue that will affect other utilities in other circumstances. As such, Staff and the parties to UM 1791 agreed that Staff should request the Commission open a generic docket to investigate the issue. The outcome of this proceeding would then inform the Commission's determination in UM 1791, as well as other proceedings. If the Commission declines to open this generic investigation, Staff anticipates addressing this issue in docket UM 1791.

Staff believes that this investigation is rather limited in scope and therefore the matter can be resolved in a timely manner.

Conclusion

Staff requests that a generic docket be opened to investigate the issue and allow the Commission to make a determination.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve Staff's request to open a docket to investigate the Commission's legal authority to defer capital costs for later inclusion in rates.

RA1 Request to investigate capital deferral

¹ See UM 1791 In the Matter of Portland General Electric Company, Initial Application, July 20, 2016.