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TELEPHONE 509-734-4500 FACSIMILE 509-737-9803
www.cngc.com

February 19, 2021

CNG/O21-02-01

Oregon Public Utility Commission
Attn: Filing Center
P.O. Box 1088
Salem, OR 97308-1088

Re: Cascade Natural Oregon COVID-19 Bill Assistance (Big HEART Program)

Cascade Natural Gas Corporation (Cascade or the Company) herewith submits the following revision to its Tariff P.U.C. Or. No. 10, stated to become effective with service on and after April 1, 2021:

Original Sheet No. 35.1
Original Sheet No. 35.2

Background

On March 8, 2020, Governor Kate Brown declared a statewide state of emergency due to the public health threat posed by the novel infectious coronavirus, COVID-19. On March 26, 2020, Cascade filed its deferral application requesting that the Commission authorize the filing utility to defer for later ratemaking treatment purposes costs from the COVID-19 public health emergency, docketed as UM 2072. The Oregon Public Utility Commission (Commission) approved Cascade's initial application for deferred accounting of COVID-19 related costs with Order 20-379.

On June 9, 2020, the Commission conducted a Special Public Meeting on the topic of "Impact to Utility Customers during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Future Economic Recovery." During the timeframe between September 24, 2020, and October 23, 2020, Parties refined the Energy Term Sheet and developed a Stipulated Agreement on terms and conditions to assist customers and utilities during the current COVID-19 pandemic and the aftermath of the pandemic.

Section 18 of the Term Sheet states:

Each Utility, prior to resuming disconnections, will establish a program to identify and manage residential customer arrearages associated with the pandemic to prevent bad debt accumulating on utility accounts. The program may identify and waive residential arrearages at an initial amount of at least 1% of each utilities' 2019 Oregon retail revenues (approximately \$39 million combined total for all utilities), not to be increased without prior Commission approval. Eligibility and funding amounts for each Utility will be specified in addendums to this Term Sheet. On or before October 2, 2022, Parties can propose a process to address any unspent funds if the Utility program covers arrearage forgiveness in accordance with the Utility's funding addendums and funds are remaining. Utilities may include program costs and uncollectible expense identified in deferral tracking as described below.¹

¹ Stipulated Agreement, Docket No. UM 2114 at 18.

Overview

Cascade has identified the following essential functions of a new and temporary COVID-19 Bill Assistance Program to help customers who are experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic and its corresponding induced global economic recession resulting in a past due balance on their active service account.

- Minimum burden and barriers for both the customers to participate and the Company to operate.
- Ease of access by customers who are experiencing COVID-19 related financial hardship.
- Simple program structure for the benefit of our customers, Community Action Agency (CAA) partners, and Company employees.
- Customers will not be disqualified from applying for or receiving other energy assistance grants determined by CAAs.
- Existing assistance programs will not be impacted by this program.
- Most of the funding will be used for bill payment assistance to customers who are experiencing COVID-19 related financial hardship.

To support these essential functions, the Company proposes the following opportunities for customers to receive Big HEART grant assistance:

AUTOMATIC HARDSHIP GRANT

Customers with a proven history of low-income program eligibility (customer has received energy assistance within the previous 24 months) will automatically receive a one-time Big HEART grant equal to the amount of their outstanding balance (all past due charges) not to exceed \$1,500 and not to result in an account credit.

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP GRANT

For customers who have not received energy assistance within the past 24 months but express financial hardship due to COVID-19 to Cascade, either verbally or in written form, may qualify for the Big HEART grant. Cascade will work with customer to determine which payments or arrangements can be made before a grant credit is provided for the remaining balance. Any payments made by the customer will be deducted from the customer's account balance to be paid with a Big HEART grant.

For customers who apply for energy assistance with CAAs and have not received energy assistance within the previous 24 months, but verbally expressing financial hardship due to COVID-19 to CAA employees during the application process. CAAs will attempt to qualify the applicant for traditional bill pay assistance (LIHEAP, WEAFF, OLIBA, and Winter Help) before utilizing the Big HEART grant.

Whether through Cascade or CAAs, a benefit curve based on household size, monthly income, and account balance will be used to determine the Big HEART grant amount. Monthly income would be provided verbally by the customer where documentation is not required and shall be the combined current income amounts of all adult household members. The grant will be equal to the amount of their outstanding balance (all past due charges) not to exceed \$1,500 and not to result in an account credit. Cascade has provided a copy of its benefit curve that will calculate and provide the grant amount.

Availability

Applies to any customer receiving natural gas service for domestic purposes under the Company's Rate Schedule 101, general residential service, within the Company's service territory and who has a

household income up to 300 percent (300%) of the Federal Poverty Level (“FPL”).

Funding

The estimated Company funding to be distributed is one percent (1%) of retail revenues as determined by the Company’s current general rate case stipulated settlement in docket UG 390, which is \$707,517. Most of the funding will be to assist customers for bill and debt relief with a portion of the funding used to promote the availability of financial assistance throughout the Company’s service area. This outreach may include, but not be limited to, emails, print, and digital advertisements. Cascade has provided examples of the outreach that will be provided to customers.

The Big HEART Grant as described above will be in operation from April 2021 through September 2022. Funding that is not spent by September 30, 2022, will be used to reduce any remaining bad debts, and any remaining funds will be rolled into the Company’s low-income program.

If you have any questions regarding this filing, please contact me at (509) 734-4593.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael Parvinen

Michael Parvinen
Director, Regulatory Affairs

Attachments

Schedule 35

TEMPORARY COVID-19 RESIDENTIAL BILL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(N)

PURPOSE:

Implement a temporary residential bill assistance program ("Big HEART grant" or "program") to help with financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as required by Commission Order No. 20-401. The Big HEART grant is intended to help prevent bad debt accumulation on customer accounts by identifying, waiving, and managing residential customer arrearages.

AVAILABILITY:

Applies to any customer receiving natural gas service for domestic purposes under the Company's Rate Schedule 101, general residential service, within the Company's service territory and who has a household income up to 300 percent (300%) of the Federal Poverty Level ("FPL").

ENROLLMENT:

Eligible customers may receive a Big HEART grant by calling Cascade's Customer Service at (888) 522-1130 during business hours (Monday – Friday, 7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.); or by reaching out to their local Community Action Agency ("CAA").

BILL ASSISTANCE OPTIONS:1. Automatic Hardship Grant

Customers with a documented history of low-income program eligibility in which the customer has received energy assistance within the previous 24 months will automatically receive a one-time Big HEART grant equal to the amount of their outstanding balance (all past due charges) not to exceed \$1,500 and not to result in an account credit.

2. Financial Hardship Grant

For customers who have not received energy assistance within the past 24 months but express financial hardship due to COVID-19 to Cascade, either verbally or in written form, may qualify for the Big HEART grant. Cascade will work with customer to determine which payments or arrangements can be made before a grant credit is provided for the remaining balance. Any payments made by the customer will be deducted from the customer's account balance to be paid with a Big HEART grant.

For customers who apply for energy assistance with CAAs and have not received energy assistance within the previous 24 months, but verbally expressing financial hardship due to COVID-19 to CAA employees during the application process. CAAs will attempt to qualify the applicant for traditional bill pay assistance (LIHEAP, WEAFF, OLIBA, and Winter Help) before utilizing the Big HEART grant.

Whether through Cascade or CAAs, a benefit curve based on household size, monthly income, and account balance will be used to determine the Big HEART grant amount. Monthly income would be provided verbally by the customer where documentation is not required and shall be the combined current income amounts of all adult household members. The grant will be equal to the amount of their outstanding balance (all past due charges) not to exceed \$1,500 and not to result in an account credit.

(continued)

(N)

Schedule 35
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Applies to any customer receiving natural gas service for domestic purposes under the Company’s Rate Schedule 101, general residential service, within the Company’s service territory and who has a household income up to 300 percent (300%) of the Federal Poverty Level (“FPL”).

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(continued)

(N)

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(N)

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Funding to be distributed is one percent (1%) of the Company's Oregon retail revenues, not to be increased without prior OPUC approval, as determined by the Company's recent general rate case in Docket UG 390, which the amount is \$707,517. Majority of the funding will be to assist customers for bill and debt relief with a portion of the funding used to promote the availability of financial assistance throughout the Company's service area. This outreach may include, but not be limited to, emails, print, and digital advertisements.

TERM:

The Big HEART program, as described above, will be in operation from April 2021 through September 2022, or until the Company reaches its spending limit, or until the OPUC closes the program. Funding not spent by September 30, 2022, will be used to reduce any remaining residential bad debts starting in chronological order from oldest to most recent balance, then any remaining funds will be rolled into the Company's low-income program.

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(N)

(N)



In the Community to Serve®

8113 W Grandridge Blvd
Kennewick, WA 99336-7166
888-522-1130 | www.cngc.com

Important Information Regarding Your Account



Dear Customer-

Cascade Natural Gas understands that many of our customers are still experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to help our customers, **Cascade Natural Gas has established and made available assistance funds through our newly created Big Heart Grant.** As a customer with a current past due balance, you may qualify for assistance through the Big Heart Grant that could bring your current amount due to zero.

Call our Customer Service Department at the number below to inquire about receiving assistance through the Big Heart Grant. Receiving this assistance does not disqualify you from receiving further assistance or assistance from other organizations.

We sincerely hope you will take advantage of this no-strings-attached help from Cascade Natural Gas. Thank you for being a valued customer.

Cascade Natural Gas Corp.

Customer Service

888-522-1130

Monday-Friday | 7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.



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Información Importante Sobre Su Cuenta



Estimado Cliente-

Cascade Natural Gas entiende que muchos de nuestros clientes todavía están experimentando dificultades financieras como resultado de la pandemia de COVID-19. En un esfuerzo por ayudar a nuestros clientes, **Cascade Natural Gas ha establecido y puesto a disposición fondos de asistencia a través de nuestra recién creada Beca Big Heart Grant**. Como cliente con un saldo adeudado actual, puede calificar para recibir asistencia a través de la subvención Big Heart Grant que podría reducir su monto actual adeudado a cero.

Llame a nuestro Departamento de Servicio al Cliente al número que aparece a continuación para solicitar información sobre cómo recibir asistencia a través de Big Heart Grant. Recibir esta asistencia no lo descalifica para recibir más asistencia o asistencia de otras organizaciones.

Esperamos sinceramente que aproveche esta ayuda sin compromiso de Cascade Natural Gas. Gracias por ser un cliente valioso.

Cascade Natural Gas Corp.

Customer Service

888-522-1130

Lunes-Viernes | 7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Important Information Regarding Your Cascade Natural Gas Account

Cascade Natural Gas understands that many of our customers are still experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to help our



customers, **Cascade Natural Gas** has established and made available assistance funds through our newly created **Big Heart Grant**. As a customer with a current past due balance, you may qualify for assistance through the Big Heart Grant that could bring your current amount due to zero.

Call our Customer Service Department at the number below to inquire about receiving assistance through

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In the Community to Serve®

www.cngc.com



Customer Service

888-522-1130

Monday-Friday

7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Información Importante Sobre Su Cuenta de Cascade Natural Gas

Cascade Natural Gas entiende que muchos de nuestros clientes todavía están experimentando dificultades financieras como resultado de la pandemia de COVID-19. En un esfuerzo por ayudar a nuestros clientes, Cascade Natural Gas ha establecido y puesto a disposición fondos de asistencia a través de nuestra recién creada Beca Big Heart. Como cliente con un saldo adeudado actual, puede calificar para recibir asistencia a través de la subvención Big Heart Grant que podría reducir su monto actual adeudado a cero.



Llame a nuestro Departamento de Servicio al Cliente al número que aparece a continuación para solicitar información sobre cómo recibir

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Important Notice Regarding Your Account



Dear Customer-

Cascade Natural Gas understands that many of our customers are still experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to help our customers, **Cascade Natural Gas has applied a credit to your account through our Big Heart Grant that has brought your current amount due to zero.** You were chosen to receive this credit based on your use of energy assistance within the past 24 months.

Receiving this credit to your account does not disqualify you from receiving additional assistance. If you have any questions about the Cascade Natural Gas Big Heart Grant or are in need of additional assistance, please feel free to contact us at the Customer Service number below.

We sincerely hope this is a help to you. Thank you for being a valued customer.

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Aviso Importante Sobre Su Cuenta



Estimado cliente-

Cascade Natural Gas entiende que muchos de nuestros clientes todavía están experimentando dificultades financieras como resultado de la pandemia de COVID-19. En un esfuerzo por ayudar a nuestros clientes, **Cascade Natural Gas ha aplicado un crédito a su cuenta a través de nuestra Subvención Big Heart que ha reducido su monto actual a cero.** Usted fue elegido para recibir este crédito en función de su uso de asistencia energética en los últimos 24 meses.

Recibir este crédito en su cuenta no lo descalifica para recibir asistencia adicional. Si tiene alguna pregunta acerca de la subvención Cascade Natural Gas Big Heart Grant o si necesita ayuda adicional, no dude en comunicarse con nosotros al número de Servicio al cliente que aparece a continuación.

Esperamos sinceramente que esto sea de ayuda para usted. Gracias por ser un cliente valioso.

Cascade Natural Gas Corp.

Customer Service

888-522-1130

Lunes-Viernes | 7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.



The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect our employees and customers. For complete information on Cascade's continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, [click here](#).



**YOUR
ACCOUNT
IS NOW
PAID IN
FULL.**

Cascade's new Big Heart Grant has brought your account to a zero balance.

Cascade Natural Gas understands that many of our customers are still experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to help our customers, **Cascade Natural Gas has applied a credit to your account through our Big Heart Grant that has brought your current amount due to zero.** You were chosen to receive this credit based on your use of energy assistance within the past 24 months.

Receiving this credit to your account does not disqualify you from receiving additional assistance. If you have any questions about the Cascade Natural Gas Big Heart Grant or are in need of additional assistance, please feel free to contact us at **888-522-1130**. Representatives are available Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 6:30 pm.

We sincerely hope this is a help to you. Thank you for being a valued customer.

[CLICK HERE FOR INFORMATION ON
ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS](#)



The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect our employees and customers. For complete information on Cascade's continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, [click here](#).



**YOUR
ACCOUNT
COULD
BE PAID
IN FULL.**

Cascade's new Big Heart Grant can pay-off your current balance due.

Cascade Natural Gas understands that many of our customers are still experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to help our customers, **Cascade Natural Gas has established and made available assistance funds through our newly created Big Heart Grant.** As a customer with a current past due balance, you may qualify for assistance through the Big Heart Grant that will bring your current amount due to zero.

Call our Customer Service Department at 888-522-1130, Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 6:30 pm to inquire about receiving assistance through the Big Heart Grant. Receiving this assistance does not disqualify you from receiving further assistance or assistance from other organizations.

We sincerely hope you will take advantage of this no-strings-attached help from Cascade Natural Gas. Thank you for being a valued customer.

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