

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: December 1, 2020**

REGULAR CONSENT EFFECTIVE DATE December 2, 2020

DATE: November 23, 2020

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Sabrina Soldavini

THROUGH: Bryan Conway and John Crider **SIGNED**

SUBJECT: CASCADE NATURAL GAS:
(Docket No. ADV 1200/Advice No. O20-11-02)
Requests revisions to Schedule 200, Various Miscellaneous Charges, to modify language related to reconnection and late payment charges.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission) approve Cascade Natural Gas Corporation's (Cascade, CNG, or Company) request to update Schedule 200, Various Miscellaneous Charges, revising language related to reconnection and late payment charges, effective for service rendered on and after December 2, 2020, on less than statutory notice (LSN).

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Commission should approve Cascade's Advice No. O20-11-02, which modifies Schedule 200, Various Miscellaneous Charges, by adding language stating that reconnection and late payment charges will be waived for residential customers through October 1, 2022, in accordance with Order No. 20-401, effective for service on and after December 2, 2020, on less than statutory notice.

Applicable Law

ORS 757.205 requires public utilities to file schedules showing all rates, tolls, and charges for service that have been established and are in force at the time. Pursuant to

ORS 757.210, the Commission may approve tariff changes if they are deemed to be fair, just, and reasonable.

Filings that make any change in rates, tolls, charges, rules or regulations must be filed with the Commission at least 30 days before the effective date of the changes.

ORS 757.220; OAR 860-022-0015. Tariff filings to be effective on less than 30 days following notice of the change may be authorized with a waiver of less than statutory notice pursuant to ORS 757.220 and OAR 860-022-0020.

Analysis

Background

On March 8, 2020, Oregon Governor Kate Brown declared a state of emergency due to the public health threat posed by COVID-19, and directed Oregonians to stay at home to the greatest extent possible in Executive Order No. 20-12 (March 23, 2020). The state of emergency has been extended, most recently, in Executive Order 20-59 (October 27, 2020). Various orders governing social and economic activity in light of the pandemic have been issued, the most recent of which is Executive Order 20-65 (November 17, 2020) imposing a limited-duration freeze on certain activities.

On June 9, 2020, the Commission conducted a Special Public meeting on the “Impact to Utility Customers during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Future Economic Recovery.” As a result of this meeting, Docket No. UM 2114 was opened to address the challenges caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. A stipulated Agreement in Docket No. UM 2114 was approved by the Commission in Order No. 20-401 on November 5, 2020.

On November 19, 2020, the Company filed Tariff Advice No. O20-11-02, requesting that the Schedule 200 language be modified to state that “[b]oth Reconnection and Late Payment Charges listed below are waived for residential customers until October 1, 2022, per Order 20-401,”¹ on less than statutory notice.

Review

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has created added financial burden on many ratepayers. In Order No. 20-401, the Commission adopted a stipulation addressing the effects of the pandemic on energy utility customers. The terms of this Order include a provision, paragraph 11, under which utilities agree not to apply service disconnection and reconnection fees to residential customers through October 1, 2022.² In paragraph 12 of the agreement, utilities also agree not to accrue late payment fees for all

¹ ADV 1200/Advice No. O20-11-02, initial filing at 3.

² UM 2114, Order No. 20-401, Appendix A at 15.

residential customers through October 1, 2022.³ Both requirements extend through October 1, 2022, though the parties to the stipulation have agreed to confer on or about October 1, 2021, to determine whether to request that the Commission modify the October 1, 2022, end date.

Staff has reviewed the Company's filing, and finds that the requested modification to Schedule 200, Various Miscellaneous Charges, to waive reconnection and late payment charges for residential customers, conforms to Commission Order No. 20-401.

Staff further finds that the proposed modifications to Schedule 200 will benefit those customers who have been experienced increased financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

Based on the circumstances outlined above, Staff concludes that Cascade's request to modify Schedule 200, Various Miscellaneous Charges, to waive the reconnection and late payment charges for residential customers through October 1, 2022, is in compliance with Order No. 20-401.

Staff further concludes that the requested change will result in rates that are fair, just, and reasonable, and recommends that the Commission approve the Company's tariff as proposed in Advice No. O20-11-02.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve Cascade's request to modify Schedule 200, Various Miscellaneous, by adding language stating that reconnection and late payment charges are waived for residential customers through October 1, 2022, in accordance with Commission Order No. 20-401, effective for service on and after December 2, 2020, on less than statutory notice.

³ UM 2114, Order No. 20-401, Appendix A at 15.