

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

IN THE MATTER OF THE MOTION OF
VECTREN ENERGY DELIVERY OF OHIO,
INC. TO SUSPEND CERTAIN PROCEDURES
AND PROCESS DURING THE DECLARED
STATE OF EMERGENCY AND RELATED
MATTERS.

CASE NO. 20-649-GA-UNC

ENTRY

Entered in the Journal on May 13, 2020

{¶ 1} Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio, Inc. (Vectren or Company) is a natural gas company and a public utility, as defined by R.C. 4905.03 and R.C. 4905.02, respectively. As such, Vectren is subject to the jurisdiction of this Commission.

{¶ 2} R.C. 4909.16 provides, in part, that, in the event of an emergency, when the Commission finds it necessary to prevent injury to the business or interests of the public or of any public utility, it may temporarily alter, amend, or suspend any existing rates or schedules.

{¶ 3} On March 9, 2020, the governor signed Executive Order 2020-01D (Executive Order), declaring a state of emergency in Ohio to protect the well-being of Ohioans from the dangerous effects of COVID-19. As described in the Executive Order, state agencies are required to implement procedures consistent with recommendations from the Department of Health to prevent or alleviate the public health threat associated with COVID-19. Additionally, all citizens are urged to heed the advice of the Department of Health regarding this public health emergency in order to protect their health and safety. The Executive Order was effective immediately and will remain in effect until the COVID-19 emergency no longer exists. The Department of Health is making COVID-19 information, including information on preventative measures, available via the internet at coronavirus.ohio.gov/.

{¶ 4} Pursuant to R.C. 3701.13, the Ohio Department of Health has supervision of “all matters relating to the preservation of the life and health of the people” and the

“ultimate authority in matters of quarantine and isolation.” On March 12, 2020, the Director of the Ohio Department of Health issued an Order indicating that “all persons are urged to maintain social distancing (approximately six feet away from other people) whenever possible.”

{¶ 5} On March 12, 2020, the Commission opened Case No. 20-591-AU-UNC and directed all utility companies in this state to review their disconnection policies and procedures in light of the state of emergency. *In re the Proper Procedures and Process for the Commission's Operations and Proceedings During the Declared State of Emergency and Related Matters*, Case No. 20-591-AU-UNC (*Emergency Case*), Entry (Mar. 12, 2020) at ¶ 7. On March 13, 2020, the Commission extended its winter reconnection order through May 1, 2020, and directed all utility companies in this state to review their reconnection procedures. *Emergency Case*, Entry (Mar. 13, 2020) at ¶ 6. In the March 12, 2020, and March 13, 2020 Entries, the Commission also directed all utility companies to promptly seek any necessary approval, for the duration of the emergency, to suspend otherwise applicable disconnection or reconnection requirements that may impose a service continuity or service restoration hardship on residential and non-residential customers or create unnecessary COVID-19 risks associated with social contact. The Commission determined that such filings shall be deemed approved on an emergency basis for a period of at least 30 days effective as of the filing date or until such date as the Commission may otherwise specify, which shall not be less than 30 days. On April 8, 2020, the Commission extended the 30-day automatic approval period for such filings for an additional 30 days, unless otherwise ordered by the Commission. *Emergency Case*, Finding and Order (Apr. 8, 2020) at ¶ 9.

{¶ 6} On March 24, 2020, Vectren filed a motion to suspend or modify certain policies and practices and to seek a waiver of various provisions of the Ohio Administrative Code, its tariff requirements, and other policies or requirements for the duration of the state of emergency in Ohio. Vectren declares that the Company has suspended all service disconnections for nonpayment and for failure to comply with the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) requirements. Further, Vectren states that residential customers

previously disconnected for nonpayment may contact the Company for assistance to reconnect service, which may require the waiver of reconnection fees. To ensure the continuity of service or to eliminate service restoration hardships, Vectren is waiving late-payment fees and may also suspend or waive other payment, application, or verification requirements as may be necessary, including requirements applicable to PIPP customers.

{¶ 7} As a part of the motion, to minimize unnecessary social contact while ensuring the continuity of service, Vectren plans to limit field activities to emergency response; new service requests and reconnections; service disconnections requested by customers or when necessary for safety reasons; bare steel and cast iron replacement, distribution modernization, and public improvement, construction, maintenance, and inspection work that would not result in a service interruption; grade 3 leak repair that would not result in a service interruption; and additional work performed by contractors to alleviate an emergency and/or to reduce public safety risks. Thus, Vectren states that the Company may be required to forgo activities otherwise required by rule, tariff, or applicable policies and procedures, including, but not limited to, meter testing, in-person actual meter reading, meter relocations, service upgrades, and customer meetings. Vectren states that the Company has, consistent with the Commission's March 20, 2020 Entry in the *Emergency Case*, suspended all in-person meter readings, including actual meter reads to initiate or terminate service to reduce unnecessary risks associated with social contact. The Company notes that, under the circumstances, Vectren may experience an increase in customer requests and a decrease in available resources, which could affect the Company's ability to meet certain performance standards set forth in the Commission's rules. Further, Vectren states that the Company has suspended all activity related to its in-home energy efficiency programs, including weatherization programs, and inspections, except for the processing of rebates or activity deemed necessary to alleviate an emergency for low-income customers and/or to reduce public safety risks. Accordingly, to the extent the foregoing process changes prevent, limit, or delay the performance of obligations under the Commission's rules, Vectren's tariffs, or any other applicable policy or practice, Vectren requests a waiver

of such requirements, including, but not limited to, Ohio Adm.Code 4901:1-13-04(D) and (G), 4901:1-13-05(A)-(D), 4901:1-13-08(E), 4901:1-13-10(B)-(E), 4901:1-18-07(A)-(C), 4901:1-18-12(C) and (D), 4901:1-18-16(D), 4901:1-18-17(A) and (B). The Company requests such waiver for at least the duration of the emergency and to the extent that the foregoing limitations cause Vectren to fail to comply with any ongoing, regular, or annual requirements that may be in effect after the emergency.

{¶ 8} On April 13, 2020, Ohio Consumers' Counsel filed a motion to intervene. Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy also filed a motion to intervene on April 14, 2020.

{¶ 9} On May 11, 2020, Staff filed its review and recommendations in response to Vectren's motion.

{¶ 10} In order to assist the Commission in its review of Vectren's motion, the attorney examiner finds that motions for intervention and comments should be filed by no later than May 20, 2020.

{¶ 11} It is, therefore,

{¶ 12} ORDERED, That the procedural schedule set forth in Paragraph 10 be adopted. It is, further,

{¶ 13} ORDERED, That a copy of this Entry be served upon all parties of record.

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

/s/ Greta See

By: Greta See
Attorney Examiner

NJW/hac

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Summary: Attorney Examiner Entry setting forth procedural schedule electronically filed by Heather A Chilcote on behalf of Greta See, Attorney Examiner, Public Utilities Commission