



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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September 17, 2020

**NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENT**  
**(by Wednesday, September 30, 2020)**

**NOTICE OF RECESSED OPEN MEETING**  
**(Tuesday, October 6, 2020, beginning at 1:00 p.m.)**

Re: Response to COVID-19 Pandemic, Docket U-200281

**BACKGROUND**

On April 17, 2020, Governor Inslee issued Proclamation 20-23.2, which prohibits all energy, water, and telecommunications providers from (1) disconnecting residential service due to nonpayment, (2) refusing to reconnect residential customers who were disconnected due to nonpayment, and (3) charging late fees or reconnection fees. The prohibition was set to expire on May 4, 2020, but subsequent proclamations extended that date through October 15, 2020. Proclamation 20-23.4, issued on May 29, 2020, also requires utilities to develop COVID-19 Customer Support Programs, consistent with state guidance from the Governor's office, and that will address payment plan options for residential customers who are in arrears due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On June 16, 2020, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) conducted a virtual special open meeting to receive status updates from regulated utilities and interested persons regarding their general experiences responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to discuss utilities' transition plans related to the Governor's moratorium on disconnections and late or reconnection fees. The Commission has also received written comments on these issues both before and after the special open meeting.

The Commission formed a COVID-19 response workgroup of stakeholders to facilitate development of guidelines for ensuring that customers experiencing economic hardship as a

result of the COVID-19 pandemic maintain access to essential services after Proclamation 20-23 expires and the moratorium on disconnections and late fees is no longer in effect. Workgroup members included Commission staff (Staff), Puget Sound Energy, Avista Corporation, d/b/a Avista Utilities, PacifiCorp, d/b/a Pacific Power & Light Company, Cascade Natural Gas Corporation, Northwest Natural Gas Company, the Public Counsel Unit of the Washington Attorney General's Office, The Energy Project, Front and Centered, Northwest Energy Coalition, Puget Sound Sage, and the Sierra Club.

Workgroup members exchanged proposed term sheets and participated in several workshops. The participants agreed on some of the issues presented but were unable to reach consensus on a single proposed set of guidelines or requirements. Accordingly, Staff prepared a term sheet that reflects the agreed terms and recommended resolutions of the disputed issues, as well as a separate document explaining Staff's recommendations. Copies of Staff's proposed term sheet, Staff's explanatory document, and the latest proposals by the joint utilities and the joint advocates are on file in this docket at <http://www.utc.wa.gov/200281>.

### WRITTEN COMMENTS

The Commission seeks written responses to Staff's recommended term sheet. The Commission also welcomes comments on the latest term sheets prepared by the joint utilities and joint advocates. Additionally, the Commission requests the utilities provide updated data for the period of January 1, 2020, through August 30, 2020, provided by month as compared to calendar year 2019 for:

1. The number of customers by customer class with past-due balances (arrearages).
2. The amount of past-due balances, by customer class, that are 30, 60, 90, and more than 90 days past due, and the total amount of arrearages.
3. The amount of past-due balances for known low-income households that are 30, 60, 90, and more than 90 days past due, and the total amount of these arrearages.
4. Number of premises receiving bill assistance or enrolled in any other assistance program.
5. Number of customers who entered into a payment plan.
6. Amount over the baseline bad debt expense as compared to authorized level in most recent general rate case.

Written comments on these proposals and the requested utility data would be most helpful if the Commission receives them by **5 p.m. on Wednesday, September 30, 2020**.

Written comments should be submitted in electronic form, specifically in searchable .pdf format (Adobe Acrobat or comparable software), via the Commission's web portal at [www.utc.wa.gov/e-filing](http://www.utc.wa.gov/e-filing). If you are unable to submit documents via the portal, you may submit your comments by email to the Commission's Records Center at [records@utc.wa.gov](mailto:records@utc.wa.gov) or by mailing or delivering an electronic copy to the Commission's Records Center on a flash drive,

DVD, or compact disc that includes the filed document(s). Comment submissions should include:

- The docket number of this proceeding (Docket U-200281).
- The commenting party's name.
- The title and date of the comment or comments.

The Commission will post on its web site all comments that are provided in electronic format. The web site is located at <http://www.utc.wa.gov/200281>.

### **RECESSED OPEN MEETING**

After concluding its consideration of other items on the agenda of its regularly scheduled September 24, 2020, open meeting, the Commission will recess the open meeting until **October 6, 2020, beginning at 1 p.m.** to consider proposals for guidelines or requirements to assist customers who are experiencing economic hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain access to essential services.

The Commission will conduct the recessed open meeting virtually. Interested persons may participate in the proceeding by phone by calling (360) 407-3810 and entering the Conference ID: 648699, or via the Skype for Business app by using the following link: <https://lync.wa.gov/utc.wa.gov/meet/omeeting/4YJ5Z17S>.

If you have questions regarding this request for comments and recessed open meeting, you may contact Amy Andrews, Policy Director, at [amy.andrews@utc.wa.gov](mailto:amy.andrews@utc.wa.gov) or (360) 481-1335.

MARK L. JOHNSON  
Executive Director and Secretary