

Special Open Meeting for COVID-19 related issues  
June 16, 2020  
Docket U-200281

Chat Comments:

[6/16/2020 1:11 PM] Brown, Matthew:  
Ryan, this is Matt Brown with WA Water, can you make it so that I can share my presentation when the time comes? Thanks

[6/16/2020 1:13 PM] Smith, Ryan (UTC):  
Matt, I've made you a presenter - when it is time I can stop presenting my screen and you can then present yours. Are you familiar with to do that?

[6/16/2020 1:13 PM] Brown, Matthew:  
Thanks Ryan. More familiar with Zoom, but I think I can figure it out (hopefully)

[6/16/2020 1:14 PM] Smith, Ryan (UTC):  
Please let me know if assistance is needed.

[6/16/2020 1:15 PM] Brown, Matthew:  
Is it easier to present my desktop (screen?) or Power Point files?

[6/16/2020 1:16 PM] Smith, Ryan (UTC):  
Desktop would likely be easier

[6/16/2020 1:16 PM] Vasconi, Mark (UTC):  
Ryan, once the energy IOUs finish their presentations, Eli King from Commerce will be speaking for about 10 minutes. She has called in on 360-764-0126 b/c Skype doesn't seem to work on her end. Will she be able to be heard using her phone as her access method?

[6/16/2020 1:16 PM] Brown, Matthew:  
Thanks, I'll try that

[6/16/2020 1:17 PM] Smith, Ryan (UTC):  
Thank you Mark - I will add her to the presenter list so she isn't muted on accident.

[6/16/2020 1:17 PM] Vasconi, Mark (UTC):  
Thanks, Ryan.

[6/16/2020 1:30 PM] Smith, Ryan (UTC):  
Matt, you may present now

[6/16/2020 1:46 PM] Smith, Ryan (UTC):

Matt - when you can, please click 'stop presenting' located on the top right portion of your screen. Thank you!

[6/16/2020 2:00 PM] David Morton:

+1 to Doug Howell

[6/16/2020 2:00 PM] Nick Simmons:

Thank you Doug Howell, well said.

[6/16/2020 2:17 PM] Forbes Mercy:

I would enjoy speaking to telecommunications.

[6/16/2020 2:21 PM] Adam Sherr (CTL):

This is Adam Sherr from CenturyLink - Lisa Anderl is on the phone and was attempting to speak. Does the UTC have phone participants muted?

[6/16/2020 2:22 PM] chris mccord:

Want to provide a complete answer on our upcoming loan rounds.

[6/16/2020 2:22 PM] Smith, Ryan (UTC):

She needs to press \*6 to unmute herself.

[6/16/2020 2:22 PM] chris mccord:

From DOH2020 Funding and Application Cycles

Consolidation Feasibility Study Grants: August 3-31.

Water Main Replacement Loan: August 3-31.

Construction Loan: October 1 through November 30.

Emergency Loans: Applications accepted year-round.

[6/16/2020 2:22 PM]

Thank you, Chris! We will get this posted to our docket with the remainder of the comments.

[6/16/2020 2:58 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

Yes -- hoping for just payment plans for all utilities as we move forward

Also yes! Also hoping for no disconnects

[6/16/2020 3:00 PM] David Morton:  
+1 to Ruth Sawyer

[6/16/2020 3:22 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:  
I have not been able to get energy assistance because my mortgage is more than the monthly amt allowed.

[6/16/2020 3:24 PM] Roberts, Andrew (UTC):  
Hello Andrea, I would be happy to discuss energy assistance with you. I can be reached at 360-664-1101, or our toll free consumer line 1-888-333-9882

[6/16/2020 3:25 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:  
Some jurisdictions (Bellevue) utility costs are significantly higher than other jurisdictions. If we want our communities to be economically diverse, some kind of income based payment for utilities should be put in place.

[6/16/2020 3:28 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:  
I do not know if this has been addressed, but as an educator I am quite concerned about children who may be affected by utility cutoffs due to their parents' unemployment. Especially in marginalized communities these kinds of trauma compound and have lifelong implications.

[6/16/2020 3:32 PM] David Morton:  
+1 to Andrea Scott-Murray

[6/16/2020 3:35 PM] Ruth Sawyer:  
Yes, I think we need to prioritize people's overall well-being as we move forward

[6/16/2020 3:39 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:  
I am an underemployed, high risk senior. I was late on my mortgage prior to the pandemic. While I have been paying my utilities, my mortgage is piling up. I can't see how I will be able to sell my house at this time or find other housing. When I bought this house I was dismayed at the exterior walls with no insulation and shoddy ducting. There are few to no resources to improve single family housing energy efficiency and meet health and safety standards. LED lightbulbe and toilet water saving devices are a start but a pallid one and truly a drop in the ocean of actions that need to be taken to improve building efficiency and come back better than before.

[6/16/2020 3:42 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:  
40% increase in arrears!

[6/16/2020 3:49 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:  
Economic estimations and recent Fed actions indicate that this pandemic will result in a large and probably long lasting economic downturn. Marginalized communities are likely

to be even more impacted in terms of less employment and loss of small businesses. Return to cutoffs should reflect that reality.

[6/16/2020 3:53 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

For sure. We have an opportunity and an obligation to make sure that we are protecting those hardest hit by this crisis, and to remake our economy so it doesn't continue to exacerbate racial and economic inequality or the ongoing climate crisis.

[6/16/2020 3:54 PM] David Morton:

+1 to Ruth Sawyer

[6/16/2020 4:02 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:

People want to pay their obligations! People aren't ignoring resources willfully, they are on overwhelm and may be dealing with life and death family issues.

[6/16/2020 4:05 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

Sounds like Avista has been contacting folks to remind them to pay bills if they can as a form of contact

[6/16/2020 4:06 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

Telling them you are going to shut off their power isn't the only way to contact them about programs, as far as I'm aware

I'm definitely in favor of continuing not to shut off people's power during a pandemic!

[6/16/2020 4:07 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:

Fourty percent again. That looks like the # of people who are really struggling to pay basic bills. This is a huge number!

[6/16/2020 4:09 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:

It defies common decency to threaten a cutoff in order to offer assistance.

[6/16/2020 4:13 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

So critical -- utility service has always been essential. During a pandemic whose spread can be slowed by handwashing, and many people's work and learning is completely online, it is even more so. Water and energy should be a human right

[6/16/2020 4:14 PM] David Morton:

+1 to Ruth; +1 to Andrea

[6/16/2020 4:15 PM] Andrea Scott-Murray:

Thank you for assisting in those ways PSE. The way to meet the shortfalls the energy companies are facing due to customer distress is to accelerate the switch to clean energy and building and infrastructure efficiency.

[6/16/2020 4:21 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

Definitely adding more people to assistance programs / lowering barriers to entry would be helpful

[6/16/2020 4:38 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

People shouldn't be disconnected due to loss of income, either  
Now that is true, but it should be extended into the future much further

[6/16/2020 4:43 PM] David Morton:

I care about Washingtonians who are suffering right now due to impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, the economic downturn, unemployment, and social and racial injustice. I am asking the UTC and utilities to show compassion and to help reduce the suffering of those unable to pay their utility bills during these challenging times.

I am calling on the Utilities and Transportation Commission to do everything in its power to ensure that people have access to stable, debt-free utility service during this pandemic and beyond. This includes:

- No debt for poor and working class families
- Just payment plans for all utilities
- No fees and disconnects

Please have compassion. Some people are suffering during these difficult times and are experiencing reduced incomes. Please do not disconnect their utility services. Doing so would likely increase their suffering.

[6/16/2020 5:01 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

YES. Appreciate what you're saying Karen

[6/16/2020 5:02 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

We need to prioritize consumer protections available to all  
Low-income people and also people of color have been hardest hit

[6/16/2020 5:07 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

++ Debt forgiveness ++

[6/16/2020 5:19 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

Yes, let's build back better

[6/16/2020 5:26 PM] Ruth Sawyer:

YES, thank you Katrina

[6/16/2020 5:36 PM] Wendy Gerlitz:

Eleanor Bastian was having trouble getting off mute, but she is available to provide comment now

[6/16/2020 5:38 PM] Karen Lusson:

Debt forgiveness is critical. Deferred payment arrangements in and of themselves -- no matter the length (although longer, such as 24 months, is better!) is not enough. You are asking the person to pay their already unaffordable utility bill AND add on the arrearage payment. Customers need either Percentage of Income Payment Plans (that include debt forgiveness) or discount rates with arrearage reduction programs that forgive the debt for staying current on your significantly discounted bill.

[6/16/2020 5:41 PM] Shawn Collins:

\$13 million allocated to WA State as part of the CARES Act LIHEAP funding

[6/16/2020 5:54 PM] Karen Lusson:

I want to add that the Illinois settlement debt forgiveness program included a portion to be set aside for undocumented persons who would otherwise not qualify for LIHEAP. Note, too, that undocumented persons will also not have access to CARES Act benefits and unemployment benefits. Assistance for a utility's undocumented population should be included in any program.