

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD

Docket No. 6863

Investigation into Hardwick Electric Department's)	Hearing at
Service Quality & Reliability Performance, Monitoring)	Montpelier, Vermont
& Reporting Plan)	August 18, 2003

Order entered: 9/17/2003

PRESENT: Edward McNamara, Esq., Hearing Officer

APPEARANCES: Sarah Hofmann, Esq.
for the Vermont Department of Public Service

William B. Piper, Esq.
Primmer & Piper, P.C.
for the Town of Hardwick Electric Department

I. INTRODUCTION

In this Proposal for Decision, I recommend that the Public Service Board ("Board") approve Hardwick Electric Department's ("Hardwick") Service Quality & Reliability Performance, Monitoring & Reporting Plan ("Plan") as filed with the Board on July 2, 2003, with the modification discussed below. The Plan includes minimum performance standards, service guarantees, reporting protocols and methods of data collection for each of the customer service, safety, and reliability performance areas identified in Hardwick's Plan.

I recommend that the Board make one minor modification to Hardwick's Plan as discussed below. This modification was discussed at the technical hearing and all parties have agreed to the modification.

II. FINDINGS

Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 8, and based on the record and evidence before me, I present the following findings of fact and conclusions of law to the Board.

1. The Plan establishes performance standards, performance monitoring and reporting, and service commitments to customers for electric service provided by Hardwick. Joint Exhibit 1.
2. The Plan establishes measurement and reporting protocols for the performance standards. Joint Exhibit 1.
3. The Plan establishes performance areas in which Hardwick agrees to monitor, report and be subject to minimum performance standards. Joint Exhibit 1.
4. The Plan establishes customer service guarantees to be offered by Hardwick, subject to Board approval of a tariff amendment containing the guarantees to be filed within 30 days of Board approval of the Plan. Joint Exhibit 1.
5. The benefits provided to Hardwick customers by the Plan are comparable to those that have been established by other Vermont electric utilities. Tr. 8/18/03 at 12-13 (Frankel).
6. The baselines in the Plan are within the range previously approved by the Board for service quality and reliability plans for other municipal electric utilities. Tr. 8/18/03 at 13 (Frankel).
7. The Plan provides that it will remain in effect for two years from the date of approval by the Board. Joint Exhibit 1.
8. The parties agree that the second sentence in section C(1) of the Plan should be clarified by inserting the italicized text that follows: "Consumer complaints to DPS, determined after investigation to be 'escalations,' in which the consumer complains he or she could not reach the utility should not exceed five percent of all consumer complaints *concerning Hardwick* to DPS." Tr. 8/18/03 at 8-9.

III. DISCUSSION

At the technical hearing, I asked the parties whether there was a mechanism in place to ensure that the Plan is accessible to customers. The Department responded that the service quality and reliability plans for electric utilities which have filed such plans are available on the

Department's website. Additionally, Hardwick stated that it understands that there has been some information in the Hardwick Gazette concerning this Plan, and that ratepayers have been made aware of this Plan through that avenue.

As the Board has found with similar plans that have been proposed by other electric utilities,¹ the Plan benefits Hardwick customers by ensuring that adequate reliability and service standards are in place. I find approval of Harwick's Plan to be in the public interest, and I recommend that the Board approve it with the modification noted in Finding 8, above.

IV. CONCLUSION

For the reasons outlined above, I recommend that the Board approve Hardwick's Plan with one minor clarification: that the second sentence in section C(1) of the Plan be modified to read: "Consumer complaints to DPS, determined after investigation to be 'escalations,' in which the consumer complains he or she could not reach the utility should not exceed five percent of all consumer complaints *concerning Hardwick* to DPS."

On August 18, 2003, the Department filed a letter with the Clerk of the Board waiving its right pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 811 to comment on this Proposal for Decision, on the condition that this Proposal for Decision recommends that the Board adopt Hardwick's Plan substantially in the form as filed in Exhibit Joint 1. On August 20, 2003, Hardwick filed a similar letter. Because I am recommending that the Board approve the Plan as proposed, with only the minor clarification to which both parties have agreed, this Proposal for Decision has not been served on the parties.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont, this 12th day of September, 2003.

s/Ed McNamara
Edward McNamara, Esq.
Hearing Officer

1. See Docket No. 6851, Order of 5/23/03; Docket No. 6575, Order of 11/16/02.

V. BOARD DISCUSSION

In light of the limited degree of public information about the Plan (described on pages 2 to 3 of the Proposal for Decision) and the importance of having each customer understand its rights, the Board directs that Hardwick inform its customers of the Plan in a bill insert within 75 days of the date of this Order.

VI. ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED by the Public Service Board of the State of Vermont that:

1. The Findings and Conclusions of the Hearing Officer are adopted.
2. The Service Quality & Reliability Performance, Monitoring & Reporting Plan for Hardwick Electric Department that was filed with the Board on July 2, 2003, is approved with the following modification. The second sentence in section C(1) of the Plan shall be modified to read: "Consumer complaints to DPS, determined after investigation to be 'escalations,' in which the consumer complains he or she could not reach the utility should not exceed five percent of all consumer complaints concerning Hardwick to DPS."
3. Hardwick shall file a tariff incorporating the Service Quality & Reliability Performance, Monitoring & Reporting Plan.
4. Within 75 days of the date of this Order, Hardwick shall provide its customers with a bill insert informing them of the Plan.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont, this 17th day of September, 2003.

<u>s/Michael H. Dworkin</u>)	
)	PUBLIC SERVICE
)	
<u>s/David C. Coen</u>)	BOARD
)	
)	OF VERMONT
<u>s/John D. Burke</u>)	

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

FILED: September 17, 2003

ATTEST: s/Susan M. Hudson

Clerk of the Board

NOTICE TO READERS: This decision is subject to revision of technical errors. Readers are requested to notify the Clerk of the Board (by e-mail, telephone, or in writing) of any apparent errors, in order that any necessary corrections may be made. (E-mail address: Clerk@psb.state.vt.us)

Appeal of this decision to the Supreme Court of Vermont must be filed with the Clerk of the Board within thirty days. Appeal will not stay the effect of this Order, absent further Order by this Board or appropriate action by the Supreme Court of Vermont. Motions for reconsideration or stay, if any, must be filed with the Clerk of the Board within ten days of the date of this decision and order.