

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Case No. 20-0789-INV

Vermont Public Utility Commission orders and memoranda issued in response to COVID-19 pandemic	
--	--

Order entered: 04/13/2021

ORDER EXTENDING APPLICABILITY OF GUIDANCE ON MAKING CERTAIN FILINGS THROUGH OCTOBER 10, 2021, AND CONFIRMING THAT THE COMMISSION DOES NOT INTEND TO HOLD SITE VISITS THROUGH JUNE 30, 2021

Both the State of Vermont and the federal government have declared a state of emergency due to the outbreak of the new coronavirus known as COVID-19. The Vermont Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) recognizes the importance of helping to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Vermont.

Social distancing is one step that helps slow the spread of this virus. As a result, the Commission examined its procedural requirements to identify those that require close personal contact and to review whether those requirements could be temporarily modified during this public health emergency without adversely affecting other parties’ procedural rights.

The Commission recently promulgated a revised version of Emergency Rule 2.500 to modify those procedural requirements that were contained in the Commission’s rules. The revised Emergency Rule 2.500 will be in effect until October 10, 2021, unless the Commission withdraws it sooner.

The Commission also previously provided additional guidance on how to file certain types of documents with the Commission during the pandemic. That guidance currently applies to filings made through April 13, 2021. In this order, the Commission extends the applicability of that guidance to filings made through October 10, 2021.¹ Specifically, the Commission extends:

- The guidance on how to file **confidential documents** with the Commission that is contained in the Commission’s March 31, 2020, order in this proceeding. The Commission similarly extends the waiver of the portion of Section IV.(c) of the

¹ This aligns the time period that the filing guidance will be in effect with the time period that the revised Emergency Rule 2.500 will be in effect.

Commission's "Standards and Procedures Applicable to Electronic Filing Using ePUC" that requires hard copies of confidential documents to be filed with the Commission within one business day of the date on which the non-confidential version of the document was filed using ePUC.²

- The guidance on how to file **notices of appeal** with the Commission that is contained in the Commission's April 23, 2020, order in this proceeding.

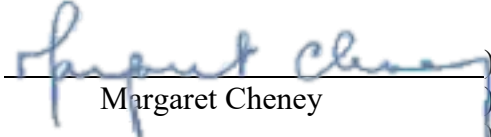
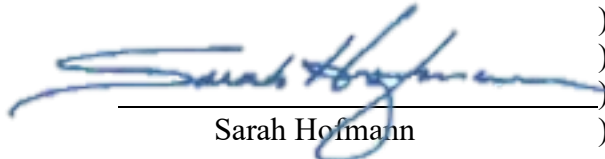
In addition, the Commission previously announced that it did not intend to hold any site visits through April 13, 2021. This order confirms that the Commission does not intend to hold any site visits through June 30, 2021. The Commission continues to anticipate that it would be difficult to maintain current social distancing requirements at an in-person site visit. In addition, because the purpose of a site visit is for Commissioners or hearing officers to see the actual physical site of a proposed project, the Commission does not believe that remote site visits would fulfill that purpose. However, the Commission recognizes that vaccinations against COVID-19 are underway in Vermont, and it is unknown when that could lead to changes in social distancing requirements. Because site visits are the one activity that the Commission has halted as a result of the pandemic, it is appropriate for the Commission to consider in late June whether the resumption of site visits would be consistent with social distancing requirements in effect at that time.

The Commission will continue to monitor the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic to determine whether any changes to these decisions may be appropriate.

SO ORDERED.

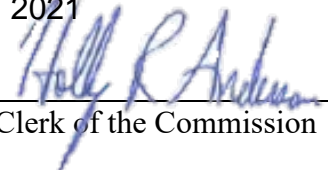
² Emergency Rule 2.503 also addresses how to file documents with the Commission.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont, this 13th day of April, 2021.

 _____ Margaret Cheney)	PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF VERMONT
)	
)	
 _____ Sarah Hofmann)	

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

Filed: April 13, 2021

Attest: 

Clerk of the Commission

Notice to Readers: This decision is subject to revision of technical errors. Readers are requested to notify the Clerk of the Commission (by e-mail, telephone, or in writing) of any apparent errors, in order that any necessary corrections may be made. (E-mail address: puc.clerk@vermont.gov)