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**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

July 8, 2020

Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Maryland's	*	Administrative Docket
Gas and Electric Utility Operations and	*	PC53
Customer Experiences	*	
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**NOTICE OF PUBLIC CONFERENCE ON THE  
IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Since March 5, 2020 Maryland has operated under a state of emergency in an effort to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19. COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that spreads easily from person to person and may result in serious illness or death. The economic impacts of COVID-19, both within the State and the Nation, are significant and likely to last into the future.<sup>1</sup>

As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its fifth month the Commission continues its statutory duties to oversee Maryland utilities, including ensuring the provision of safe and reliable service at just and reasonable rates. In light of the ongoing pandemic, the Commission finds that

<sup>1</sup> On March 16, 2020, Governor Larry Hogan issued an Executive Order prohibiting the termination of residential utility services and the imposition of late fees during the COVID-19 state of emergency. This prohibition is currently set to expire on August 1, 2020. On April 9, 2020 the Maryland Public Service Commission (“Commission”) issued Order No. 89542 authorizing Maryland utilities to “create a regulatory asset to record the incremental costs related to COVID-19[.]” The asset should track costs “incurred by the Utilities in their efforts to serve customers during this period.” The utilities were also directed to include in the asset any assistance or benefit received in connection with COVID-19. In a future proceeding, the Commission will consider whether recovery of the amounts detailed in the asset, are just and reasonable as well as the appropriate recovery period.

information related to the impacts of COVID-19, and resulting economic disruption on Maryland utilities and ratepayers is necessary in order to begin post-pandemic planning. The Commission is therefore convening a Public Conference 53 to elicit information from Maryland utilities and stakeholders to better understand the impacts to date of the pandemic on utilities and the services they provide. In order to initiate such action, the Commission poses the following questions to Maryland electric utilities, other than municipal and small rural electric cooperatives, and all Maryland gas utilities (“Utilities”):

1. What operational changes has the utility made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated State and local Executive Orders and recommendations of the public health community? In the future, what are the utility’s plans for transitioning back to normal operations?
2. What impacts, if any, has COVID-19 had on utility storm readiness and mutual assistance preparedness planning?
3. How has the pandemic and its associated repercussions, such as stay-at-home orders and broad economic slowdowns, impacted system usage, load projections and other reliability considerations? In addition, how is the utility assessing and preparing for changing circumstances such as re-openings or potential returns to more restrictive measures?
4. How has the pandemic and its associated repercussions, such as stay-at-home orders and broad economic slowdowns, impacted utility revenues including reductions in usage, shifts in load between customer classes, and impacts on bill stabilization adjustments (if applicable)? In addition, what actions is the utility considering to secure its long-term financial health including any plans to adjust its financing structure and capital or operational budgets?

5. To date, what is included in the utility's COVID-19 regulatory asset?
6. What are the impacts of COVID-19 on ongoing utility programs such as EmPOWER, active pilot programs, and other initiatives?
7. How has the pandemic impacted the utility's customer payment behaviors? How does the utility plan to handle the financial impacts of the prohibition on terminations as well as the resumption of terminations, when appropriate? Beyond the Governor's prohibition, what policies and procedures has the utility developed to handle increasing numbers of customers who are unable to pay utility bills? How will the utility insure that customer protections provided in COMAR are honored, including appropriate notice to customers regarding payment options?
8. What regulatory actions would the utility, or other parties, suggest the Commission consider to mitigate and continue monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 on Maryland utilities and ratepayers?

The Maryland electric utilities, other than municipal and small rural electric cooperatives, and gas utilities shall file responses to the eight questions outlined above by August 11, 2020. Other utilities may file at their own discretion. Interested parties may file comments, on both the utilities' responses and addressing Question 8 no later than August 21, 2020. Comments shall reference "PC53" and be submitted to Andrew S. Johnston, Executive Secretary, Maryland Public Service Commission, William Donald Schaefer Tower, 6 St. Paul Street, 16th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Commission encourages persons to use the Commission's E-file system for submission of the filing. Details of the E-file system are on the Commission's website, [www.psc.state.md.us](http://www.psc.state.md.us).

Furthermore, the Commission hereby gives notice that it will conduct a virtual legislative-style hearing beginning at 10:00 a.m. on August 27 and 28, 2020 for the purpose of reviewing the Utilities' responses to the Commission's questions and comments received from interested parties. The Commission will conduct the virtual meeting on WebEx at the following link: <https://mdpsc.webex.com/meet/CommissionVirtualHearing>.<sup>3</sup>

*Do not use the link unless you wish to actively participate in the hearing.*

If you would like to actively participate in the hearing, you must:

- Contact Molly Knoll at [mollyg.knoll@maryland.gov](mailto:mollyg.knoll@maryland.gov) by 12:00 noon on Monday, August 24, 2020.<sup>4</sup>

Otherwise, you may watch the live stream of the hearing on the Commission's YouTube channel.<sup>5</sup> Please also direct any questions about the hearing to Molly Knoll.

By Direction of the Commission,

*/s/ Andrew S. Johnston*

Andrew S. Johnston  
Executive Secretary

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<sup>3</sup> If the link does not work, you may call in by phone at: (202) 860-2110, Access code: 791 133 649. If you expect to participate by phone, please include your phone number in your email to Molly Knoll.

<sup>4</sup> Participants will receive an email confirming participation and information on a mandatory test run, if necessary.

<sup>5</sup> You may access the Commission's YouTube Channel via the "Watch PSC Proceedings" button on the lower left side of the Commission's home page, or via the following link to the YouTube Channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/MarylandPSC>.