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OMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVAN



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April 3, 2006

James J. McNulty Secretary Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission Commonwealth Keystone Building 400 North Street P.O. Box 3265 Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

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RE:

Proposed Rulemaking Re Net Metering for Customer-Generators Pursuant to Section 5 of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act, 73 P.S. § 1648.5

Docket No. L-00050174

Implementation of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act of 2004: Net Metering

Docket No. M-00051865

Dear Secretary McNulty:

Enclosed are an original and fifteen (15) copies of the Comments of the Office of Consumer Advocate, in the above-referenced proceeding.

Copies have been served on the parties of record as indicated on the enclosed Certificate of Service.

Sincerely,

Churchy M. Appleby

Christy M. Appleby Assistant Consumer Advocate

Enclosures

cc: Calvin Birge, Bureau of Conservation, Economics and Energy Planning H. Kirk House, Office of Special Assistants

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BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Proposed Rulemaking Re Net Metering for Customer-Generators Pursuant to Section 5 of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act, 73 P.S. § 1648.5

Docket Nos. L-00050174

Implementation of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act of 2004: Net Metering

M-00051865

Office of Consumer Advocate's Comments on Net Metering Regulations

2006 APR -3 PM 3: 53

I. Introduction

On November 10, 2005, the Commission issued its proposed rulemaking regarding net metering for customer generation pursuant to the requirements of Act 213 of 2004 (the Act). On February 4, 2006, the Commission's proposed rulemaking Order was published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin. The proposed rulemaking addresses issues including net metering definitions; metering requirements and charges; alternative energy credits; and the treatment of stranded costs.

The OCA supports the Commission's efforts to develop rules for small customers that are easy to use and that balance the issues presented by net metering.¹ Net metering provides long-term reliability and diversity benefits by allowing for, and stimulating, the

Previously, the OCA actively participated in the Working Group on net metering and interconnection and has submitted both informal working group and formal comments. On August 26, 2005, the OCA submitted comments regarding the Commission's proposed Net Metering Draft Regulations. Many of the OCA's prior comments and suggestions have been incorporated in, or addressed by, the proposed rulemaking.

development of distributed generation and alternative resources. The OCA submits that the Commission has developed a sound approach to its net metering regulations and provided a fair compensation method for individual customer-generators by following the New Jersey rules in this regard. The proposed regulations also limit charges on customer-generators and provide that the Electric Distribution Company (EDC) may not require additional equipment or insurance unless authorized by the Commission. Section 75.13(k). Eliminating unnecessary barriers will aid in the development of this behind the meter generation.

The QCA also supports the Commission's approach to stranded cost recovery for residential customers set forth in the proposed regulations. Recognizing that net metering by residential customers does not warrant additional procedures to address any reduction in stranded cost recovery is a reasonable reading of 66 Pa. C.S. § 2808(a). The Commission correctly observes that the cost of tracking reduced stranded cost recovery for residential customer-generators will likely exceed the recovery of the lost value of unrecovered stranded costs. Further, the costs of modifying billing systems in order to recover very small amounts of money from residential customer-generators alone will also far outstrip the value recovered. The principle of 66 Pa.C.S. § 2808(a) is not violated by foregoing the recovery of stranded costs when the reduction in usage is not significant and the costs of doing so far outstrip the amount of money that could be recovered. The OCA strongly supports the Commission's approach.

The OCA submits that the proposed regulations strike the appropriate balance in most respects and provide a positive step forward. The OCA has identified one area of concern with the proposed rulemaking. The OCA is concerned with Section 75.14(d)

which allows an EDC to secure ownership of Alternative Energy Credits if a customergenerator rejects ownership.

II. Discussion

The Commission has proposed in its regulations that if a customer-generator expressly rejects ownership of the alternative energy credits (AEC), the EDC may secure ownership by supplying additional metering equipment. Section 75.14(d) provides:

- (d) EDC Title to Credits.
- (i) When the customer-generator expressly rejects ownership of alternative energy credits produced in the customer-generator's facility, the EDC may supply additional metering equipment required to qualify the alternative energy credit at the EDC's expense. In those circumstances, the EDC shall take title to any alternative energy credit produced.
- (ii) A customer-generator is not prohibited from having a qualified meter service provider install metering equipment for the measurement of generation, or from selling alternative energy credits to a third party other than an EDC.

The OCA submits that it must be made clear in the regulation that any solicitation from the utility requesting that a customer give up title to credits can only be made in the context of a full and accurate description of the options open to the customer. It is insufficient that a utility be able to potentially gain title to credits by installing additional equipment without the fully informed agreement of the customer.

The proposed regulation should be modified to reflect a requirement that the EDC fully inform the customer of the value of credits and other options for the credits. The OCA submits that the value of ownership of credits must be clearly explained to customer-generators so that customers fully understand their rights to title and can make

fully informed decisions. This language will ensure that decisions by customers are fully informed. The OCA proposes the following language:

- (d) EDC Title to Credits.
- (i) When the customer-generator expressly rejects ownership of alternative energy credits produced in the customer-generator's facility, the EDC may supply additional metering equipment required to qualify the alternative energy credit at the EDC's expense. In those circumstances, the EDC shall take title to any alternative energy credit produced.
- (ii) An EDC shall, prior to gaining title to credits produced by customer-generators, fully inform the customergenerator of the potential value of those credits and of other options for disposing of those credits.
- (iii) A customer-generator is not prohibited from having a qualified meter service provider install metering equipment for the measurement of generation, or from selling alternative energy credits to a third party other than an EDC.

In order to prevent confusion between EDCs and customer-generators, the OCA strongly urges that the Commission adopt a standard statement that EDCs must use in seeking to have customer-generators expressly reject ownership of their credits in favor of the EDC.

III. Conclusion

WHEREFORE, the Office of Consumer Advocate generally supports the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's proposed net metering regulations and submits the above-requested comments.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christy Appleby

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April 3, 2006

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

Proposed Rulemaking Re Net Metering for Customer-Generators Pursuant to Section 5

of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards

Act, 73 P.S. § 1648.5

Docket Nos. L-00050174

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Implementation of the Alternative Energy

Portfolio Standards Act of 2004: Net Metering

M-00051865

I hereby certify that I have this day served a true copy of the foregoing document, Comments of the Office of Consumer Advocate, upon parties of record in this proceeding in accordance with the requirements of 52 Pa. Code § 1.54 (relating to service by a participant), in the manner and upon the persons listed below:

Dated this 3rd day of April 2006.

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