LEGISLATIVE CONSUMER COMMITTEE

MINUTES LOG
September 13, 2021
State Capitol, Room 102
Zoom Videoconference

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

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Please contact the Montana Consumer Counsel at 406-444-2771 for more information.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Mary Ann Dunwell, Vice-Chair
Representative Mike Hopkins, Chair
Senator Brad Molnar

COMMITTEE MEMBERS excused

Senator Christopher Pope

MONTANA CONSUMER COUNSEL STAFF PRESENT

Jason Brown, Staff Attorney
Paul Schulz, Rate Analyst
Jaime Stamatson, Economist
Suzanne Snow, Secretary
CALL TO ORDER

13:14:35 Chair Hopkins called the meeting to order with roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – May 9, 2021

13:15:30 MOTION: Vice-Chair Dunwell moved acceptance of the minutes.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

STATUS OF CASES PENDING

Jason Brown highlighted the cases that have seen some change in status since the Committee’s last meeting.

13:17:48 NWE Application for Preapproval of Capacity Resources, Docket 2021.02.022, filed 5/19/21

Committee Discussion

13:21:55 Vice-Chair Dunwell asked Jason Brown to clarify that the battery storage facility in Yellowstone would not result in an increase in residential bills.

13:23:20 Senator Molnar expressed his concern about all the different pieces of NorthWestern’s proposal, and where those different pieces might appear in rates.

PUBLIC COMMENT

13:28:57 Jeff Smith, 350 Montana
13:35:39 Carla Abrams
13:38:40 Patricia Ames

STATUS OF CASES PENDING continued


Committee Discussion

13:51:39 Vice-Chair Dunwell asked if NorthWestern’s request to update the base power costs and credits was unprecedented.

13:53:07 Vice-Chair Dunwell asked if the Montana Consumer Counsel (MCC) would intervene in the NorthWestern PCCAM docket 2021.09.112 - filed 8/3/21.


13:56:40 NWE Request for Partial Waiver of In-Person Notice, Docket 2021.08.109, filed 8/19/21.


13:58:12 MDU Electric Tracker (Rate 58), Docket 2020.06.075.

13:58:37 MDU Electric Tracker (Rate 58), Docket 2021.06.091, filed 6/16/21


14:00:44 Apex Solar, LLC Petition to Set Terms and Conditions, Docket 2019.11.091, filed 11/8/19.

14:02:16 Caithness Beaver Creek, LLC Petition to Set Terms and Conditions, Docket 2019.06.034, filed 6/12/19


14:06:19 NWE Application for Approval of QF Interconnection Procedures and Agreements, Docket 2021.08.106, filed 8/4/21
Vice-Chair Dunwell noted that the MCC would intervene in docket 2021.04.060 – NorthWestern’s request for immediate waiver of the requirement to calculate avoided costs within 20 days for hybrid renewable battery QFs and inquired into the currently approved method.
Blackfoot Communications, Inc. Application for ETC Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier, Docket 2021.01.006, filed 1/5/21

InterBel Telephone Cooperative, Inc. Petition for Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier, Docket 2021.02.020, filed 2/16/21.

Committee Discussion:

14:35:17 Vice-Chair Dunwell asked whether the QF dockets, referenced earlier in the status of cases, related to larger QFs, and not roof top solar customers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No additional public comment was offered at this time.

FINANCIAL REPORT

14:37:50 Jason Brown reviewed the budget versus expenditure report, dated September 7, 2021, which accounted for the first two months of fiscal year 2022.

14:39:30 Jason Brown gave a brief overview of the Department of Revenue’s handout.

CONTRACTED SERVICES

14:40:30 Jason Brown requested authorization from the committee to retain the services of the following consultants:

2021.07.102 – Qwest/CenturyLink – Petition to Eliminate Performance Assurance Plan and Performance Indicator Definitions
   Rolka Loube, LLC – Robert Loube

2021.09.112 – NWE – Annual PCCAM Application
   Acadian Consulting Group, LLC – David Dismukes

2021.02.022 – NWE – Application for Preapproval of Capacity Resources
   Resolve Utility Consulting, PLLC – David J. Garrett
   Garrett Group, LLC – Mark Garrett

14:45:45 MOTION: Chair Hopkins moved to approve the retention of consultants as per the request made by the Consumer Counsel.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote after a brief recess due to technical difficulties.
Next Meeting

15:00:50 The date of the next meeting was set for Monday, October 4, 2021, at 1 p.m.

Adjournment

15:03:35 There being no other matters before the Committee Chair Hopkins adjourned the meeting.