



## Public Service Commission

For Immediate Release: 06/22/23

Rory M. Christian, Chair

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23062 / 21-G-0577; 23-G-0141

### **PSC Slashes Liberty Utilities Rate Hike Request by 68 Percent**

#### **Customer Service Improvements Will Be Made**

#### **Funding for Low-Income Consumers Significantly Expanded**

**ALBANY —** The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved a three-year rate plan for Liberty Utilities Corp. (Liberty) that results in a change in revenues that is 68 percent lower than the \$4.33 million the company originally requested in the first year. In addition to the change in rates, the company will improve customer service and expand funding for low-income customers.

“The rate plan we have adopted is premised on rates, terms and conditions that are just and reasonable, and we accordingly find that it is in the public interest,” **said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian.** “We find the agreement provides sufficient funding for the company to maintain safe and reliable service, and that it appropriately balances the interests of ratepayers and other parties. Further, the agreement furthers the social, economic, and environmental policies of New York State, including the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act or Climate Act.”

With the Commission’s decision, base delivery revenue rates will increase \$1.38 million in the first year, \$1.93 million in the second year, and \$1.94 million in the third year, resulting in a 2.97 percent total bill increase in each of the rate years, an increase well-below the current rate of inflation.

For the typical residential heating customer, these revenue changes would yield a \$7.84 increase in the average monthly bill in the first year, a \$6.06 increase in the second year, and a \$6.11 increase in the third year. The new rates begin November 1, 2022 and ends October 31, 2025. Since the beginning of the rate plan occurs prior to its approval, the company will be allowed to apply a surcharge.

The Commission adopted the terms of a joint proposal executed by Liberty, trial staff of the Department of Public Service and Multiple Intervenors, a consortium of large consumers of natural gas. Liberty is a local gas distribution company with 572 miles of mains that sells or transports natural gas to approximately 17,000 customers in portions of St. Lawrence, Lewis and Franklin counties.

The parties in the proceeding recognized that energy costs represent a significant burden for low-income individuals and families, and as a result, the company’s existing low-income program will be expanded, while also increasing the dollar amounts awarded. The low-income program will be funded at \$351,459 in the first year, \$399,708 in the second year, and \$452,674 in the third year. The

expanded low-income program identifies and allocates more funding to customers who are in greater need of assistance.

Provisions in the approved agreement were informed by the Climate Act and recent Commission orders related to gas planning and Climate Act implementation, including mechanisms for ensuring Commission scrutiny of proposed entitlement capital projects or company-funded extension capital projects; implementation of a behavioral demand response program; a requirement that the company provide annual reporting of its greenhouse gas emissions; implementation of a residential methane detector program; and a requirement that the company encourage energy efficiency and gas conservation through messaging to customers. As a result, the new rate agreement will contribute to New York's achievement of Climate Act goals while ensuring the company's continued ability to provide safe and adequate service to ratepayers.

Meanwhile, in addition to the rate case decision, the Commission approved Liberty's request to renew its gas franchise with the Town of Fowler, St. Lawrence County. Renewing the gas franchise was deemed to be in the public interest because it would allow the company to continue to provide gas service to customers in the Town of Fowler, as it has done over the past 30 years.

Today's decisions may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at [www.dps.ny.gov](http://www.dps.ny.gov) and entering Case Numbers 21-G-0577 [rate case] and 23-G-0141 [Town of Fowler franchise] in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.