



SBUA Public Comment for November 3, 2020 Public Meeting

Small Business Utility Advocates (“SBUA”) offers these comments to the Oregon Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) regarding the Stipulated Agreement on Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Energy Utility Customers (“Stipulation”) in Docket UM 2114 Investigation into the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Utility Customers.

Thanks to Commission, its Staff, and participants for the work and recognizing that this is a very challenging time. Small businesses, those with under 100 employees and those who are small commercial utility customers, continue to be challenged by the impacts of the COVID-19 virus, and responses to check it, and many see no relief in sight for a return to what was “normal”. The Legislature received this report in September: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/201911/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/226444> and there are other reports such as this provided in a Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce presentation <https://files.constantcontact.com/2f37d1d5001/f5d32eaa-4588-4b96-a475-059e3600018c.pdf>. The impact of COVID-19 has prompted innovation, and in some sectors some gains, but most small businesses are challenged and many are working to survive. Support and resources available still require time and have their own difficulties as businesses that navigate the Payroll Protection Plan and various grant opportunities can attest.

SBUA does not sign on to this Stipulation where the challenge for small commercial and small business is still so clearly ongoing, the future uncertain for small commercial customers, and small commercial should be treated more similarly to residential customers. SBUA sees a contrast with a nearby example and provides a link to that Washington Utility and Transportation Commission Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in U-200281 <https://www.utc.wa.gov/docs/Pages/DocketLookup.aspx?FilingID=200281>

That said, SBUA understands that much impetus for this Oregon proceeding is a focus on low income residential consumers and that is a very important group. SBUA does not oppose the Stipulation and will continue to work with these stakeholders participating in the processes explicitly identified in the Stipulation, especially insofar as they relate to small commercial customers.

Meanwhile, SBUA continues to support small business in Oregon regarding COVID-19 impacts, to educate and remind the small commercial customers to reach out to their utilities and to keep up the communication to resolve payment and service difficulties, and to participate in Commission proceedings impacting these customers.

Respectfully submitted,

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