

The Commission met on **Thursday, April 15, 2021**, with Chair Sieben and Commissioners Means, Schuerger, and Sullivan present.

The following matters were taken up by the Commission:

**G-022/S-20-837**

**In the Matter of the Petition by Greater Minnesota Gas, Inc. for Approval of its 2021 Capital Structure and Permission to Issue Securities**

Commissioner Schuerger moved that the Commission

1. Approve GMG's proposed 2021 capital structure, with an equity floor of 35 percent by March 31, 2021.
2. Approve a total capitalization of \$46.2 million with a 10 percent capitalization contingency of \$4.6 million (resulting in a total capitalization of \$50.8 million, including contingency).
3. Require that GMG maintain at all times an equity ratio floor of at least 34 percent, increasing to 35 percent beginning March 31, 2021.
4. Require GMG to propose in its next capital structure petition a plan that would be expected to result in:
5. An equity ratio of 39 percent by December 31, 2022.
6. A step increase in its equity floor from 35 percent to 36 percent beginning March 31, 2022.
7. A step increase in its equity floor from 36 percent to 37 percent beginning March 31, 2023.
8. Approve a short-term debt contingency cap of 10 percent of GMG's total capitalization and allow GMG to violate the short-term debt contingency cap for up to 60 days.
9. Permit the Company to issue long-term debt so long as it (1) remains at or above the approved equity floor at all times, and (2) remains within the approved short-term debt contingency range (GMG is not to exceed its short-term debt contingency range for more than 60 days.)
10. Allow the approved 2021 capital structure to remain in effect until the Commission issues a 2022 capital structure order for GMG.
11. Require GMG to file its next capital structure petition no later than January 1, 2022.

The motion passed 4–0.

**G-011/GR-17-563**

**In the Matter of the Application of Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation for Authority to Increase Rates for Natural Gas Service in Minnesota**

Chair Sieben moved that the Commission

1. Accept MERC's compliance filing including its reply comments regarding Improved Customer Experience (ICE) implementation for WEC Legacy Utilities.

The motion passed 4–0.

**E-015/M-20-825**

**In the Matter of Minnesota Power's Rider for Boswell Center Unit 4 (BEC4) Emissions Reduction and 2021 Factor**

Commissioner Sullivan moved that the Commission

1. approve MP's request to make a one-time charge to the "All Other" customer group to recover the remaining BEC4 tracker balance;
2. require the Company to file a compliance filing detailing the amount charge to the "All Other" customer group and showing tracker data to support the amount of this charge;
3. approve MP's requests to end the BEC4 bill credit and make a one-time credit to close out the tracker balance for the "Large Power" customer group;
4. require MP to submit a compliance filing detailing the amount credited to the "Large Power" customer group in the final month as well as tracker data to support the charge and the ending of the credit;
5. approve MP's request to reverse the amount that is in the BEC4 Tracker related to the Ash Pond project; and
6. approve MP's request to end BEC4 credit on customer bills for the "All Other" customer classes in December 2021.

The motion passed 4–0.

**E-015/M-20-557**

**In the Matter of the Petition by Minnesota Power for Approval of its 2020 Solar Renewable Factor within its Renewable Resources Rider**

Commissioner Schuerger moved that the Commission

1. Approve Minnesota Power’s petition for approval of its 2020 solar renewable factors within its Renewable Resource Rider with modification.
2. Approve Minnesota Power’s cost recovery with revenue requirements of \$7,150,343 for Camp Ripley, \$16,984 for the Community Solar Garden, and \$3,038,222 for SolarSense, for a total recovery of \$9,437,440.
3. Approve Minnesota Power’s proposed Solar Factor with a 3-year recovery of Camp Ripley Costs and a 0.2917% carrying charge. This would allow recovery of \$5,182,618 in the first year with rates as shown in Column C of Table 3 of the staff briefing papers.
4. Approve use of an energy charge to recover capacity benefits from SES-Exempt Customers.
5. Authorize an effective date of June 1, 2021.
6. Require MP to submit, within 10 days of the order in this docket, a compliance filing of the Solar Renewable Factor tariff sheets, showing the Solar Factor rates approved by the Commission.
7. Require MP to file a Solar Renewable Factor true-up annually, following the initial implementation of the authorized Solar Renewable Factor rates.
8. Approve MP’s proposed bill message for customer notification, as shown below:

The Solar Renewable Rider has been approved by the MPUC per Docket No. E- 015/M-20-557 effective XX-XX-2021 and is reflected in your billing statement. The Solar Renewable Rider is X.XXX Cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

The motion passed 4–0.

**E,G-999/CI-20-375**

**In the Matter of an Inquiry into Actions by Electric and Natural Gas Utilities in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency**

Chair Sieben moved that the Commission

1. Adopt as modified the Consumer Advocate’s Transition Plan Proposal, which includes the following:
  - a. Require utilities to file a Transition Plan including the six criteria shown in Table 1.
  - b. Require utilities to add a “Tab 5” to the current monthly Residential Customer Status Reports for the duration of the transition period (April 30, 2022). Require the following information in the following format in monthly transition plan reports:

- i. Service Deposit Charged Y/Amount N
    - ii. Reconnection Fee Charged Y/Amount N
    - iii. Down Payment Required Y/Amount N
    - iv. Interest/penalties/fees required Y/Amount N
    - v. Number of customers with current payment arrangements
    - vi. Average payment arrangement amount \$ amount requested
    - vii. Average duration of payment arrangement (months).
  - c. Require utility companies, on a one-time basis, and in narrative form, to provide the following additional information in their transition plans:
    - i. A description of outreach activities to customers in arrears
    - ii. Arrearage forgiveness plans
    - iii. Any proposed changes to current affordability and low-income efficiency programs.
- 2. Disallow the imposition of any service deposits, down payments, interest, late payment charges, or (business hour) reconnection fees through April 30, 2022, for customers who enter, or are complying with, a payment agreement. No fees or other charges shall be imposed on customers who are disconnected and reconnected after defaulting on one payment agreement and who agree to re-establish that agreement.
- 3. Require utilities to suspend negative reporting to credit agencies for residential customers.
- 4. Adopt the Consumer Advocate's proposed transition timeline: a) April 1, 2021 Transition plans filing date b) May 3, 2021 Transition plans completeness findings c) May 3, 2021 Initial outreach to customers d) June 1, 2021 Companies resume sending disconnection notices e) August 2, 2021 Companies resume service disconnections.
- 5. Prohibit disconnections of customers with past due balances who have a pending application or been deemed eligible for LIHEAP/EAP assistance for the duration of the transition period (April 30, 2022).
- 6. The utilities should provide its Notice translated into other languages predominant in their communities such as Spanish, Somali or Hmong.
- 7. Utilities shall notify customers of available energy assistance programs and how to apply for assistance, including, but not limited to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- 8. The Commission will issue a press release in consultation with the Department aimed at informing customers that disconnect and collection activities will be resuming and to work with their utilities on repayment options and also provide details regarding energy assistance and available utility low-income programs.

9. Modify the Commission's March 8, 2021 Order in ordering paragraph 6 (below) as follows:

Utilities that have filed a transition plan may resume collection activity and service disconnections upon the earlier of an Executive Secretary finding of transition plan completeness.

10. Delegate authority to the Executive Secretary to issue notices setting schedules for any follow up filings required as a part of this Order.

11. Determine that, in the absence of notification by Commission staff of issues with the plan on or before April 23, 2021, the Dakota Electric, Greater MN Gas, Great Plains Natural Gas, Minnesota Power, Otter Tail Power and Xcel Energy transition plans are deemed complete on April 23, 2021. CPE and MERC shall file amended transition plans, consistent with today's decisions by April 23, 2021, and will be deemed complete upon review by the Executive Secretary.

12. Require CPE to maintain the service disconnection threshold of \$500 for August 2021, to increase the service disconnection threshold to \$350 in September 2021, and to increase the service disconnection threshold to \$200 for the months October 2021 through the duration of the transition period (April 30, 2022).

The motion passed 4–0.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION: May 12, 2021**



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**Will Seuffert, Executive Secretary**