

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
UTILITIES COMMISSION
RALEIGH**

DOCKET NO. E-7, SUB 1214

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of
Application of Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC For) ORDER GRANTING INTERIM
Adjustment of Rates and Charges Applicable to) AUTHORITY FOR CHANGES
Electric Service in North Carolina) RELATED TO IMPLEMENTATION
) OF CUSTOMER CONNECT,
) WITH CONDITIONS

BY THE COMMISSION: On September 30, 2019, Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC (DEC or Company) filed an *Application for General Rate Case* in the above-captioned docket. The Commission has held hearings on DEC's application and is poised to issue a final order on the application.

Effective for service on and after August 24, 2020, DEC implemented temporary rates pursuant to DEC's right to do so under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 62-135. However, the statute provides that such temporary rates are subject to refund, with interest, if all or a portion of the temporary rates are not consistent with the rates established by the Commission's final order.

On March 18, 2021, DEC filed a letter in this docket notifying the Commission of DEC's intent to implement two customer billing and payment changes effective April 5, 2021, as follows:

(1) Extending the period when bills for non-residential customers become past due from 15 days to 25 days. DEC stated that this change matches the current requirement for residential customers, is based on feedback from the Company's non-residential customers, and better aligns with the payment terms of net thirty days that non-residential customers have with other vendors. Further, DEC stated that no party in the rate case objected to this change.

(2) Eliminating the requirement that residential customers pay a convenience fee when making a payment by credit card, debit card, or electronic check (electronic payment fees). DEC stated that electronic payment fees are one of the largest frustrations that residential customers experience, and customers have grown accustomed to paying for other products and services with a credit card or debit card without a separate, additional fee. Further, DEC stated that no party objected to the elimination of the electronic payment fees, but that the Public Staff proposed an adjustment to operations and maintenance expense to remove expenses related to the payment forms from the 2018 cost of service and also proposed tracking the

impact of the program on late payments and uncollectibles. According to DEC, the Company and Public Staff reached an agreement on the Public Staff's recommendations in the Agreement and Stipulation of Partial Settlement (First Partial Stipulation) filed by DEC and the Public Staff on March 25, 2020.

DEC stated that it intends to launch its new customer billing and information system, Customer Connect, on April 5, 2021, and that Customer Connect was designed with the change in the period when bills for non-residential customers become past due and the elimination of electronic payment fees.

Finally, DEC stated that it consulted with the Public Staff and was authorized to represent to the Commission that the Public Staff does not object to the Company incorporating these changes on the effective date of Customer Connect.

Based on the foregoing and the record, the Commission concludes that there is good cause to grant DEC interim authority, subject to the Commission's final order herein, to make the two requested changes in DEC's billing and payment guidelines when DEC implements Customer Connect. In addition, the Commission finds good cause to condition this interim authority on DEC's obligation to refund, with interest, any revenue that DEC receives as a result of the two changes that is above the revenue requirement set by the Commission's final order herein.

IT IS, THEREFORE, SO ORDERED.

ISSUED BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION.

This the 24th day of March, 2021.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

Handwritten signature of Kimberly A. Campbell in black ink.

Kimberly A. Campbell, Chief Clerk