

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

**Northern States Power Company
Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)
Tariff and Rates**

Case No. PU-22-180

ORDER

February 8, 2023

Preliminary Statement

On May 2, 2022, Northern States Power Company (NSP) filed an application to implement a manual meter reading rider. NSP also requested a permanent variance to North Dakota Administrative Code section 69-09-02 relating to the required frequency of meter readings.

On May 25, 2022, the Commission issued a Notice of Opportunity for Hearing that provided until July 6, 2022, for receiving written comments and hearing requests. No response was received. The notice identified that the issues to be considered in this proceeding are:

1. Are the proposed tariff revisions just and reasonable?
2. Do the proposed rates comply with the tariff?
3. Are the proposed rates just and reasonable?
4. Whether the requested variance should be granted?

On July 6, 2022, the Commission discussed this matter with NSP and Commission Staff during an Informal Hearing.

On August 4, 2022, NSP filed a modification to the proposed tariff based on Commissioner input during the Informal Hearing.

On October 17, 2022, the Commission discussed this matter with Commission Staff during a work session.

On December 21, 2022, NSP filed supplemental information based on the work session.

Discussion

NSP's proposed manual meter reading rider provides an option for customers to opt-out of receiving an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) smart meter. The rider requires a one-time payment of \$40 for customers who opt-out prior to the AMI smart meter being installed and \$80 for customers who opt-out after the AMI smart meter has

been installed. In addition to the one-time charge, customers opting out would also pay a monthly manual meter reading fee.

NSP's request for a permanent variance is to North Dakota Administrative Code Section 69-09-02-11(2), which requires customer bills to show the current meter reading. The variance is being requested because NSP does not believe the current meter reading value is relevant to the calculation of customer's bills.

During the July 6, 2022, Informal Hearing, the Commission raised concerns with the one-time payments for installation and removal of the AMI smart meters and with the frequency of the manual meter readings. NSP's August 4, 2022, filing modified the one-time payment obligations as requested, but did not modify the manual meter reading frequency. NSP asserted that reducing the frequency of the manual meter readings would not reduce the cost of the readings on an annual basis, and therefore would not result in a reduction in the manual meter reading rate.

In NSP's December 21, 2022, supplemental filing, it laid out several manual meter reading fee options at \$5, \$10 or \$15 per month. The Commission believes that a \$10 monthly manual meter reading fee allows NSP an opportunity to recover its costs while not being overly punitive to customers who do not wish to have an advanced meter installed at their service location.

Having considered this matter, the Commission finds NSP's proposed tariff and rate for its proposed manual meter reading rider filed on August 4, 2022, is just, reasonable, in compliance with the tariff and should be approved. The Commission also finds NSP's request for a variance for the frequency of meter readings should be approved. Therefore, the Commission issues its:

Order

The Commission orders:

1. Northern States Power Company's August 4, 2022, manual meter reading rider tariff and rates are APPROVED utilizing a \$10 per month manual meter reading rate.
2. Northern States Power Company's request for a variance to the required frequency of meter readings is GRANTED.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION



Sheri Haugen-Hoffart
Commissioner

"Nay"

Randy Christmann
Chair



Julie Fedorchak
Commissioner