FILED
APR 06 2023
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
G.P.S.C.

DOCKET# 15296
DOCUMENT# 193996

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JASON SHAW

REECE McALISTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SALLIE TANNER
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 656-4501
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 656-2341
psc.ga.gov

IN RE:

SERVICE QUALITY MEASURES FOR THE CERTIFICATED NATURAL GAS MARKETERS) **DOCKET NO. 15296**

ORDER GRANTING SCANA A WAIVER OF THE CALL CENTER SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD

This matter came before the Georgia Public Service Commission ("Commission") as the result of Scana Energy ("Scana" or the "Company") filing on March 7, 2023, a petition for a waiver of the Call Center Service Level Standard for the months of February and March 2023 ("Petition") pursuant to Commission Rule 515-7-8-.09. During its March 21, 2023, Administrative Session, the Commission granted Scana the requested waiver.

Background

Pursuant to Commission Rules 515-7-8-.03 and 515-7-8-.07, and Commission Order 15296, in order to ensure that quality service is afforded to all natural gas customers in Georgia, all Marketers shall file reports with the Commission demonstrating its performance. In addition, Marketers must meet certain benchmarks established by the Commission, otherwise they may be subject to remediation actions or penalties. One of the standards that the Commission has established a benchmark for Marketers to meet is the Call Center Service Level. The purpose of this standard is to measure the percentage of calls answered within a specified timeframe. The benchmark for Call Center Service Level has been set at 80% of all calls to the call center answered within 180 seconds of a request to speak with an agent, measured over one calendar month.

Scana's Petition

On March 7, 2023, Scana filed a petition requesting a waiver for the Call Center Service Level Standard for the months of February and March 2023.

On October 12, 2022, Scana transitioned to a new billing system. The new billing system was designed to improve Scana's customers' experiences and provide additional benefits to the customers. Following the transition to the new billing system, Scana experienced double the normal call volume and Scana's Customer Solutions Specialists spent extra time going over the new bill and setting up online accounts. On November 2, 2022, Scana filed a petition requesting a waiver of the Call Center Service Level Standard for the months of November, December, and January. On December 6, 2022, this Commission granted Scana a waiver.

As a result of transitioning to the new billing system, coupled with problems retaining Service Representatives, Scana has not been able to return to its normal call center quality standards by February 2023 as anticipated when Scana filed its previous Petition in November 2022.

Scana now anticipates that it has developed an improved hiring and training plan that will allow Scan to comply with the Call Center Service Level benchmark by April 2023 at the latest.

Staff Analysis

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-13-9.1(c), in order for a company subject to an agency's jurisdiction to obtain a waiver of a duly promulgated rule, it must demonstrate "that the purpose of the underlying statute upon which the rule is based can be or has been achieved by other specific means which are agreeable to the person seeking the variance or waiver and that strict application of the rule creates a substantial hardship to such person."

Furthermore, O.C.G.A. § 50-13-9.1 (b)(1) defines "substantial hardship" as a "significant, unique, and demonstrable economic, technological, legal, or other type of hardship to the person requesting a variance or waiver which impairs the ability of the person to continue to function in the regulated practice or business."

Staff met with the Company and the Company explained the steps being taken in order to achieve normal levels by April 2023. Since Scana was able to show improving numbers and given that Staff is currently reviewing the current SQM rules to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to add clarity to those rules, Staff recommended approval of the waiver.

Commission Decision

The Commission finds that it is appropriate to grant the requested waiver. The Commission also finds that since Scana has shown improving numbers, it is in the best interest of customers for Scana to direct all efforts towards remediating the deficiencies.

* * * * *

ORDERING PARAGRAPHS

WHEREFORE IT IS ORDERED, that the Commission hereby grants Scana a waiver of the Call Center Service Level Standard for the months of February and March 2023.

ORDERDED FUTHER that a motion for reconsideration, rehearing, or oral argument or any other motion shall not stay the effective date of this Order, unless otherwise ordered by the Commission.

ORDERED FURTHER that jurisdiction over this matter is expressly retained for the purpose on entering such further Order or Orders as to this Commission may seem just and proper.

The above action of the Commission during Administrative Session on the 21st day of March, 2023.

Sallie Tanner
Executive Secretary

4-6-23
Date

Tricia Pridemore
Chairman

4.6.23
Date