

Agenda Date: 03/09/20

Agenda Item: 8D

### STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Board of Public Utilities 44 South Clinton Avenue, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350 www.nj.gov/bpu/

**CLEAN ENERGY** 

IN THE MATTER OF THE CLEAN ENERGY	)	ORDER
PROGRAMS AND BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020 -	)	
COMFORT PARTNERS BUDGET REVISION	)	DOCKET NO. QO19050645

#### Parties of Record:

Stefanie A. Brand, Esq., Director, New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel Andrew McNally, Esq., Atlantic City Electric Company Joshua R. Eckert, Esq., Jersey Central Power & Light Company Andrew K. Dembia, Esq., New Jersey Natural Gas Company Matthew M. Weissman, Esq., Public Service Electric and Gas Company Margaret Comes, Esq., Rockland Electric Company Deborah M. Franco, Esq., South Jersey Gas Company Michael Ambrosio, TRC Energy Services

#### BY THE BOARD:

This Order memorializes action taken by the Board of Public Utilities ("Board" or "BPU") at its March 9, 2020 public meeting, where the Board considered revisions to the Fiscal Year 2020 ("FY20") budget for the Comfort Partners Program, part of New Jersey's Clean Energy Program ("NJCEP"), and approval of budget revisions associated with the FY20 Comfort Partners Compliance Filing.

#### **BACKGROUND & PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On February 9, 1999, the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act ("EDECA" or "Act"), N.J.S.A. 48:3-49 et seq., was signed into law, creating the societal benefits charge ("SBC") to fund programs for the advancement of energy efficiency ("EE") and renewable energy ("RE") in New Jersey. The Act also provided for the Board to initiate proceedings and undertake a comprehensive resource analysis ("CRA") of EE and RE programs in New Jersey every four years. The CRA would then be used to determine the appropriate level of funding over the next four years for the EE and Class I RE programs, which are part of what is now known as NJCEP. Accordingly, in 1999, the Board initiated its first CRA proceeding, and in 2001, it issued an order

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The budgets approved in this Order are subject to State appropriations law.

setting funding levels, the programs to be funded, and the budgets for those programs, all for the years 2001 through 2003. Since then, the Board has issued numerous Orders setting the funding levels, related programs, and program budgets for the years 2004 – FY20.<sup>2</sup>

The Board established FY20 programs and budgets through a Board Order dated June 21, 2019.<sup>3</sup> On February 27, 2020, Board staff ("Staff") released a proposal for the revised Comfort Partners FY20 budget. Staff accepted public comments through March 5, 2020, which are summarized below.

#### PROPOSED FY20 COMFORT PARTNERS BUDGET REVISIONS

The attached, revised FY20 Comfort Partners Compliance Filing illustrates changes to the individual line items within the Comfort Partners budget but does not change the overall program budget.

These changes have been proposed in order to react to current participation trends and to account for the Comfort Partners program evaluation study, which is in the development stage and is now anticipated to be conducted in Fiscal Year 2021.

#### **Revised Budget Table:**

A summary of the proposed FY20 Comfort Partners Budget Changes is below:<sup>4</sup>

Differences Between Original & Proposed FY20 Comfort Partners Budgets								
	Utility Totals	Admin and Program Development	Sales, Marketing, Call Centers, Web Site	Training	Rebates, Grants and Other Direct Incentives	Rebate Processing, Inspections, Other QC	Evaluation & Research	
ACE	\$108,000.00	(\$4,129.63)	\$3,870.37	\$3,870.37	\$93,518.52	\$10,870.37	\$0.00	
JCP&L	(\$15,000.01)	\$124,712.96	(\$287.04)	(\$287.04)	(\$14,351.85)	\$15,212.96	(\$140,000.00)	
PSE&G- Elec	(\$129,600.00)	\$28,363.71	\$28,363.70	(\$4,036.30)	(\$201,814.81)	\$19,523.70	\$0.00	
RECO	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
NJNG	\$107,999.99	\$1,472.22	\$1,472.22	\$1,472.22	\$73,611.11	\$29,972.22	\$0.00	
Elizabethtown	\$15,000.01	\$26,211.11	(\$403.70)	(\$403.70)	(\$20,185.18)	\$9,781.48	\$0.00	
PSE&G-Gas	(\$194,399.99)	\$42,545.56	\$42,545.56	(\$6,054.44)	(\$302,722.22)	\$29,285.55	\$0.00	
SJG	\$108,000.00	\$1,870.37	\$1,870.37	\$1,870.37	\$93,518.52	\$8,870.37	\$0.00	
TOTAL	\$0.00	\$221,046.30	\$77,431.48	(\$3,568.52)	(\$278,425.91)	\$123,516.65	(\$140,000.00)	
PSE&G - Combined	(\$323,999.99)	\$70,909.27	\$70,909.26	(\$10,090.74)	(\$504,537.03)	\$48,809.25	\$0.00	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In the early years, the budgets and programs were based on calendar years, but in 2012, the Board determined to begin basing the budgets and programs on fiscal years in order to align with the overall State budget cycle.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> In the Matter of the Clean Energy Programs and Budgets for Fiscal Year 2020, BPU Docket No. QO19050645 (June 21, 2019).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Following the release of Staff's Request for Public Comments on February 27, 2020, Staff corrected one cent rounding errors in the "Admin and Program Development" and "Utility Totals" columns that were causing the budgets to total incorrectly. Staff corrected these line items, which resulted in one cent changes to some budgetary line items in these columns; these changes exclusively represent the correction of rounding errors.

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#### SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC STAKEHOLDERS

On February 27, 2020, Staff posted on the NJCEP website and distributed to the listserv a Request for Comments regarding the proposed revisions to the budget within the proposed revised FY20 Comfort Partners Compliance Filing. Staff accepted comments through March 5, 2020.

Written comments submitted by the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel ("Rate Counsel"), New Jersey Natural Gas, SJI Utilities, and two individuals are summarized below, along with Staff's responses.

**Comment:** One individual commented that the budget looks good but recommended that the State should make available opportunities to evaluate older uninsulated buildings and make low-interest loans available to correct these situations. The individual specifically noted that many churches in Sussex County are uninsulated and may waste energy.

**Response:** Staff appreciates these comments and the support of the budget revision. Staff also recommends that the individual review the suite of energy efficiency and financing options available through New Jersey's Clean Energy Program, which can be accessed at <a href="https://www.njcleanenergy.com">www.njcleanenergy.com</a>. Staff advises that the Local Government Energy Audit ("LGEA") program may be of particular interest.

**Comment:** Another individual commented that they are unclear about the implications of the proposed budget change; they also indicated concern about potential increases in utility bills and utility rates.

**Response:** Staff notes that this change will not impact the overall Comfort Partners program budget and therefore will not impact utility rates. Staff also advises that individuals with similar concerns may be interested in participating in the CRA stakeholder process in Spring 2020 where the issue of rate impacts will be more comprehensively addressed.

**Comment**: SJI Utilities (Elizabethtown Gas and South Jersey Gas) and New Jersey Natural Gas submitted comments in support of the proposed budget modification. SJI believes that the proposed budget adjustments are responsive to current trends in demand and will allow the program to maximize participation and treat more customers. Both NJNG and SJI supported the budget modification and underscored the importance of making sure that low-income customers have access to energy efficiency and health and safety upgrades through Comfort Partners.

**Response**: Staff appreciates SJI and NJNG's review of the proposed revisions and SJI's support of the modification.

**Comment**: Rate Counsel commented that they do not object to the specific modifications that are proposed, but recommend items to be considered in the upcoming program evaluation. Rate Counsel also noted that three utilities had significant increases to their "Rebates, Grants, and Other Direct Incentives" budget, while three had decreases to their "Rebates, Grants, and Other Direct Incentives."

Rate Counsel's recommendations for the evaluation include: Increasing understanding of variations between utility territories related to their ability to expend the amounts budgeted; increasing understanding about whether there is sufficient outreach to USF customers; and

identifying solutions to the following market barriers: customer trust (including identifying opportunities to partner with local organizations), multiple languages, challenges in obtaining landlord permission, health and safety barriers, and limitations of the contracting model.

**Response**: Staff thanks Rate Counsel for their support of the modifications and agrees that Comfort Partners will continue to develop solutions and address many of the most prevalent market barriers. Staff and the utility working group are aware of these challenges and will continue to discuss issues of budget expenditures, marketing, and decreasing market barriers.

#### **BOARD STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff coordinated with the Comfort Partners Utility Working Group regarding the proposed budget revisions. The revised FY20 Comfort Partners Compliance Filing includes revisions to the detailed program budget but no changes to the overall program budget.

Having reviewed and considered the comments, Staff recommends that the Board adopt and approve the revised FY20 Comfort Partners Compliance Filing attached hereto.

#### **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

Staff distributed the proposed, revised the FY20 Comfort Partners Compliance Filing, including a summary of the proposed budget revisions to the EE listserv, posted them on the NJCEP website, and solicited written comments about them from stakeholders and the public. Staff and the Board considered those comments. Accordingly, the Board <u>FINDS</u> that the processes utilized in developing these proposed budget revisions and programs were appropriate and provided stakeholders and interested members of the public with adequate notice and opportunity to comment.

The Board has reviewed the revisions to the FY20 Comfort Partners Compliance Filing. The Board <u>FINDS</u> that these budget revisions will benefit customers and are consistent with the goals of reducing energy usage and associated emissions, as well as ensuring access to energy efficiency programs for all New Jersey ratepayers. Therefore, the Board <u>HEREBY APPROVES</u> the proposed, revised FY20 Comfort Partners Compliance Filing.

This Order shall be effective March 19, 2020.

DATED: 3/9/20

**BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES** 

BY:

JOSEPH L. FIORDALISO

PRESIDENT

DIANNE SOLOMON COMMISSIONER UPENDRA J. CHIVUKULA COMMISSIONER

ROBERT M. GORDON COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:

AIDA CAMACHO-WELCH

SECRETARY

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the within document is a true copy of the original in the files of the Board of Public Utilities.

# IN THE MATTER OF THE CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAMS AND BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020 TRUED UP AND REVISED BUDGET DOCKET NO. QO19050645

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# New Jersey's Clean Energy Program FY 2020 Program Descriptions and Budgets

**Utility Residential Low Income** 

**Comfort Partners Program** 

**Program Description and Budget** 

May 29, 2019, Revised February 10, 2020

# Residential Low-Income Program "New Jersey Comfort Partners"

The Residential Low-Income Program known as Comfort Partners, managed by Atlantic City Electric, Jersey Central Power & Light, New Jersey Natural Gas, Elizabethtown Gas, Public Service Electric & Gas and South Jersey Gas is primarily designed to reduce the high cost of energy and lower energy bills by maximizing lifetime energy savings (kWh and therms) per dollar spent. With that, this program is also designed to improve energy affordability for low-income households through energy education, efficiency, and conservation. To achieve this objective, several market barriers must be overcome. Key among these are: (1) lack of information on either how to improve efficiency or the benefits of efficiency; (2) low income customers do not have the capital necessary to upgrade efficiency or even, in many cases, keep up with regular bills; (3) low income customers are the least likely target of market-based residential service providers due to perceptions of less capital, credit risk and/or high transaction costs; and (4) split incentives between renters and landlords. The Program addresses these barriers through:

- Direct installation of cost-effective energy efficiency measures
- Comprehensive, personalized customer energy education and counseling
- Installation of health and safety measures as appropriate

# Target Market and Eligibility

The Program is targeted at participants in the Universal Service Fund who have high energy usage. By definition this target population is characterized by high-energy burdens based on their income. Program participation will be prioritized by energy use with the highest energy users being served first.

The Program is available to households with income at or below 250% of the federal poverty guidelines. Customers who receive Federal Supplemental Security Income ("SSI"), Home Energy Assistance ("HEAP"), Universal Service Fund ("USF"), Lifeline, Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled ("PAAD"), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families ("TANF"), Section 8 Housing, Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or General Assistance, also may be eligible. Customers who could take advantage of the Comfort Partners Program or engage with another State sponsored energy saving implementation program, will not only directly benefit from the weatherization and health and safety measures, but will also help to reduce costs to all of our rate payers as well.

A participant must be a customer of record with a separately metered electric or natural gas account and live in a single-family or multi-family residential building with 1-14 units; the residence must be their primary home. Customers who heat with fuel oil will be referred to the Department of Community Affairs' Weatherization Assistance Program ("WAP") for services in conjunction with a memorandum of agreement between Comfort Partners and WAP. Customers, who heat with fuel oil where WAP cannot reasonably

provide critical services, such as repairing or replacing oil fired heating systems, will be considered for conversion to natural gas by Comfort Partners. In addition, customers who receive natural gas service from an investor- owned New Jersey natural gas utility, and who receive electric service from a municipal electric company will also be eligible for Comfort Partners services. Ineligible customers will be referred to WAP or Home Performance with Energy Star ("HPWES") for services. Referrals will be made between Comfort Partners and WAP for measures not performed by either entity, i.e. WAP may refer customers to Comfort Partners for evaluation of central air conditioning and freezer replacements.

# Offerings and Customer Incentives

Among the measures to be considered for each home are efficient lighting products; hot water conservation measures (water heater replacement and tank temperature turn-down); replacement of inefficient refrigerators and freezers; installation of programmable thermostats; insulation up-grades (attic, wall, basement, etc.); blower-door guided air sealing; duct sealing and repair; heating/cooling equipment maintenance, repair and/or replacement; and other measures as may be needed, such as repair or replacement of a broken window, repair of a hole in the wall and/or roof, and other barriers to installing energy efficiency measures, such as mold or the installation of rain gutters, as an example.

Failed or failing heating or cooling systems can be replaced for efficiency and/or health and safety reasons, on a case-by-case basis. In the event of insufficient funding, or if Comfort Partner customer's homes require more treatment than the Comfort Partners program is designed to deliver, the Utilities' Working Group will attempt to maximize and leverage available resources by entering into discussions with WAP. The goal of such discussions will be to determine their interest in accepting Comfort Partners program referrals to install heating systems, and perform other needed work for energy efficiency and/or health and safety reasons.

#### Measure Selection

Energy efficiency measures, and other reasonable repairs required to install those measures, may be installed in each home. The program will review, on a case-by-case basis, the repair and installation of items that, in and of themselves, may not be considered energy saving technologies, but would be required in order to effectively install energy conservation measures, such as the repair of a roof prior to the installation of attic insulation. Cost-effectiveness will be assessed on a measure and site-specific basis. All measures, their installation, and energy education services will be provided free of charge. The selection of measures designed to reduce heating and cooling will be guided by a spending calculation based on past energy consumption, and is a guide for contractors, not an absolute or prescriptive target or cap. If the site needs are greater than the calculated spending guideline, the contractor will confer with the appropriate utility after documenting reasons for requesting to exceed the spending guideline. The utility will decide to what extent additional work can be performed.

Refrigerator or freezer replacement will be based upon on-site monitoring of the energy use of the existing unit. Consumption thresholds for cost-effective replacement vary according to size. Any refrigerator or freezer with measured consumption above the threshold values is eligible for free replacement with a new energy-efficient model. These values and procedures will be updated periodically to reflect changes in refrigerator costs and/or efficiency.

The cost-effective installation of energy-efficient lighting products will be based upon the wattage and the estimated average daily burn time for the existing lamp.

Domestic hot water and other custom measures will be installed according to program guidelines.

The costs associated with home repairs, such as the repair of a roof, will be excluded from the cost effectiveness test used to determine measure eligibility.

## **Delivery Methods**

Electric and natural gas utilities with overlapping service territories will jointly deliver efficiency, health and safety and education services so that customers receive both natural gas and electric efficiency measures simultaneously. Selection of program delivery contractors and program delivery costs is shared between the participating natural gas and electric utilities. Currently, there are a total of six (6) contractors that are under contract with the utilities to perform the work in customer homes.

The Program will continue its efforts to address neighborhood canvassing, mold/moisture remediation, roof repairs, electrical repairs, lead, and asbestos. Remediation will be considered on a case-by-case basis with the implementation contractors who will contract directly with the appropriate organizations, or approved subcontractors following utility approval.

This fiscal year the utilities will continue to use the JCP&L web-based LEEN System as the statewide platform to track all program participants, measures and energy savings. The system is used by all utilities, The Board of Public Utilities ("BPU") Clean Energy staff, multiple program delivery vendors, inspection vendors and State WAP agencies. Maintenance and enhancements to the system will be paid for by JCP&L and are incorporated in the administrative budget in Appendix A

# **Quality Assurance Provisions**

A minimum of 15% of randomly selected treated homes will be subject to verification and inspection by an independent contractor(s) hired by the utilities. Quality assurance processes will be continually reviewed and enhanced as required.

### **Budgets**

A detailed budget for this program is attached as Appendix A, and includes costs representing program commitments valued at \$7,000,000. Allocation of costs in different cost categories may appear to be inconsistent among utilities. As an example, PSE&G covers the cost of statewide printing of Comfort Partners materials and JCP&L covers the cost of administering and maintenance of the LEEN System administration, program evaluation, etc.

The program spending allowance guidelines continue to be evaluated for the Comfort Partners Program to be consistent with other low - income state weatherization programs.

## Goals and Energy Savings

#### Goals

Under the proposed budget, the goal for the number of electric service customers to be served and committed is 5,846 on a twelve -month basis from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. The goal for the number of natural gas service customers to be served and committed is 5,564 on a twelve-month basis from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020.

The Comfort Partners Utilities' Working Group adopted the 2006 APPRISE Inc. recommendation from the evaluation of the Universal Service Fund and the December 2014 Comfort Partners evaluation that the Working Group will engage stakeholders to develop an initiative to encourage a greater number of USF customers to participate in a Comfort Partners Program audit. Apprise further recommended that "[t]he BPU should work with the utilities to standardize their system for referring USF clients to the Comfort Partners program and establish official guidelines for coordinating these two benefits" (Executive Summary page xxii). Due to a finite pool of applicants and the high cost of marketing, the Comfort Partners Utilities' Working Group continues to fully support this initiative and would like to move forward with the support of the BPU. As per the December 2014 APPRISE evaluation recommendations, the Program is transitioning from serving as many homes as the budget would allow, to striving to install deeper cost-effective energy savings measures, per project.

#### **Energy Savings**

Energy saving estimates for the purpose of this filing were calculated using the latest protocols approved by the BPU on June 29, 2016, in Docket No. QO16040353. Based on that standard, it is estimated that the Program will now save approximately 6,722 MWH of electric and 40,283 MMBTU of natural gas during FY 2020, with a lifetime savings of approximately 48,814 MWH of electric and 622,389 MMBTU of gas.

# Appendix A

# Fiscal Year 2020 Comfort Partners Budget

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020 CP Budget (Proposed 2/10/2020)								
		Admin and Program Development	Sales, Marketing, Call Centers, Web Site	Training	Rebates, Grants and Other Direct Incentives	Rebate Processing, Inspections, Other QC	Evaluation & Research	
ACE	\$2,243,099.10	\$193,938.57	\$39,882.62	\$39,931.73	\$1,873,670.37	\$95,675.81	\$0.00	
JCP&L	\$5,016,685.61	\$452,777.83	\$118,058.77	\$88,058.77	\$4,110,631.47	\$217,158.77	\$30,000.00	
PSE&G- Elec	\$10,213,792.52	\$485,855.77	\$282,062.64	\$178,824.21	\$8,920,487.55	\$346,562.35	\$0.00	
RECO	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
NJNG	\$5,929,119.30	\$253,609.23	\$198,609.06	\$110,339.06	\$5,180,452.88	\$186,109.07	\$0.00	
Elizabethtown	\$3,565,480.00	\$175,474.92	\$65,144.06	\$65,375.75	\$3,134,117.72	\$125,367.55	\$0.00	
PSE&G-Gas	\$15,320,688.73	\$728,783.64	\$423,093.95	\$268,236.30	\$13,380,731.32	\$519,843.52	\$0.00	
SJG	\$3,211,134.74	\$247,718.55	\$60,437.00	\$59,699.81	\$2,735,928.35	\$107,351.03	\$0.00	
TOTAL	\$45,500,000.00	\$2,538,158.51	\$1,187,288.10	\$810,465.63	\$39,336,019.66	\$1,598,068.10	\$30,000.00	
PSE&G - Combined	\$25,534,481.25	\$1,214,639.41	\$705,156.59	\$447,060.51	\$22,301,218.87	\$866,405.87	\$0.00	