

Agenda Date: 12/18/24

Agenda Item: 2C

**ENERGY** 

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor
Post Office Box 350
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350
www.nj.gov/bpu/

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF ROCKLAND ELECTRIC COMPANY'S ANNUAL RGGI SURCHARGE FILING RECONCILING COST FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2023 AND ESTIMATED COSTS FOR CALENDAR YEAR	) ) )	DECISION AND ORDER SETTING ADMINISTRATIVE FEE
2024	)	DOCKET NO. ER24020072

#### Parties of Record:

Margaret Comes, Esq., for Rockland Electric Company Brian O. Lipman, Esq., Director, New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel

### BY THE BOARD:

On February 1, 2024, Rockland Electric Company ("RECO" or "Company") filed a petition with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("Board") seeking a review and true-up of the Company's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Surcharge ("RGGI Surcharge") component rates ("February 2024 Petition"). On November 5, 2024, RECO filed an amendment to the February 2024 Petition requesting a continuation of the Company's Solar Renewable Energy Certificate ("SREC") II Program Administrative Fee at the previously approved \$30 per SREC ("Amendment").

#### BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

## **Solar Programs**

### SREC I Program

By Order dated August 7, 2008, the Board directed RECO to file, by January 31, 2009, a solar financing program based upon SRECs, utilizing and incorporating certain mandatory design and filing requirements.<sup>1</sup> By Order dated July 31, 2009, the Board authorized the Company to implement its SREC Financing Program ("SREC I Program").<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the July 2009 Order, the costs for the SREC Financing Program ("Program Costs") were to be charged through a component of the Company's existing RGGI Surcharge. The SREC Financing Program component of the RGGI Surcharge would recover: 1) costs for the Company's purchase of SRECs offset by revenues received by the Company SREC auctions; 2) program administrative costs; 3) an SREC transaction fee of \$39.11 per SREC; and 4) interest on over- or underrecoveries. Pursuant to the July 2009 Order, because net Program Costs for the first year were uncertain and variable, the RGGI Surcharge rate for the initial year was set to recover the estimated annual costs to be reconciled on an annual basis. The Board therefore directed RECO to revisit the RGGI Surcharge rate within twelve (12) months of the awards from the first solicitation.

# **SREC II Program**

By Order dated April 27, 2011, the Board directed the Office of Clean Energy to conduct a thorough review of the utility-supported solar programs to help the Board determine whether these programs should continue, be allowed to expire, be modified or expanded.<sup>3,4</sup> By Order dated May 23, 2012, the Board authorized the extension of certain utility-run solar financing programs previously approved by the Board for a total capacity of 180 megawatts ("MW") over three (3) years to be divided among the participating electric distribution companies ("EDCs") based on retail sales.<sup>5</sup> RECO's share of the 180 MW was 4.5 MW. By Order dated December 18, 2013, the Board authorized RECO to participate in an SREC-based financing plan.<sup>6</sup> Pursuant to the SREC II Order, RECO agreed to implement an SREC II Program whereby it would enter into

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In re the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Amendments to the Minimum Filing Requirements for Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy, and Conservation Programs, and for Electric Distribution Company Submittals of Filings in Connection with Solar Financing, BPU Docket No. EO06100744, Order dated August 7, 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company Concerning a Proposal for an SREC-Based Financing Program Under N.J.S.A. 48:3-98.1, BPU Docket No. EO09020097, Order dated July 31, 2009 ("July 2009 Order").

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> In re the Petition of Public Service Electric and Gas Company for Approval of a Solar Generation Investment Program and an Associated Cost Recovery Mechanism, BPU Docket No. EO09020125, Order dated April 27, 2011.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The Office of Clean Energy was subsequently renamed the Division of Clean Energy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> In re the Review of Utility Supported Solar Programs, BPU Docket No. EO11050311V, Order dated May 23, 2012 ("May 2012 Order").

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval to Implement an Extended Solar Renewable Energy Certificate-Based Financing Program Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:3-98.1 (SREC II Program), BPU Docket No. EO13020118, Order dated December 18, 2013 ("SREC II Order").

SREC Purchase and Sale Agreements with solar project owners or developers selected through a competitive process. Specifically, RECO agreed to enter into agreements up to 4.5 MW of installed solar capacity, allocated among three (3) program segments within the Company's service territory.

By the SREC II Order, the Board directed RECO to assess Application Fees, Assignment Fees, and Solar Developer fees to program participants and set the Administrative Fee at \$30 per SREC. Pursuant to the SREC II Order, RECO charges a non-refundable Application Fee of \$150 for applicant to participate in SREC II Program solicitation. RECO also charges SREC II participants an Assignment Fee of \$1,000 for each SREC-PSA assignment, a Solar-Development Fee of \$30 for each SREC purchased and a transaction fee of \$39.11 for each SREC purchased. The SREC II Order provided that, after five (5) years, the Company must true-up the Administrative Costs and Program Participant Fees, and the Program Participant fees would be adjusted accordingly on a prospective basis.

Through a series of Orders, the Board approved a RGGI Surcharge for the recovery of the SREC II Program Direct Costs at \$0.000000 per kilowatt-hour ("kWh"), an SREC II Administrative Fee of \$30 per SREC, and authorized RECO to carry forward its unrecovered administrative fee balance in future annual periods with interest.<sup>7,8</sup>

### TREC Program

By Order dated December 6, 2019, the Board established the Transition Renewable Energy Certificate ("TREC") Program to bridge the gap between Legacy SREC Programs and a to-be-determined successor program.<sup>9</sup> The Board directed the EDCs to work with Board Staff to jointly procure a TREC Administrator that would acquire all TRECs produced each year by eligible solar generation projects. The TREC Administrator would then allocate the TRECs to load serving entities based upon their market share of retail sales for retirement within the generation attribute tracking system as part of the annual renewable portfolio standard compliance process.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company Concerning the Setting of the Administrative Fee and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Recovery Charge ("Rider RGGI") for 2019 Associated with its Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SREC II) Program, BPU Docket No. ER19020156, Order dated December 20, 2019; In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company Concerning the Setting of the Administrative Fee and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Recovery Charge ("Rider RGGI") for 2021 Associated with its Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SREC II) Program, BPU Docket No. ER20100691, Orders dated December 16, 2020 and July 14, 2021; In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company Concerning the Setting of the Administrative Fee and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative ("RGGI") Recovery Charge for 2022 Associated with its Solar Renewable Energy Certificate ("SREC II") Program, BPU Docket No. ER21091108, Orders dated December 15, 2021 and June 29, 2022; In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company Concerning the Setting of the Administrative Fee and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative ("RGGI") Surcharge for 2023 Associated with its Solar Renewable Energy Certificate ("SREC II") Program, BPU Docket No. ER22090548, Order dated December 21, 2022; and In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company Concerning the Setting of the Administrative Fee and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative ("RGGI") Surcharge for 2024 Associated with its Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SREC II) Program, BPU Docket No. ER23080632, Order dated December 20, 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> All rates quoted here include Sales and Use Tax unless otherwise noted.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> In re a New Jersey Solar Transition Pursuant to P.L. 2018, c. 17, BPU Docket No. QO19010068, Order dated December 6, 2019.

By Order dated March 9, 2020, the Board prescribed that the TREC Administrator would acquire all TRECs produced by eligible solar generation projects at a base compensation rate of \$152 per MW-hour.<sup>10</sup> The TREC Administrator would calculate the actual value of a TREC to be acquired by multiplying the base compensation rate by a factor applicable to the solar project type.

In July 2020, the EDCs executed a contract with InClime, Inc. to serve as the TREC Administrator. The EDCs estimated the cost of the TREC Administrator Services Fees for the initial three (3)-year period to be between \$3.4 million and \$3.8 million.

By Order dated August 12, 2020, the Board authorized RECO to recover costs associated with the TREC Program and establish a TREC component as part of the Company's RGGI Surcharge. As a result of the initial estimated costs associated with the TREC Program component, the Board authorized RECO to establish a TREC Program component rate of 0.0473 cents per kWh.

## SuSI Program

In accordance with the Clean Energy Act ("CEA") and the Solar Act of 2021, L. 2021, c. 169, on June 28, 2021, the Board issued an Order establishing a new solar incentive program with the goal of incentivizing up to 3,750 MW of new solar generation by calendar year 2026. <sup>12,13</sup> Pursuant to the CEA, the Board established the SuSI Program to replace the State's legacy SREC program with new incentives that encourage solar development while minimizing ratepayer costs.

The SuSI Program contains two (2) sub-programs:

- 1) The Administratively Determined Incentive ("ADI") Program, which includes a fixed incentive payment for net metered solar projects of five (5) MW or less including all residential customers and most commercial and industrial buildings, and all Community Solar installations. The incentive value varies based on project type and size, and is guaranteed for a term of fifteen (15) years; and
- 2) The Competitive Solar Incentive Program is a competitive solicitation designed to incentivize grid supply projects and net-metered commercial and industrial projects larger than five (5) MW with the lowest feasible financial contribution from ratepayers.

By Order dated June 29, 2022, the Board authorized RECO to establish the Successor Solar Incentive ("SuSI") Program component of the Company's RGGI surcharge.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> In re a New Jersey Solar Transmission Pursuant to P.L. 2018, c.17 – TREC Base Compensation Schedule, BPU Docket No. QO19010068, Order dated March 9, 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of the Recovery of Associated Costs Related to the Transitional Renewable Energy Certificate Program ("TREC Program"), BPU Docket No. ER20050363, Order dated August 12, 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> N.J.S.A. 48:3-87(d); N.J.S.A. 48:3-115.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> In re a Solar Successor Incentive Program Pursuant to P.L. 2018, c.17, BPU Docket No. QO20020184, Order dated June 28, 2021.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for the Recovery of its Costs for the Successor Solar Incentive Program, BPU Docket No. ER21121243, Order dated June 29, 2022.

## **CSEP Program**

By Order dated August 17, 2022, the Board authorized RECO to establish the Community Solar Energy Pilot ("CSEP") Program.<sup>15</sup> The CSEP Program enables New Jersey electric utility customers to participate in a solar energy project that may be remotely located from their properties and receive a credit on their utility bills and provide access to local clean energy for utility customers otherwise unable to place solar generation directly on their own properties.

#### **Energy Efficiency Programs**

By Order dated November 23, 2009, the Board approved a stipulation of settlement authorizing RECO to implement an Energy Efficiency Stimulus ("EES") Program ("2009 EES Program") with three (3) energy efficiency ("EE") programs to be implemented for a one (1)-year period ending December 31, 2010. The 2009 EES Program included three (3) sub-programs: 1) a Residential Enhanced Rebate Sub-Program; 2) an On-Line Energy Audit Sub-Program; and 3) a Low-Income Audit and Install Sub-Program ("Low Income Audit I Program"). The November 2009 Order also authorized the Company to recover costs associated with the 2009 EES Program through an Energy Efficiency Program Surcharge Component of its RGGI Surcharge.

By Order dated March 30, 2011, the Board authorized RECO to continue its 2009 EES Program through December 31, 2011.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, through a series of Orders, the Board authorized RECO to extend only the Low Income Audit I Program through December 2013.<sup>18</sup>

By Order dated April 23, 2014, the Board authorized RECO to implement its Low Income Audit and Direct Install Energy Efficiency II Program ("Low Income Audit II Program") and authorized the Company to implement a Low Income Audit II Program Surcharge component of its RGGI Surcharge of \$0.000083 per kWh.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> In re the Petition of Rockland Electric Company Community Solar Energy Pilot Program Cost Recovery, BPU Docket No. ER21060870, Order dated August 17, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> In re Energy Efficiency Programs and Associated Cost Recovery Mechanisms and In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of an Energy Efficiency Program and Associated Cost Recovery, BPU Docket Nos. EO09010056 and EO09010061, Order dated November 23, 2009 ("November 2009 Order").

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of an Energy Efficiency Program and Associated Rate Recovery- Extension Request, BPU Docket No. EO10120987, Order dated March 30, 2011.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of an Energy Efficiency Program and Associated Rate Recovery- Extension Request, BPU Docket No. EO12020115, Order dated March 12, 2012; and In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of an Energy Efficiency Program and Associated Cost Recovery Mechanisms- Extension Request, BPU Docket No. EO12121073, Order dated March 20, 2013.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of an Energy Efficiency Stimulus Program and Associated Rate Recovery, BPU Docket No. ER13060535, Order dated April 23, 2014.

By Order dated March 26, 2018, the Board authorized RECO to establish its Low Income Audit and Direct Install, EE III Program ("Low Income Audit III Program") and implement a Low Income Audit III Program Surcharge of \$0.000062 per kWh.<sup>20</sup> By Order dated January 27, 2021, the Board authorized RECO to extend the Low Income Audit III Program through June 30, 2021, or until exhaustion of the budgeted funds.<sup>21</sup>

## Clean Energy Act Program

By Order dated June 9, 2021, the Board authorized RECO to establish an additional component of the RGGI Surcharge: the CEA Program component.<sup>22</sup> By the June 2021 Order, the Board authorized RECO to implement seven (7) EE sub-programs with a total portfolio cost of \$18.1 million, resulting in an initial CEA component rate of \$0.00078 per kWh, commencing on July 1, 2021 for three (3) years concluding on June 30, 2024 ("Triennium 1 Program"). Additionally, by the June 2021 Order, the Board also authorized RECO to implement an electric Conservation Incentive Program mechanism to account for lost revenues resulting from the potential decrease in customer energy usage.

By Order dated May 22, 2024, the Board authorized an extension of the Company's Triennium 1 Program.<sup>23</sup> By the May 2024 Order, the Board further authorized RECO to shift program budgets within the Triennium 1 extension period. Based upon the May 2024 Order, there were no immediate rate impacts to the CEA component of the RGGI Surcharge.

## Triennium 2 Program

By Order dated May 24, 2023, the Board directed each electric and gas public utility to propose, for Board approval, EE programs for the second triennium period ("Triennium 2") on before October 2, 2023.<sup>24</sup>

By Order dated October 30, 2024, the Board issued an Order authorizing RECO to implement its Triennium 2 program for a two-and-one half years commencing on January 1, 2025 and ending

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of an Energy Efficiency Stimulus Program and Associated Cost Recovery, BPU Docket No. ER17080869, Order dated March 26, 2018.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> In re the Verified Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of an Energy Efficiency Stimulus Program and Associated Rate Recovery – Request for Extension of the Low Income Audit and Direct Install Energy Efficiency III Program, BPU Docket No. EO20120751, Order dated January 27, 2021.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> In re the Implementation of L. 2018, c.17 Regarding the Establishment of Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs and In re the Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of its Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs, BPU Docket Nos. QO19010040 and EO20090623, Order dated June 9, 2021 ("June 2021 Order").

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> In re the Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of its Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs, BPU Docket No. EO20090623, Order dated May 22, 2024 ("May 2024 Order").

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> In re the Implementation of P.L. 2018, c. 17, the New Jersey Clean Energy Act of 2018, Regarding the Establishment of Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs; In re the Implementation of P.L. 2018, c. 17, the New Jersey Clean Energy Act of 2018, Regarding the Second Triennium of Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs; In re Electric Public Utilities and Gas Public Utilities Offering Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs, Investing in Class I Renewable Energy Resources and Offering Class I Renewable Energy Programs in Their Respective Service Territories on a Regulated Basis, Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:3-98.1 and N.J.S.A. 48:3-87.9 - Minimum Filing Requirements, BPU Docket Nos. QO19010040, QO23030150, and QO17091004, Order dated May 24, 2023.

June 30, 2027.<sup>25</sup> By the October 2024 Order, the Board authorized RECO to implement its Triennium 2 Program and authorized RECO to recover the revenue requirement for its Triennium 2 costs through a per-kWh charge applicable to all rate classes, as a component of the RGGI Surcharge with an initial rate of \$0.00141 per kWh, effective January 1, 2025.

### FEBRUARY 2024 PETITION

By the February 2024 Petition, RECO sought to reconcile and update the following components of its RGGI Surcharge: a) the Low Income Audit II Program; b) the Low Income Audit III Program; c) the SREC Program; d) the TREC Program; e) the SuSI Program; f) the CEA Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs; and g) the CSEP Program.

The Company based the requests contained within the February 2024 Petition upon information from calendar year 2023 and estimated costs for calendar year 2024. The February 2024 Petition did not include a request to maintain or modify the SREC II Program Administrative Fee for 2025 and did not include a request related to RECO's Triennium 2 Program.

By the February 2024 Petition, the Company proposed an increase to its total RGGI Surcharge rate from 0.3512 cents per kWh to 0.5260 cents per kWh including SUT, as shown below:

	<b>Current Rate</b>		Update Proposed Rate	
RGGI Rate Components	Excl. SUT (¢/kWh)	Incl. SUT (¢/kWh)	Excl. SUT (¢/kWh)	Incl. SUT (¢/kWh)
Low Income Audit II Program	0.0295	0.0315	(0.0311)	(0.0332)
Low Income Audit III Program	(0.0023)	(0.0025)	0.0199	0.0212
SREC I Program	0.0282	0.0301	(0.0440)	(0.0469)
SREC II Program	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
TREC Program	0.2005	0.2138	0.2880	0.3071
SuSI Program	0.0229	0.0244	0.0281	0.0300
CEA Program	0.0505	0.0539	0.2130	0.2271
CSEP Program	0.0000	0.0000	<u>0.0194</u>	0.0207
Total	0.3293	0.3512	0.4933	0.5260

### SREC II Administrative Fee

As set forth in Appendix I to the February 2024 Petition, from inception of the SREC II Program, RECO collected \$141,686 in administrative fees and incurred administrative costs of \$119,312 based on actual data through December 2023. As a result, the Company asserted that its over-recovered balance of administrative costs from initiation of the SREC II Program through December 2023 was \$22,374. RECO calculated an SREC II Administrative Fee rate of \$1.31 per SREC.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> In re the Petition of Rockland Electric Company for Approval of its Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs, BPU Docket No. QO23120875, Order dated October 30, 2024 ("October 2024 Order").

On August 8, 2024, RECO updated Appendix I with actual data from January 2024 through June 2024 and estimated data from July 2024 through December 2024, and calculated a 2025 Administrative Fee ("Update"). According to the Update, RECO estimated a collection of administrative fees of \$169,166 and incurred administrative costs of \$151,516 through December 2024. As a result, the Company's estimated over-recovered balance of administrative fees and costs from initiation of the SREC II Program through December 2024, based on actual data from January 2024 through June 2024 and estimated data from July 2024 through December 2024, was \$17,650. RECO estimated its administrative costs at \$25,650 for calendar year 2025. RECO asserted that adherence to the cost recovery mechanism set forth in the SREC II Order results in an estimated 2025 SREC II Administrative Fee of \$8.73 per SREC.

By the Amendment, RECO requested that the SREC II Administrative Fee for 2025 remain at \$30 per SREC. According to RECO, the Administrative Fees calculated per the SREC II Order are only estimates, and a prospective reduction of the Administrative Fee could result in an underrecovery in 2025 and subsequent calendar years. The Company proposed to defer the actual balance of Administrative Fees and Costs for consideration in the next annual SREC II reconciliation filing. Pursuant to the SREC II Order, a final true-up of net Administrative Costs and net SREC sale revenue will occur at the end of the SREC-II cost amortization.

### **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

The parties are in the process of reviewing and evaluating the February 2024 Petition, the process for which will not be complete prior to the impending change in the SREC II Program Administrative Fee, required by the SREC II Order. Accordingly, having reviewed the record to date, the Board <u>HEREBY FINDS</u> it appropriate to maintain the SREC II Administrative Fee for calendar year 2025 at its current level. Accordingly, the Board <u>HEREBY ORDERS</u> the continuation of the SREC II Program Administrative Fee at the Board's previously approved rate of \$30.00 per SREC for calendar year 2025.

The Board <u>NOTES</u> that the parties continue to review the remaining portions of the petition. As such, the Board <u>FURTHER</u> <u>FINDS</u> that more time is needed to reach a final disposition in this matter and the Board will issue a separate Order disposing of all issues in controversy at a later date.

The Company's costs, including those related to the programs described above; remain subject to audit by the Board. As such, this Decision and Order shall not preclude or prohibit the Board from taking any actions determined to be appropriate as a result of any such audit.

The effective date of this Order is December 26, 2024.

DATED: December 18, 2024

**BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES** 

BY:

CHRISTINE GUHL-SADOVY

**PRESIDENT** 

DR. ZENON CHRISTODOULOU COMMISSIONER

MARIAN ABDOU COMMISSIONER

MICHAEL BANGE COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:

SHERRI L. GOLDEN

**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 PETITION OF ROCKLAND ELECTRIC COMPANY'S ANNUAL RGGI SURCHARGE FILING RECONCILING COST FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2023 AND ESTIMATED COSTS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2024

#### **DOCKET NO. ER24020072**

#### SERVICE LIST

**Board of Public Utilities** 

44 South Clinton Avenue, 1st Floor Post Office Box 350 Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350

Sherri Golden, Board Secretary board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov

Stacy Peterson, Deputy Executive Director stacy.peterson@bpu.nj.gov

Counsel's Office

Colin Emerle, Deputy General Counsel colin.emerle@bpu.nj.gov

Elspeth Faiman Hans, Deputy General Counsel elspeth.hans@bpu.nj.gov

Michael Hunter, Regulatory Officer michael.hunter@bpu.nj.gov

Division of Revenue and Rates

Justin Cederberg justin.cederberg@bpu.nj.gov

**Rockland Electric Company** 

4 Irving Place New York, NY 10003

Margaret Comes, Esq., Associate Counsel comesm@coned.com

William Atzl, Jr. atzlw@coned.com

Cheryl Ruggiero ruggieroc@coned.com

**Division of Law** 

NJ Department of Law and Public Safety Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex Public Utilities Section 25 Market Street, P.O. Box 112 Trenton, NJ 08625

Pamela Owen, ASC, DAG pamela.owen@law.njoag.gov

Matko Ilic, DAG matko.ilic@law.njoag.gov

Terel Klein, DAG terel.klein@law.njoag.gov

**Division of Rate Counsel** 140 East Front Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Post Office Box 003 Trenton, NJ 08625-0003

Brian O. Lipman, Esq., Director blipman@rpa.nj.gov

Maura Caroselli, Esq., Managing Attorney mcaroselli@rpa.nj.gov

Mamie W. Purnell, Esq. mpurnell@rpa.nj.gov

Rate Counsel Consultant

Robert J. Henkes Henkes Consulting 7 Sunset Road Old Greenwich, CT 06870 rhenkes13@gmail.com