



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
Post Office Box 350
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350
www.nj.gov/bpu/

CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF JERSEY)	ORDER APPROVING
CENTRAL POWER & LIGHT COMPANY SEEKING)	PETITION
APPROVAL TO (i) RELOCATE ITS MORRISTOWN)	
BUSINESS OFFICE FUNCTION TO 300 MADISON)	
AVENUE, MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY DUE TO THE)	
FLOODING/DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY HURRICANE)	
IRENE; AND (ii) CLOSE THE MORRISTOWN)	
BUSINESS OFFICE, AS A RESULT OF SUCH)	
FLOODING AND DESTRUCTION)	DOCKET NO. EO14040318

Parties of Record:

Michael J. Connolly, Esq., Windels Marx Land & Mittendorf, LLP, on behalf of Petitioner, Jersey Central Power & Light Company
Stefanie A. Brand, Esq., Director, Division of Rate Counsel

BY THE BOARD:

Jersey Central Power & Light Company ("JCP&L" or "Petitioner") is a New Jersey electric public utility primarily engaged in the delivery and sale of electric energy and related utility services to more than 1,000,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers located within 13 counties and 216 municipalities of the State and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Board of Public Utilities ("Board"). N.J.S.A. 48:2-13.

On April 1, 2014, JCP&L filed a petition with the Board pursuant to N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(c) seeking Board approval to relocate its Morristown Business Office ("MBO") from 90 Ridgedale Avenue, Morristown to its Northern Region Headquarters ("NRH") located at 300 Madison Avenue, also in Morristown.

According to JCP&L, the relocation is the direct result of the flooding caused by Hurricane Irene beginning on Sunday, August 28, 2011, that rendered the MBO unusable absent extensive and expensive repairs and rehabilitation. The MBO had been temporarily closed since August 28, 2011, and the Petitioner advised the Board staff that after an evaluation of, among other things, the costs of repairs and rehabilitation, the temporary closure became permanent in November 2013 when the demolition of the MBO building was completed.¹

¹ According to the petition, a building damage assessment conducted by Miksell & Associates estimated a construction budget of \$776,000 to repair the MBO building.

The MBO had been part of an approximately 9.7 acre site consisting of four lots that had comprised a complex that includes the Morristown Substation and other buildings which house the JCP&L substations and cable departments and associated operations-related departments and functions. The MBO was accessible from Ridgedale Avenue and also from Legion Place through the Morristown Substation property, and was outside the fence of the Substation and the other buildings mentioned above.

According to the petition, at the time of the flooding which rendered the MBO useless, the MBO function and meter reading group were the only JCP&L operations and business functions utilizing the MBO building, with the MBO function occupying approximately 25 percent of the building. The Petitioner asserts that prior to the flooding, the rest of the building was vacant and was not readily suitable for additional occupancy without major renovations, including asbestos removal. The Petitioner advised Board Staff that it had made temporary arrangements to accept payments at the NRH, which is about 2.6 miles from the MBO building. A notice to this effect was posted at the MBO site and subsequently, JCP&L further notified Staff that customers would be able to make payments via credit or debit cards using a 1-800-number provided on the Petitioner's website and at two payment agent locations in Morristown² or by visiting the Hopatcong Business Office location at 175 Center Street, Landing, New Jersey 07850. According to the petition, a revised notice reflecting this additional information was posted at the MBO by the Petitioner during September 2011. In addition, JCP&L has continued to advise Staff as to the status of the MBO, as part of the annual report required by N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(b).

As a result of the storm damage, consideration of the costs of repair and taking into account the extent of the occupancy of the MBO building, JCP&L has proposed, through its pending petition and with the approval of the Board, as within time, to relocate the MBO function permanently to the NRH. JCP&L currently plans to maintain the MBO site as part of its existing complex to be used for possible substation expansion and/or for additional operations-related parking when needed.

As currently designed, the temporary location would be in the lobby of the NRH building and the proposed permanent location, which would take about six months to renovate, will be in another location within the NRH site footprint. The Petitioner asserts that the proposed location complies with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1 in that the relocation is not unreasonable and will not prejudice the public interest. JCP&L further states that it has not received any complaints regarding the temporary closure of the MBO which it attributes to factors such as: (1) the MBO will be replaced with an equally accessible Morristown-based location for purposes of providing customer walk-in business office services; (2) the NRH site is located near a New Jersey Transit ("NJT") bus stop at the intersection of Punch Bowl Road and Madison Avenue; (3) the NRH is approximately ¾ of a mile from NJT's Convent Station rail station; and (4) the NRH site contains ample parking. JCP&L stated that the twenty-eight employees who performed meter reading and business office functions at or from the MBO up until the time of the flooding have been transferred to the NRH where they continue to perform business office operations functions except for payment receipt and other in-person interactions with customers or members of the general public which are or can be handled at the next closest JCP&L business office in Hopatcong or, in the case of payment, at local payment agent locations. According to the Petitioner, no JCP&L employees have lost their jobs as a result of the circumstances affecting the MBO although reduced staffing is proposed for the NRH location based on what the company sees as changed usage of in person Customer Service Center.

² Super Gold Deli & Convenience at 122 Speedwell Avenue, Morristown, New Jersey 07960 or the Garden State Check Cashiers at 157 Morris Street, Morristown, New Jersey 07960.

The Petitioner has claimed that because of the unusual and unforeseen circumstances that led to the closure of the MBO, it could not comply with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 14:3-5.1(e) which requires an application for Board approval to be filed 60 days prior to the closing but recognizes that the relocation of the MBO function is explicitly subject to the Board's written approval, which it is seeking through the pending petition. JCP&L cites to recent petitions filed under what it maintains are similar circumstances by other New Jersey utilities for approval to relocate offices due to flood damage from Hurricane Sandy. See, I/M/O the Petition of United Water Toms River Inc. for Approval of the Relocation of its Administrative Office as a Result of the Destruction Caused by Super Storm Sandy, Docket No. WO1310084 (February 19, 2014); and I/M/O the Application of Cablevision of Hudson County, LLC To Close a Local Business Office Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 14:18-5.1, Docket No. CO13111067 (March 19, 2014).

The Petitioner also indicated its intent to provide customers and other interested parties with a notice of the proposal to relocate the MBO function to the NRH on a permanent basis by posting the notice on its website and transmitting a copy of same to the clerk of each affected municipality, which the Company represents it did within three business days after the filing of its petition. In addition, the Petitioner also represents that it published the notice in newspapers serving the affected area. JCP&L also indicated that upon approval of the request for relocation to the NRH by the Board, it will notify customers and other interested parties regarding the relocation and the Board's approval through postings to the Petitioner's website and through a press release and related media announcements.

Rate Counsel advised Board Staff by letter dated September 3, 2014 (attached) that it has no objections to the Board's approval of JCP&L's proposals to permanently close its MBO; to renovate a small portion of its Northern Region Headquarters; and to relocate its business office functions to the renovated space. The conditions recommended in Rate Counsel's comments are reasonable, consistent with language contained in previous Board Orders dealing with office relocations and will be adopted along with other conditions set out below with the exception of the following: (1) the inclusion of the delay in filing for approval of this relocation as a subject to be investigated in the Petitioner's next management audit, which the Board deems premature; and (2) a direction for the Petitioner to notify the Board and Rate Counsel if it anticipates changes in its hours of operation, staffing levels, or levels of service at the NRH as unnecessary in that the Company would have to seek additional approval under N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(c) if any subsequent changes were to be considered.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Petitioner failed to comply with the Board's rules in a timely manner, JCP&L has sufficiently completed the notification procedures required by N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(c). Therefore, the Board **HEREBY FINDS** that JCP&L has provided its customers and other interested parties with sufficient notice of the relocation and continuation of services³.

The Board **FURTHER FINDS** that

1. On April 1, 2014, JCP&L submitted a request pursuant to N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(c) and (d) to relocate its Morristown Business Office from 90 Ridgedale Avenue, Morristown, New Jersey to its Northern Region Headquarters located at 300 Madison Avenue, Morristown, New Jersey as the original site had to be demolished as a result of flooding damage caused by Hurricane Irene.

³ JCP&L does not provide an explanation for its delay in filing a petition with this Board once it determined that the MBO was and would remain unusable for an extended period of time. The Board recognizes that JCP&L did keep Staff apprised of its efforts to provide the services which would otherwise have been provided by the MBO.

2. Petitioner provided customers and other interested parties with notification of the relocation by posting notice at the former office location as required by N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e)2.
3. The closure of the MBO located at 90 Ridgedale Avenue in Morristown and its relocation to the Petitioner's NRH located at 300 Madison Avenue, also in Morristown, is not unreasonable and will neither unduly prejudice nor inconvenience the public nor adversely affect the public interest.

Therefore, the Board **HEREBY APPROVES** the relocation of JCP&L's Morristown Business Office from its location at 90 Ridgedale Avenue, Morristown, New Jersey, to its Northern Region Headquarters located at 300 Madison Avenue, Morristown, New Jersey subject to the following conditions:


1. Petitioner shall maintain the same hours of operation, level of service and accessibility to persons with disabilities as were provided at its Morristown Business Office, with staffing levels to be maintained at the level in effect at the time of the filing of this petition;
2. This Order shall not be construed as directly or indirectly fixing for any purposes whatsoever the value of any tangible or intangible assets now owned or hereafter to be owned by Petitioner; and
3. This Order shall not affect nor in any way limit the exercise of the authority of this Board or of this State, in any future petition or in any proceedings with respect to rates, franchises, service, financing, accounting, capitalization, depreciation or any other matter affecting Petitioner.

The Board **FURTHER ORDERS** JCP&L to notify the Board's Division of Customer Assistance of the date of the opening of the new business office not less than 48 hours before such event occurs.

DATED: 9/30/14

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
BY:


JOSEPH L. FIORDALISO
COMMISSIONER


DIANE SOLOMON
PRESIDENT


MARY-ANNA HOLDEN
COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:

KRISTI IZZO
SECRETARY

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the within
documents are a true copy of the original
in the files of the Board of Public
Utilities



**IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF JERSEY CENTRAL POWER & LIGHT COMPANY
SEEKING APPROVAL TO (i) RELOCATE ITS MORISTOWN BUSINESS OFFICE FUNCTION
TO 300 MADISON AVENUE, MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY DUE TO THE
FLOODING/DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY HURRICANE IRENE; AND (ii) CLOSE THE
MORRISTOWN BUSINESS OFFICE, AS A RESULT OF SUCH FLOODING AND
DESTRUCTION**

BPU Docket No. EO14040318

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CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

September 3, 2014

STEFANIE A. BRAND
Director

Via E-mail and Hand Delivery

Kristi Izzo, Secretary
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th floor
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**Re: I/M/O the Petition of Jersey Central Power & Light Company for Approval to 1) Relocate Its Morristown Business Office Function to 300 Madison Avenue, Morristown, New Jersey Due to the Flooding/Destruction Caused by Hurricane Irene; and 2) Close the Morristown Business Office, as a Result of Such Flooding and Destruction
BPU Docket No. EO14040318**

Dear Secretary Izzo:

Please accept for filing in the above-referenced matter an original and ten (10) copies of the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel's ("Rate Counsel") comments regarding the Petition by Jersey Central Power & Light Company ("JCP&L" or "the Company") to permanently close, nunc pro tunc, its Morristown Business Office at 90 Ridgedale Avenue, Morristown due to flooding and destruction caused by Hurricane Irene in August 2011; to renovate a small portion of its Northern Region Headquarters, located at 300 Madison Avenue, Morristown; and to relocate its business office functions to the renovated space. We enclose one additional copy. Please date stamp it as "filed" and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Background

JCP&L is a public utility of the State of New Jersey having offices at 300 Madison Avenue, Morristown and at One River Center, 331 Newman Springs Road, Building No. 3, Red Bank. JCP&L is subject to the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (“BPU” or the “Board”). On March 31, 2014 JCP&L filed a petition with the Board seeking approval under N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e) to permanently close its Morristown Business Office, located at 90 Ridgedale Avenue, Morristown (“MBO”), to renovate a small portion of its Northern Region Headquarters, located at 300 Madison Avenue, Morristown and relocate its “business office” (i.e. customer service) functions to the renovated portion of that building. (Petition ¶ 1) Due to the high cost of repairs, JCP&L demolished its MBO in November 2013. (Id.) JCP&L estimates that the renovation of its Northern Region Headquarters will take approximately three to six months to complete. (Petition ¶ 25; RCR-18) From August, 2011 to March 2014, there was no MBO and customers needed to travel to Hopatcong to obtain customer services. Since March 24, 2014, JCP&L has implemented temporary measures to provide walk-in customer services at its Northern Region Headquarters. (RCR-4; see Petition ¶¶ 25, -26)

Renovation of the Northern Region Headquarters for business office functions

Rate Counsel is unable to opine at this time as to the cost-effectiveness of the proposed renovations of the Northern Region Headquarters, as JCP&L currently only has estimates of the costs. (RCR-19, -20) The Company anticipates a net monetary saving from the renovation, which in its evaluation will cost less than rebuilding the now-demolished MBO. (Petition ¶¶ 1, 9 & 19 - 22) JCP&L plans to renovate its Northern

Region Headquarters to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, (RCR-9), and to provide more customer parking than the MBO, (RCR-10). Rate Counsel agrees with the Company that the costs will be subject to review in JCP&L's next base rate case, and reserves our rights in that regard. (See RCR-21)

After the renovation, JCP&L plans to provide the same services during the same hours as it did at the MBO. (Petition ¶ 27; RCR-7, -12, -13) The Company does not anticipate any increase in the number of customer transactions handled at the renovated Northern Region Headquarters, (RCR-7 & -14); instead, it anticipates the continued decrease in in-person payment transactions that began in 2011, (RCR-29). Accordingly, JCP&L proposes to reduce the number of personnel in Morristown from four to two full-time customer service representatives and from one full-time supervisor to one "floating" supervisor. (RCR-12) That supervisor will continue to manage JCP&L's Hopatcong Business Office along with the duties associated with supervising this new office. (RCR-34) The labor cost of providing customer services in Morristown has fallen significantly between 2010 (\$689,587) and the budgeted amount for 2014 (\$454,761). (RCR-27) The Company has explained that its proposed staffing reduction will save approximately \$263,000 annually, (RCR-31 & -32), and that those reductions resulted from attrition, (RCR-33 & -34), while maintaining customer service, (see RCR-7).

Analysis

1. Notice

The Board's regulations provide that simultaneously with the filing of a petition to close or relocate an office, a utility must notify its customers and the clerk of each affected municipality of the pending application for permission to relocate or close the

subject office, N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e)(2), and, within three days of filing the petition, the utility must publish a notice in the newspaper(s) serving the affected area. Id.

In support of its Petition, JCP&L provided the Affidavit of Verification of Mark A. Mader, stating that it will post notice of this Petition on its website, provide it to the clerks of the affected municipalities and publish it in ten newspapers serving the affected area, (Petition ¶ 31 & 32 and Exs. H, I & J). JCP&L also has represented that once it obtains approval from the Board for its Petition it will provide notice to the public through postings to its website and through a press release and related media announcements. (Petition ¶ 33)

In accord with the Board's regulations, the notice advises customers of their right to file comments with the Board on the Company's proposal to permanently close the MBO due to its damage by Hurricane Irene in August 2011; to renovate a small portion of its Northern Region Headquarters; and to relocate its business office functions to the renovated space, as per N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e)(2). (Petition Ex. H) JCP&L stated that it has not received any complaints or comments about these proposals from its customers or the Town of Morristown. (Petition ¶ 24; RCR-15)

2. Reasonable/Public Interest

The Board's regulations provide that, when seeking to close or relocate an office, a utility must demonstrate to the Board that the closure or relocation is not unreasonable and will not unduly prejudice the public interest. N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e)(1). With regard to cost savings, based on the facts available at this time, Rate Counsel is unable to opine as to the cost-effectiveness of the proposed renovations. The prudence of those costs will

be subject to review in JCP&L's next base rate case. Rate Counsel reserves its rights to inquire into or object to those costs at an appropriate time.

JCP&L indicates that it anticipates labor cost savings of approximately \$263,000 annually, (RCR-31 & -32), from staffing reductions due to attrition, (RCR-33 & -34), but anticipates that it can continue to meet its customers' service demands at its Northern Region Headquarters with the reduced staffing, (RCR-29). JCP&L explained that the number of its in-person payment transactions has fallen since 2011, (RCR-14 & -29), due to increased options for customers to pay their bills on line, by phone and through payment agencies, (RCR-29). Accordingly, Rate Counsel sees no reason to object to JCP&L's proposals to permanently close, nunc pro tunc, its MBO, to renovate a small portion of its Northern Region Headquarters, and to relocate its business office functions to the renovated space, or to characterize those proposals as unreasonable or unduly prejudicial to the public interest.

3. JCP&L has not explained its failure to seek Board approval to change its in-person customer service arrangements in Morristown between August 2011 and March 2014.

Rate Counsel is concerned with the timing of this filing two years after the closing of the MBO, in contradiction to N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e). JCP&L's MBO has been closed since 2011, throughout a period of heightened public concern about the Company's reliability and customer service. In addition, the Company's temporary arrangements, directing customers to go to its Hopatcong Business Office rather than providing an interim customer service office in Morristown, (see Petition ¶ 5), likely inconvenienced customers requiring in-person service. Driving between Morristown and JCP&L's

Hopatcong Business Office is a one-hour, 50-mile round trip.¹ That trip is even less convenient for customers who do not own a car, have a disability or must travel with children.² Rate Counsel recommends that the Board review this issue during its next management audit of the Company. Notwithstanding the issue of timeliness, Rate Counsel does not object to JCP&L's Petition.

JCP&L notified its customers of the MBO closure and alternative service locations. (Petition ¶¶ 13 - 16 and Exs. A & C) The Company annually reported to Board Staff the location of its in-person business offices as per N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(b), (Petition ¶ 17 and Exs. E, F & G). However, JCP&L has not shown that it requested or the Board approved the closure of the MBO as per N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e). While the Company obviously could not provide the Board sixty days' advance notice of the MBO's closure, (see N.J.A.C. 14:3-5.1(e); Petition ¶ 29), it failed to do so in the over two and a half years since that closure.

JCP&L's reliance on Board Orders approving closure of other utilities' customer service centers that had been damaged by Hurricane Sandy only highlights the fact that JCP&L failed to obtain a similar order until two and one-half years after closing its MBO. (Petition ¶ 30, citing I/M/O the Petition of United Water Toms River Inc. for Approval of the Relocation of its Administrative Office from 15 Adafre Avenue, Toms River to 1451 Route 37 West, Toms River, New Jersey as a Result of the Destruction Caused by Superstorm Sandy, BPU Docket No. WO13100884 (Order of Approval, Feb. 19, 2014) and I/M/O the Application of Cablevision of Hudson County, LLC to Close a

¹ See www.googlemaps.com.

² JCP&L does not have statistics on the number of its customers who use each of the available means of transportation to its business offices. (RCR-8)

Local Business Office pursuant to N.J.A.C. 14:18-5.1, BPU Docket No. CO13111067

(Order, March 19, 2014)) In both of these cited matters, the utility filed a timely petition with the Board seeking approval of the closure of its business office. While these Board Orders may support the Company's proposed business office renovation and relocation, they do not support its failure to submit a sufficient and timely filing with the Board.

Recommendations

In summary, based on the information provided, Rate Counsel does not object to JCP&L's proposals to permanently close its MBO; to renovate a small portion of its Northern Region Headquarters; and to relocate its business office functions to the renovated space, subject to the conditions set forth below. Rate Counsel reserves the right to review the rate impact and prudence of the costs incurred in carrying out these measures in the Company's next base rate case. Rate Counsel is concerned, however, with the timing of this filing. JCP&L did not seek required Board approval to close its MBO and change its customer service arrangements in Morristown, implemented in August 2011, until filing this Petition on March 31, 2014.

Rate Counsel recommends that any Board Order approving JCP&L's Petition contain the following language:


1. JCP&L shall maintain, at a minimum, the same hours of operation and level of customer service at the renovated Northern Region Headquarters, after its renovation, as it had provided in the MBO before its closure.
2. JCP&L shall maintain, at a minimum, the same staffing levels at the renovated Northern Region Headquarters, after its renovation, as set forth in the Petition.

3. JCP&L shall maintain, at a minimum, the same level of accessibility for persons with disabilities at the renovated Northern Region Headquarters, after its renovation, as set forth in the Petition.
4. JCP&L shall notify the Board and Rate Counsel if it anticipates any changes in the hours of operation, staffing levels, or level of service at the renovated Northern Region Headquarters, after its renovation, as set forth in the Petition.
5. The Board will review, in its next management audit of the Company, JCP&L's failure to seek timely Board approval to close its MBO and change its customer service arrangements in Morristown between August 28, 2011 and March 31, 2014.
6. This Order shall not affect nor in any way limit the exercise of the authority of the Board in any future Petition or in any proceeding with respect to rates, franchises, service, financing, accounting, capitalization, depreciation, or any other matter affecting the Petitioner.

JCP&L's agreement to the terms set forth above would address Rate Counsel's concerns about the Petition.

Very truly yours,

STEFANIE A. BRAND
DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF RATE COUNSEL

By: 

Brian Weeks
Deputy Rate Counsel

c. Service List

**I/M/O the Petition of Jersey Central Power & Light Company for Approval to 1) Relocate its Morristown Business Office Function to 300 Madison Avenue, Morristown, New Jersey Due to the Flooding/Destruction Caused by Hurricane Irene; and 2) Close the Morristown Business Office, as a Result of Such Flooding and Destruction
BPU Docket No. E014040318**

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