



Agenda Date: 4/27/21
Agenda Item: 2B

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/

ENERGY

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF SOUTH)
JERSEY GAS COMPANY TO CHANGE THE LEVELS)
OF ITS SOCIETAL BENEFITS CLAUSE ("SBC") AND)
ITS TRANSPORTATION INITIATION CLAUSE ("TIC"))

DECISION AND ORDER
APPROVING STIPULATION
DOCKET NO. GR20070504

Parties of Record:

Stefanie A. Brand, Esq., Director, New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel
Deborah M. Franco, Esq., on behalf of South Jersey Gas Company

BY THE BOARD:

On July 31, 2020, South Jersey Gas Company ("SJG" or "Company") filed a petition with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("Board" or "BPU") requesting approval to revise the rates pertaining to its Transportation Initiation Clause ("TIC"), and two (2) components of the Company's Societal Benefits Charge ("SBC"): the Remediation Adjustment Clause ("RAC") and the Clean Energy Program ("CLEP") ("July 2020 Petition").¹ By this Order, the Board considers a stipulation of settlement ("Stipulation") executed by SJG, Board Staff ("Staff"), and the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel ("Rate Counsel") (collectively, "Parties") intended to resolve the Company's requests related to the July 2020 Petition.

BACKGROUND

The SBC was created as a result of the Electric Discount and Energy Competition Act. SJG's SBC is comprised of a number of components: the RAC, the CLEP, the USF and the Lifeline Program charges. The RAC allows the Company to adjust its rates to recover reasonably incurred environmental remediation costs associated with the clean-up of its former manufactured gas plant ("MGP") sites, on a deferred basis, over a rolling seven (7) year period, with carrying charges tied to seven (7) year treasuries plus 60 basis points. The CLEP recovers costs associated with energy efficiency and renewable energy programs related to the New Jersey Clean Energy Program. The

¹ The Universal Service Fund and Lifeline components of the SBC are addressed in a separate proceeding, BPU Docket No. ER20060392. Accordingly, SJG proposed no changes to these specific components of the SBC within this filing.

USF and Lifeline Programs were established to help provide affordable electric and natural gas service to eligible New Jersey residential customers.

The TIC was designed to recover all reasonable and prudent development and operating costs relating to Electronic Data Interchange (“EDI”). The Board, by Order in Docket No. GX99030121 directed that EDI be implemented to allow information to be exchanged electronically between gas distribution utilities and sellers of gas to customers.

JULY 2020 PETITION

In the July 2020 Petition, SJG sought approval to increase its per therm RAC rate from \$0.048815 to \$0.050626, resulting in an annual revenue increase of \$1.0 million.² For the CLEP component, SJG sought approval to increase the rate from \$0.019265 to \$0.028475, resulting in an annual revenue increase of \$4.9 million. SJG further sought approval to decrease its TIC rate from \$0.001321 to \$0.000386, resulting in an annual revenue decrease of \$0.4 million. On a combined basis, the July 2020 Petition sought to increase the overall annual level of its SBC and TIC by \$5.5 million.

Through discovery, SJG updated the July 2020 Petition to include actual data through May 2020. Based upon the update, the data continued to support a combined annual increase of \$5.5 million.

Following publication of notice, telephonic public hearings were conducted on March 9, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.³ No members of the public attended the public hearings or submitted written comments.

STIPULATION

Upon review of the July 2020 Petition and discovery, the Parties executed the Stipulation, which provides for the following:⁴

6. The Company’s proposed per therm RAC rate component of \$0.050626 should be implemented and made final.
7. The Company’s proposed per therm CLEP rate component of \$0.028475 should be implemented and made final.
8. The Company’s proposed per therm TIC rate component of \$0.000369, updated per discovery response RCR-A-16, should be implemented and made final.

² All rates quoted herein include all applicable taxes.

³ Due to COVID-19 pandemic, public hearings were held telephonically.

⁴ Although described in this Order, should there be any conflict between this summary and the Stipulation, the terms of the Stipulation control, subject to the findings and conclusion in this Order. Paragraphs are numbered to reflect numbering in the Stipulation.

9. The combined RAC, CLEP and TIC rate changes result in a bill increase of \$1.01, or 0.72% for the average residential heating customer using 100 therms during a winter month.
10. The Parties agree that SJG's MGP remediation costs will remain subject to Board audit. SJG will continue to conduct an annual audit of the RAC to assess the validity of the expenses being charged to the RAC.
11. The Company represents that no MGP related properties were leased or sold during the RAC remediation period for which this RAC rate is established.
12. SJG also represents that the Stipulation does not include recovery of any administrative, legal, consulting or other costs associated with Natural Resource Damage ("NRD") related to MGP claims, or any costs associated with incentive compensation or pension costs incurred during the time period set forth in the July 2020 Petition.
13. Beginning with the RAC remediation year commencing August 1, 2019, NRD-related costs, as defined below, that are incurred by the Company, will be deferred in a regulatory asset account with carrying costs, pending a decision by the Board as to whether such costs are recoverable through the RAC. NRD-related costs are defined as compensation to the State of New Jersey for injury to its natural resources, above and beyond costs incurred to investigate, contain, or remediate former manufactured gas plant sites. NRD-related costs also include any administrative, legal, or consulting costs incurred by the Company associated with NRD claims being investigated by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, as well as any amounts paid by the Company to resolve such claims.
14. In accordance with the Board's December 2, 2020 order in Docket No. GM20020170, which approved the sale of certain property located in Bridgeton, New Jersey, the Company represents that it credited the RAC balance with the full tax assessed value of the Property in the amount of \$37,600. The Company acknowledges that it recorded the \$37,600 credit to the RAC in December 2020.
15. The Company agrees to provide a final reconciliation of its annual RAC factor recovery within ninety (90) days of the completion of each RAC recovery year, which reconciliation will include the calculation of actual sales volumes that recovered the RAC factor and the resultant net expenses or credit amount which is to be carried over to the next recovery year. Implementation and/or adjustments of the RAC factor is subject to the Parties' review of SJG's expenditures and reconciliation thereof in SJG's future RAC and/or SBC proceedings.

16. The Parties agree that the terms of the Stipulation shall be deemed to resolve all factual and legal issues relating to the determination of all amounts that were or could be included in the calculation of the Company's deferred RAC balance, except as described in Paragraph 12 of the Stipulation with respect to NRD-related costs and incentive compensation costs or pension costs.
17. The Company agrees that it will include in its future RAC filings responses to the minimum filing requirements ("MFRs") as set forth in Exhibit A to the Stipulation. At a minimum, the Company agrees to provide electronic copies of the filings and the MFRs to the Board, Rate Counsel, and the consultants to Rate Counsel.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The Board reviewed the record in this proceeding, including the July 2020 Petition and the attached Stipulation. The Board **HEREBY FINDS** that the Stipulation is reasonable, in the public interest, and in accordance with the law. Therefore, the Board **HEREBY ADOPTS** the Stipulation in its entirety, and **HEREBY INCORPORATES** its terms and conditions as though fully set forth herein.

The Board **HEREBY APPROVES** the Company's implementation of the following per therm rates: a RAC rate of \$0.050626, a CLEP rate of \$0.028475, and a TIC rate of \$0.000369 for service rendered on or after June 1, 2021. Based upon the Stipulation, the monthly bill impact on a typical residential heating customer using 100 therms in a winter month is an increase of \$1.01 or 0.72%.

The Board **HEREBY ORDERS** the Company to file the appropriate tariff sheets conforming to the terms and conditions of this Order prior to June 1, 2021.

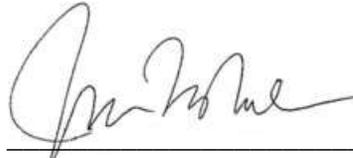
The Board **FURTHER ORDERS** that the NRD related costs should continue to be deferred until such time as the Board addresses the rate recoverability of NRD related costs via the RAC mechanism.

The Company's costs, including those related to the SBC and TIC, will remain subject to audit by the Board. This Decision and Order shall not preclude the Board from taking any actions deemed to be appropriate as a result of any such audit.

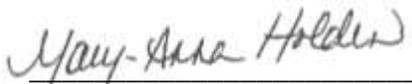
The effective date of this Order is May 7, 2021.

DATED: April 27, 2021

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
BY:



JOSEPH L. FIORDALISO
PRESIDENT



MARY-ANNA HOLDEN
COMMISSIONER



DIANNE SOLOMON
COMMISSIONER



UPENDRA J. CHIVUKULA
COMMISSIONER



ROBERT M. GORDON
COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:



AIDA CAMACHO-WELCH
SECRETARY

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF SOUTH JERSEY GAS COMPANY TO CHANGE THE
LEVEL OF ITS SOCIETAL BENEFITS CLAUSE ("SBC") AND ITS TRANSPORTATION
INITIATION CLAUSE ("TIC") - BPU DOCKET NO. GR20070504

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Deborah M. Franco, Esq.
VP, Rates, Regulatory & Sustainability

April 13, 2021

Aida Camacho-Welch
Office of the Secretary
NJ Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Re: In the Matter of the Petition of South Jersey Gas Company to Change the Levels of Its Societal Benefits Clause (“SBC”) and Its Transportation Initiation Clause (“TIC”) BPU Docket No. GR20070504

Dear Secretary Camacho-Welch:

Enclosed for filing in the above-referenced proceeding is a Stipulation executed by representatives of South Jersey Gas Company, the Staff of the Board of Public Utilities, and the Division of Rate Counsel. It is respectfully requested that the Board consider the Stipulation at its next agenda meeting.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah M. Franco".

Deborah M. Franco

DMF:caj
Enclosures

cc: See attached Service List (with enclosures)

**IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF SOUTH JERSEY GAS COMPANY
TO REVISE THE LEVELS OF ITS SOCIETAL BENEFITS CLAUSE (“SBC”)
AND ITS TRANSPORTATION INITIATION CLAUSE (“TIC”)
BPU DOCKET NO. GR20070504**

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**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION	:	BPU DOCKET NO. GR20070504
OF SOUTH JERSEY GAS COMPANY	:	STIPULATION OF
TO CHANGE THE LEVELS OF ITS	:	SETTLEMENT
SOCIETAL BENEFITS CLAUSE	:	
(“SBC”) AND ITS TRANSPORTATION	:	
INITIATION CLAUSE (“TIC”)	:	

APPEARANCES:

Deborah M. Franco, Esq., Vice President, Rates, Regulatory and Sustainability, for South Jersey Gas Company, Petitioner.

Felicia Thomas-Friel, Esq., Deputy Rate Counsel, and **Henry M. Ogden, Esq.**, Assistant Deputy Rate Counsel, **Maura Caroselli, Esq.** Assistant Deputy Rate Counsel, on behalf of the Division of Rate Counsel (**Stefanie Brand**, Director).

Terel Klein, Deputy Attorney General, on behalf of the Staff of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (**Gurbir S. Grewal**, Attorney General of New Jersey).

TO THE HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS OF THE BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES:

This Stipulation is intended to resolve the pending Societal Benefits Clause ("SBC") proceeding (hereinafter referred to as this "Proceeding") by which South Jersey Gas Company ("South Jersey" or "Company") seeks to increase the annual revenue level of its Societal Benefits Clause (“SBC”) through an increase in its Remediation Adjustment Clause (“RAC”), and an increase in its Clean Energy Program (“CLEP”) charge, both components of the SBC, as well as a decrease in its Transportation Initiation Clause (“TIC”). The parties to this proceeding are South Jersey, the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel (“Rate Counsel”), and the Staff of the Board of Public Utilities (“Staff”) (collectively, "Parties").

I. PROCEDURAL HISTORY

1. On July 31, 2020, consistent with N.J.S.A. 48:2-21, South Jersey filed a petition with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("Board") in Docket No. GR20070504 seeking approval of a \$5.5 million increase in the annual level of its SBC and TIC charges ("Petition"). The proposed net increase in recoveries for the period November 1, 2020 through October 31, 2021 total \$5.5 million comprised of the following: (i) a \$1.0 million increase to the RAC; (ii) a \$4.9 million increase to the CLEP; and (iii) a \$0.4 million decrease to the TIC.

2. In its Petition, South Jersey requested that: (i) the per therm RAC rate be increased to \$0.050626 from its current level of \$0.048815; (ii) the per therm CLEP rate be increased to \$0.028475 from its current level of \$0.019265; (iii) and the per therm TIC rate be decreased to \$0.000386 from its current level of \$0.001321.¹ The rates requested in the Petition were derived utilizing actual information for the period November 2019 through May 2020, and projected information for the period June 2020 through October 2021.

3. As stated in the Petition, the Universal Service Fund ("USF") and Lifeline components of the SBC ("USF/Lifeline") were addressed in a separate proceeding approving an interim State-wide natural gas per therm rate of \$0.011600, effective October 1, 2020. See I/M/O the 2020/2021 Annual Compliance Filings for the Universal Service Fund ("USF") Program Factor Within the Societal Benefits Charge Rate. On September 23, 2020, the Board approved interim USF Rates and Lifeline Rates in BPU Docket No. ER20060392.

4. Following proper notice, telephonic public hearings were held in this matter on March 9, 2021.² No members of the public were in attendance via telephone.

¹ All rates quoted herein include Sales and Use Tax.

² Public Hearings were conducted telephonically due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Discovery was propounded and answered by the Company.

II. STIPULATED TERMS

Based upon the terms and conditions set forth herein, the Parties **STIPULATE AND AGREE** as follows:

6. The Company's proposed per therm RAC rate component of \$0.050626 should be implemented and made final.

7. The Company's proposed per therm CLEP rate component of \$0.028475 should be implemented and made final.

8. The Company's proposed per therm TIC rate component of \$0.000369, updated per discovery response RCR-A-16, should be implemented and made final.

9. The combined RAC, CLEP and TIC rate changes result in a bill increase of \$1.01, or 0.72% for the average residential heating customer using 100 therms during a winter month.

10. The Parties agree that South Jersey's Manufactured Gas Plant ("MGP") remediation costs will remain subject to Board audit. South Jersey will continue to conduct an annual audit of the RAC to assess the validity of the expenses being charged to the RAC.

11. The Company represents that no MGP related properties were leased or sold during the RAC remediation period for which this RAC rate is established.

12. South Jersey also represents that this Stipulation does not include recovery of any administrative, legal, consulting or other costs associated with Natural Resource Damage ("NRD") related to MGP claims, or any costs associated with incentive compensation or pension costs incurred during the time period set forth in the Petition.

13. Beginning with the RAC remediation year commencing August 1, 2019, NRD-related costs, as defined below, that are incurred by the Company, will be deferred in a regulatory

asset account with carrying costs, pending a decision by the Board as to whether such costs are recoverable through the RAC. NRD-related costs are defined as compensation to the State of New Jersey for injury to its natural resources, above and beyond costs incurred to investigate, contain, or remediate former manufactured gas plant sites. NRD-related costs also include any administrative, legal, or consulting costs incurred by the Company associated with NRD claims being investigated by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, as well as any amounts paid by the Company to resolve such claims.

14. In accordance with the Board's December 2, 2020 order in Docket No. GM20020170, which approved the sale of certain property located in Bridgeton, New Jersey, the Company represents that it credited the RAC balance with the full tax assessed value of the Property in the amount of \$37,600. The Company acknowledges that it recorded the \$37,600 credit to the RAC in December 2020.

15. The Company agrees to provide a final reconciliation of its annual RAC factor recovery within ninety (90) days of the completion of each RAC recovery year, which reconciliation will include the calculation of actual sales volumes that recovered the RAC factor and the resultant net expenses or credit amount which is to be carried over to the next recovery year. Implementation and/or adjustments of the RAC factor is subject to the Parties' review of South Jersey's expenditures and reconciliation thereof in South Jersey's future RAC and/or SBC proceedings.

16. The Parties agree that the terms of this Stipulation shall be deemed to resolve all factual and legal issues relating to the determination of all amounts that were or could be included in the calculation of the Company's deferred RAC balance, except as described in Paragraph 12 above with respect to NRD-related costs and incentive compensation costs or pension costs.

17. The Company agrees that it will include in its future RAC filings responses to the minimum filing requirements (“MFRs”) as set forth in Exhibit A to this Stipulation. At a minimum, the Company agrees to provide electronic copies of the filings and the MFRs to the Board, Rate Counsel, and the consultants to Rate Counsel.

18. The Parties further acknowledge that a Board Order approving, rejecting, or modifying this Stipulation shall become effective upon the service of said Board Order, or upon such date after the service thereof as the Board may specify, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 48:2-40.

19. Following acceptance of this Stipulation by an Order of the Board, South Jersey will submit a Compliance Filing incorporating the final rates approved by the Board within ten (10) days of such approval.

III. MISCELLANEOUS

20. This Stipulation fully disposes of all issues in controversy in this proceeding, is consistent with law, and is in the public interest. This Stipulation represents a mutual balancing of interests, contains interdependent provisions and, therefore, is intended to be accepted and approved in its entirety. In the event that any provision of this Stipulation is not accepted and approved in its entirety by the Board, any Party aggrieved thereby shall not be bound to proceed with this Stipulation and shall have the right to litigate all issues addressed herein to a conclusion. More particularly, in the event that the Board, in any applicable order, does not adopt this Stipulation in its entirety, then any Party hereto is free to pursue its then available legal remedies with respect to all issues addressed in this Stipulation as though this Stipulation had not been signed.

21. This Stipulation shall be binding on the Parties for all purposes herein.

22. It is specifically understood and agreed that this Stipulation represents a negotiated agreement and has been made exclusively for the purpose of this proceeding. Except as expressly provided herein, the Parties shall not be deemed to have approved, agreed to, or consented to any principle or methodology underlying or supposed to underlie any agreement provided herein. This Stipulation shall not be cited as precedent except for the purpose of enforcing its terms. All rates are subject to audit by the Board. The Parties further acknowledge that a Board Order approving, rejecting, or modifying this Stipulation shall become effective upon the service of said Board Order, or upon such date after the service thereof as the Board may specify, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 48:2-40.

23. This Stipulation may be executed in as many counterparts as there are signatories to this Stipulation each of which counterparts shall be an original, but all of which shall constitute one and the same instrument.

WHEREFORE, the Parties hereto do respectfully submit this Stipulation and request that the Board issue a Decision and Order approving it in its entirety, in accordance with the terms hereof, as soon as reasonably possible.

SOUTH JERSEY GAS COMPANY



By: _____
Deborah M. Franco, Esq.
Vice President, Rates, Regulatory & Sustainability

GURBIR S. GREWAL
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY
Attorney for the Staff of the Board of Public Utilities



By: _____
Terel Klein
Deputy Attorney General

STEFANIE A. BRAND
DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF RATE COUNSEL



By: _____
Maura Caroselli, Esq.
Assistant Deputy Rate Counsel

Dated: 4/13/, 2021