

SECRETARY'S RECORD, NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Commission, ) Application No. C-5094  
on its own motion, to determine )  
the surcharge for the statewide )  
Telecommunications Relay System ) ORDER SETTING SURCHARGE  
to be effective July 1, 2020. )  
)  
) Entered: April 7, 2020

BY THE COMMISSION:

The above-captioned proceeding was opened by the Nebraska Public Service Commission (Commission), on its own motion, to determine the appropriate surcharge for the statewide Telecommunications Relay System (TRS) for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2020. The Commission is charged by statute to hold an annual public hearing, prior to April 1 of each year, to determine the amount of surcharge necessary to carry out the provisions of the Telecommunications Relay System Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 86-301 to 86-315. The surcharge is used to fund the TRS and the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP) for the coming year.

An order opening the above-captioned docket and setting the hearing was entered on February 19, 2020, and mailed to all interested parties. Notice of the proceeding appeared in The Daily Record, Omaha, Nebraska, on February 21, 2020.

E V I D E N C E

On March 24, 2020, a public hearing was held in this matter in the Commission Hearing Room in Lincoln, Nebraska, and through videoconference. Commission exhibits numbered 1-5 were offered and accepted. Sallie Dietrich appeared on behalf of the Commission staff.

Tami Richardson-Nelson, the Chair of the TRS Advisory Committee, submitted a letter to the Commission on January 26, 2018, reporting that the Advisory Committee voted to recommend to the Commission that the surcharge remain at its current level of three cents (\$.03) for the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020, based on the forecasts available to the Committee at its meeting on January 31, 2020. This letter was accepted into the record as Exhibit 4.

Steve Stovall, Staff Accountant for the Commission's Communication Department, testified on behalf of the Commission staff. Mr. Stovall offered his pre-filed written testimony, marked as Exhibit 5, which included four attachments. The attachments to the written testimony are as follows:

- 1) Selected Historical Statistics for Four Years beginning July 2015;
- 2) Forecast Assumption #1, showing the surcharge remaining at \$.03 for the next fiscal year;
- 3) Forecast Assumption #2, showing the surcharge reducing to \$.02 for the next fiscal year; and
- 4) Selected Historical Statistics, including session and conversation minutes.

Based on his analysis, forecasts, and experience as the Commission's administrator of the TRS program, Mr. Stovall recommended that the surcharge remain at three cents (\$.03) for the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020.<sup>1</sup> The revenue generated from a two-cent surcharge would not be sufficient to maintain a reasonable reserve balance to sustain the program.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Stovall noted that the TRS fund also funds the NSTEP program, and that the fund needs to hold a reserve sufficient to pay for outstanding NSTEP vouchers.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Stovall noted that his accounting for outstanding NSTEP vouchers has changed over the course of the past fiscal year to account for vouchers issued but not yet redeemed.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Stovall further noted that in the course of the past fiscal year, the TRS fund has moved to an online remittance system, and the TRS fund has not yet received a bill for that system but will need to pay for it in the future.<sup>5</sup>

No further witnesses were called, and the hearing was closed following Mr. Stovall's testimony.

#### O P I N I O N   A N D   F I N D I N G S

The Commission finds that the recommendations of Mr. Stovall and of the TRS Advisory Committee are reasonable and that the surcharge should remain at three cents (\$.03) for the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Transcript at 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 29; see also Exhibit 5, Attachment 3.

<sup>3</sup> Transcript at 25-27.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 30-31.

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that, pursuant to the Telecommunications Relay System Act, the TRS surcharge should be set at three cents (\$.03) per telephone number or functional equivalent, beginning July 1, 2020.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that all affected telecommunications companies are hereby required, beginning July 1, 2020, to collect a three cent (\$.03) surcharge per month on each telephone number or functional equivalent in Nebraska. Except for wireless carriers, the surcharge shall be only collected on the first one hundred telephone numbers, or functional equivalents, per subscriber.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

*Bob Johnson*  
*Crystal Hoadley*  
*Tim Schram*  
*Don Watson*

*Mary Kadden*

Chair

ATTEST:

*Michael S. Hyatt*

Executive Director