

**COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

In the Matter of:

ELECTRONIC INVESTIGATION OF THE)
PROPOSED POLE ATTACHMENT TARIFFS OF)
RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE)
CORPORATIONS)

CASE NO. 2022-00106

**TAYLOR COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CORPORATION'S
RESPONSE TO COMMISSION STAFF'S FIRST REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Taylor County RECC (“Taylor County” or the “Cooperative”), by counsel, hereby files its Response to Commission Staff’s First Requests for Information, issued in the above-captioned case on April 21, 2022.

FILED: May 5, 2022

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REQUEST NO. 1: Refer to the Joint Response of Rural Electric Cooperative Corporations to Objections filed by KBCA and AT&T, page 7, regarding the reservation of space.

- a. Explain what limits, if any, the language in your proposed tariff places on the utility's ability to reserve space with references to relevant tariff language and statutes and regulations, if applicable.
- b. Explain specifically whether the ability to reserve space is intended to be limited to space for equipment necessary to provide electric service.

RESPONSE:

- a. The Cooperative's pole network is a unique asset, as it must be shared with third parties in a nondiscriminatory manner consistent with law. *See* 807 KAR 5:015 Section 2; KRS 278.030. The issue of reservation of space is fundamentally one of access, which is addressed both generally and specifically throughout the regulatory framework and the proposed tariff. The Cooperative's ability to reserve space on its own infrastructure is entirely necessary to satisfy its reasonably anticipated service needs, but also tempered by its general inability to deny access without appropriate cause, *see, e.g.*, 807 KAR 5:015 Section 4(2)(b)(5); Proposed Tariff, Article IV(C)(3)(ii) (consistent with 807 KAR 5:015 Section 4(10) and requiring denial to be specific, include all relevant evidence and information supporting the decision, and explain how the evidence and information relate to a denial of access). Moreover, the Proposed Tariff promotes transparency and permits Licensees to request documentation to validate the need for any future space that may be

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reserved by the Cooperative. *See* Proposed Tariff, Article VIII(A)(v). Though the Cooperative's pole network at all times remains the Cooperative's own vital infrastructure, any pole owner which abuses its rights to its poles by refusing reasonable access in accordance with law can be held to account under presently-available remedies.

Typically, 9' of supply space is reserved for single phase and multiphase tangent poles, and 16.5' of supply space is reserved for multiphase vertical poles. Should special appurtenances be required on a pole or the needs of the Cooperative require it, our proposed tariff provides opportunity for the electric utility to choose to install a taller pole than standard for anticipated future use requiring additional supply space. As stated in Article VIII(A)(v), Taylor County will be transparent in providing evidence of future plans as requested.

b. The ability to reserve space is intended to be limited to space for equipment necessary to provide electric service.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 2: Refer to the Joint Response of Rural Electric Cooperative Corporations to Objections filed by KBCA and AT&T, page 8, regarding penalties for violations other than unauthorized attachments.

- a. Identify how often such penalties are expected to be imposed per year and the amount of revenue expected to be generate from them.
- b. Explain whether the penalty would be imposed on a per pole basis and, if so, explain whether there would be any limit to the penalties that could arise from a single practice, such as an improper means of attachment repeated on multiple poles.
- c. Explain why the imposition of the penalty is permissive (i.e., “Cooperative may impose”) and how that would be imposed on a non-discriminatory basis.
- d. Describe the types of issues this penalty is intended to prevent.

RESPONSE:

a. It is the hope and expectation that the Cooperative imposes no penalties; however, the Cooperative routinely observes occurrences of code violations ranging from inadequate clearance to improper installation and construction practices. Cooperatives do not have the resources, nor in many cases expertise or equipment, to perform corrections to communication equipment. Without the pole-owner having some other form of recourse like monetary penalties, there is little incentive for attachers to ensure safe and appropriate attachment and to timely and effectively remediate violations. Penalties would be imposed when violations are detected in accordance with the timelines described in the proposed

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tariff Article VIII Part B. The intention of the penalty is not to create a revenue stream (and no significant revenue stream is anticipated), but the Cooperative must ensure it has the reasonable tools available to ensure the applicable rules are followed.

b. Penalties are intended to be imposed on a per pole basis. No limits are anticipated since the actual impacts to the utility are expected to be on a per pole basis, and each violation requires remediation.

c. The permissive “may” was employed to avoid a situation, *e.g.*, where an attacher is taking good-faith action to remedy a violation but is still technically in violation. The Cooperative believes that it may reasonably employ penalties in a discretionary, but nondiscriminatory, manner (recognizing, of course, that any unreasonable or discriminatory imposition of penalties could subject the Cooperative to a complaint case available under law).

d. Examples of issues that would warrant a penalty include mid-span ground or conductor clearance violations, encroachment into the communication worker safety zone, failure to properly install guys/anchors, installations inside the supply space, and improper grounding (when applicable). The overall desire is to prevent improper connections that could pose a safety risk, a reliability risk to those who utilize the facilities, or any other risks to the facilities. The penalty is intended to discourage substandard attachment practices and to incent the offending entity to correct the violation in a timely manner to ensure the facility can continue to be operated in a safe and reliable manner.

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REQUEST NO. 3: Refer to the Joint Response of Rural Electric Cooperative corporations to Objections filed by KBCA and AT&T, pages 12–13, regarding the definition of attachment. Explain how attachers would be charged for overlashing based on the definition of attachment in the proposed tariff.

RESPONSE: Overlashing is intended to remain subject to code compliance and safety standards, like all attachments, but it is not the intention of the Cooperative to charge an annual rental rate for overlashed facilities.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 4: Refer to the Joint Response of Rural Electric Cooperative Corporations to Objections filed by KBCA and AT&T, pages 15–16, regarding the definition of “Supply Space.” Explain whether the requirement that the initial attachment be one foot above the required ground clearance was included, in part or in whole, to account for a drop in the height of the line across the span length. If so, explain why the one-foot drop was used (as opposed to some other amount).

RESPONSE: It appears there is a misunderstanding with respect the pertinent language. It is not the intention of the Cooperative to require an initial attachment be placed one foot above the lowest possible point that provides appropriate ground clearance, but rather at the lowest possible point that provides appropriate ground clearance. The reference to “one foot” can be eliminated from the final tariff.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 5: Refer to the Joint Response of Rural Electric Cooperative Corporations to Objections filed by KBCA and AT&T, pages 20–21, regarding the cost of safety inspections.

- a. Explain what circumstances would generally justify a finding of “reasonable cause to believe code violations or unsafe conditions (or other violations of ARTICLE III) exist on its system.”
- b. Explain how such safety inspections would differ from pole inspections required by 807 KAR 5:006, and explain whether they would be conducted in conjunction with such inspections or any other required system inspection.
- c. Explain how the cost of such safety inspections would be separated from other operation and maintenance costs and how such costs, if any, would be allocated to specific attachers.

RESPONSE:

- a. Various circumstances could result in the determination of reasonable cause, including the observation of a potential code violation, safety risk, reliability risk, or other issue reported by field personnel or others while working in the vicinity of the subject facility, during a routine inspection, or from an inspection during or following a service interruption. Additionally, if the Cooperative identified a trend in the construction practices of a single attacher or multiple attachers involving, *e.g.*, mid-span ground or conductor clearance issues, encroachment into the communication worker safety zone, failure to properly install guys/anchors, installations inside the supply space, or improper

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grounding, then a safety inspection may be deemed appropriate to ensure the safety and reliability of the electric distribution system is not compromised. While we make effort to follow up and perform inspection of new attachments when we are notified of attachment completion, attachers do not always provide those notices of completion.

b. Routine pole inspections conducted pursuant to 807 KAR 5:006 generally focus on the integrity of the pole, cross arms, insulators, conductors, guy wires and anchors, and similar infrastructure required to maintain electric reliability and safe system operation. While these inspections certainly include attention to third-party attachments, the primary focus is on “electric facilities...including insulators, conductors, meters, and supporting facilities...for damage, deterioration, and vegetation management...[,]” as contemplated by regulation. *See* 807 KAR 5:006 Section 26(4)(b)(4). Safety inspections outlined in the Proposed Tariff are intended to specifically focus on third-party attachments and the issue(s) that gave rise to the inspection.

c. All costs associated with safety inspections will be separately captured through specific account coding and allocated to the relevant attacher(s) first by project code or other identifier, and then proportionally among the relevant attacher(s) based on number of attachments inspected, consistent with the Proposed Tariff.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 6:

- a. Identify each account and subaccount in which the costs of utility poles in service are recorded.
- b. Provide a narrative description of the costs that are recorded in each such account, including a description of the type and vintage of poles for which costs are recorded in the account and a description other plant, if any, for which costs are recorded in the account.
- c. Provide an Excel spreadsheet with all formulas, rows, and columns unprotected and fully accessible showing the plant in service balance of each such account at the end of each of the last five fiscal years.

RESPONSE:

- a. The account in which costs of utility poles in service are recorded is account number 364.00 – Poles, Towers, and Fixtures.
- b. Account number 364.00 – Poles, Towers, and Fixtures include the installed cost of plant used to convert electric power from transmission voltage and to distribute that electric power to the ultimate consumer. Taylor County RECC accounts for the type of pole installed as follows: 35 foot & under, 40 to 45 feet, and 50 feet & over. Other plant items included in account number 364.00 are anchor-guy, bracket transformer cluster, and cross-arm.
- c. See attached Exhibit 6(c).

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 7:

- a. Identify each account and subaccount in which accumulated depreciation for poles in service is recorded.
- b. Provide a narrative description of how the accumulated depreciation in each such account is calculated.
- c. Identify the corresponding plant account or accounts for each account in which accumulated depreciation for poles is recorded.
- d. Provide an Excel spreadsheet with all formulas, rows, and columns unprotected and fully accessible showing the balance of each such account at the end of each of the last five fiscal years.

RESPONSE:

- a. The account in which accumulated depreciation for poles in service is recorded is account number 108.60 – Accumulated Provision for Depreciation-Distribution Plant.
- b. Provision has been made for depreciation on the basis of the estimated lives of assets, using the straight-line method. Under this system, the cost of a fixed asset is amortized over its useful life in equal installments. The expense incurred in each period is determined by dividing the cost of the asset less the estimated net salvage value by the estimated number of periods in which the asset is to be used.
- c. The corresponding plant account for which accumulated depreciation for poles is recorded is account number 403.60-Depreciation Expense-Distribution Plant.

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- d. See attached Exhibit 7(d).

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 8:

- a. Identify the depreciation rates currently used to calculate depreciation expense for each account containing utility pole costs.
- b. Identify the case in which each such depreciation rate was set.
- c. Identify the useful lives of the poles used to calculate each such depreciation rate.

RESPONSE:

- a. The depreciation rate currently used to calculate depreciation expense for each account containing utility pole cost is three percent (3%) annually.
- b. The case in which Taylor County RECC's depreciation rate was set was PSC Case No. 2012-00023.
- c. 33 years.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 9: Identify the total number of distribution poles in your system, and provide a breakdown of those poles based on the year they were installed.

RESPONSE: The Cooperative has approximately 60,000 distribution poles and is presently engaged in a review of its plant to ensure the most accurate information. A breakdown of poles based on the year installed is unavailable.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 10: Identify the total number of transmission poles in your system, and provide a breakdown of those poles based on the year they were installed.

RESPONSE: None.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 11: Describe in detail the current plan or policy regarding the inspection and replacement of aging or damaged poles in your system, and provide a copy of any such plan or policy that has been memorialized in writing.

RESPONSE: Drive-by inspections of the Cooperative's service area shall be conducted annually. Ground patrols will visually inspect and sound poles on at least 10% of our system each year. The Cooperative will complete sounding and inspection of each pole on a ten-year cycle. A copy of the plan is attached as Exhibit 11.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 12: State whether new attachers will be subsidizing other utility customers by paying the full cost to replace a utility pole that is not a red-tagged pole when the replacement pole has a longer useful life than the pole that is replaced, and explain each basis for the response.

RESPONSE: Consideration of impact must look beyond mere accounting. As the Commission would expect, the Cooperative operates on an annual budget to ensure costs are incurred and managed in a prudent way. When new attachers seek to attach to Cooperative poles, this is a request that occurs outside of the annual budgeting process. If a pole is replaced due to the new attacher's request, this replacement is an unforeseen, unbudgeted action taken to allow the attacher to comply with NESC clearance requirements. It is not related to the useful life of the pole. If a pole is red-tagged, the Cooperative does not and would not request the new attacher to pay any portion of the cost to replace the pole, as this replacement is a budgeted maintenance cost based on the Cooperative's inspection of the pole.

If a utility were required to pay even a portion of the costs of new poles it neither intended nor budgeted to acquire, it would negatively impact the Cooperative and other areas of the utility's budget, likely deferring investments intended for the benefit of the Cooperative's members. Put plainly, the Cooperative should not be forced to expend funds on its infrastructure that it would not spend *but for* the attacher(s), as doing so is counter not only to the letter and spirit of the pole attachment framework but also the basic autonomy of an electric utility owned by the members it serves.

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REQUEST NO. 13: Explain how it would affect capital planning and the ability to complete other necessary projects if utilities were required to cover the cost of every pole that had to be replaced to accommodate a new attacher less the undepreciated value of the pole being replaced.

RESPONSE: If utilities were required to cover the cost of every pole that had to be replaced to accommodate a new pole less the undepreciated value of the pole being replaced, it would make capital planning virtually impossible. Utilities have no knowledge of the plans of attachers until they submit a permit request, if they submit a permit request at all. Utilities undertake detailed system analysis to plan their capital budgets. In the case of electric cooperatives, this takes the form of a 4-Year Construction Work Plan, which is used as a blueprint for each year's annual capital budget. According to the Commission's Pole Attachment Regulation (807 KAR 5:015), the response time from permit request to make-ready estimate is seventy (70) days. There is no way to plan a capital budget based on the available information and timelines to accommodate a new attacher.

Please also see the response to Request No. 12.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO 14: Describe in detail the issues with pole loading that arise from overlashing, including how wind and ice affect pole loading, and explain the technical bases for such contentions.

RESPONSE: Overlashing creates multiple issues. First, while the new cable is being lashed onto the existing, the yanking and pulling of the existing cable causes intermittent forces that may exceed designed capacity. Stresses are always expected transversely (due to wind) and downwardly (due to cable weight and ice). Longitudinal stresses also occur during overlashing and can result in bowing poles, creating out-of-sag distribution routes, which can result in clearance issues. Because the overlashing process is not usually a steady one, electrical outages often occur during the process due to these longitudinal stresses and the slapping of electrical conductors.

Overlashing also creates additional loading on the structures due to the additional weight of the cable and lashing wire, the additional wind and ice loading, and the additional loading on the guys and anchors. Too often when overlashing occurs, the existing anchors of the attachers fail due to the shallowness of the usual anchors, resulting in the electrical utility's anchors, guys, and poles being forced to take-on the unanticipated additional load.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 15: Explain how the amount of the administrative review fee for completeness was determined, and provide any documentation or analysis supporting the amount of that fee.

RESPONSE: There is no administrative review fee for completeness in the Proposed Tariff.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 16: Explain how the estimated pole survey costs in your proposed tariff were determined, and provide any documentation or analysis supporting the estimate.

RESPONSE: Taylor County has contracted the permitting out to a third party. The survey charge of \$30 per pole was the estimated price given by the contractor. This is based on estimated man hour cost, overheads, travel expenses and technology costs for an average permit request. There is no mark up from the contractor's estimate.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 17: Provide justification for the unauthorized attachment fee of five times the current annual fee.

RESPONSE: Attachers must be incentivized to follow the pole attachment permitting process required by the Commission's regulation and detailed in the Cooperative's tariff. The unauthorized attachment fee is intended to create an incentive for the attacher to follow the permitting process. A fee of five times the current annual fee is designed to work in concert with the pole attachment inspection provisions of the proposed tariff, which give the parties the right to conduct a field inspection of attachments once every five years. Under this design, an attacher that does not submit a permit request is required to pay the equivalent of annual rent for the past five years; of course, an unauthorized attachment may have been in place for more or less than five (5) years, but the Cooperative established a reasonable fee of 5x consistent with its justified desire to recover unpaid costs and disincentive unpermitted, dangerous attachment activity.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 18: Regarding payments not made on time:

- a. Explain the reasoning and justification for charging interest at 1.5 percent per month instead of establishing a late payment charge.
- b. Explain whether the interest charged on any balance that remains unpaid would be simple or compound interest.
- c. Explain why 807 KAR 5:006, Section 9(3)(h), which states that a late payment charge may be assessed only once on a bill for rendered services, would not apply to the interest charge.

RESPONSE:

- a. The interest proposed to be charged a late-paying Licensee is functionally equivalent to a late payment charge, it simply varies in amount based on when the Licensee satisfies its debt to the Cooperative. The escalating amount of the charge is, of course, intended to incentivize payment and thereby help avoid stagnant receivables which can financially impact the Cooperative, especially in times of economic turbulence. Because payments due from attachers can vary from very small to very large, the Cooperative believes a percentage-based late payment charge would be more broadly applicable to create appropriate on-time payment incentives for all types of payments from attachers.
- b. Simple.
- c. As discussed above, the Cooperative proposes a late payment charge calculated based on a 1.5% simple interest rate. The charge is assessed only once (when payment is

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made), and in light of the simple nature of the interest, “[a]dditional late payment charges [are not] assessed on unpaid late payment charges[,]” as required by the pertinent regulation. *See* 807 KAR 5:006, Section 9(3)(h)(3). Moreover, it should be acknowledged that the cited regulation was designed and is most appropriately applied in connection with residential electric service, not ancillary services sought by sophisticated commercial counterparties.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 19:

- a. Explain what the performance bond required by Article XXI and Appendix D of the proposed tariff is intended to secure.
- b. Explain whether there is a market for such performance bonds, including specifically whether there is a market for performance bonds that secure “the payment by the Licensee of any damages, claims, liens, taxes, liquidated damages, penalties, or fees due to Cooperative.”
- c. Explain why it would not be duplicative to require an attacher to maintain performance bonds that secure “the payment by the Licensee of any damages, claims, liens, taxes, liquidated damages, penalties, or fees due to Cooperative” while also maintaining the required insurance coverages and listing the utility as an additional insured on the policies.
- d. Explain how the amount of the performance bond was determined.

RESPONSE:

- a. The performance bond required by Article XXI and Appendix D is intended to cover the cooperative's costs to safely remove the attacher's facilities from the cooperatives poles in the event that attacher ceases to operate or otherwise fails or refuses to address its obligations under the Proposed Tariff.

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- b. Upon information and belief, the required bonds are available in the marketplace, and will generally secure all amounts owed as a consequence of a failure to perform by a principal.
- c. If an attacher is no longer a going concern, remedy through an insurance claim is not typically feasible. Moreover, insurance claims typically take far longer to resolve, and they are often more prone to dispute than payment of a performance bond. As a result, the performance bond provides a more efficient solution.
- d. The amount of the performance bond was determined by estimating the average cost per attachment for the cooperatives' crews to remove stranded attachments left on the cooperative's poles.

Witness: Mike Skaggs, E&O Manager

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REQUEST NO. 20: For Shelby Energy only, refer to the proposed tariff, PSC KY No. 9, Original Sheet No. 302.33, Appendix A – Application/Request to Attach, and Original Sheet No. 302.36, Appendix C – Bill of Sale. Explain why the Application/Request to Attach and the Bill of Sale have not been included in the proposed tariff and is instead only available upon request.

RESPONSE: Not applicable.

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REQUEST NO. 21: For Big Rivers only, refer to the proposed tariff, P.S.C. KY No. 27, Original Sheet No. 38.12, Make-Ready. Explain whether Big Rivers requires pole attachment customers to prepay survey costs. If so, explain why the proposed tariff does not include a per pole estimate of survey costs.

RESPONSE: Not applicable.

**ELECTRONIC INVESTIGATION OF THE PROPOSED POLE ATTACHMENT
TARIFFS OF RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CORPORATIONS
CASE NO. 2022-00106**

**TAYLOR COUNTY RECC'S RESPONSE TO
COMMISSION STAFF'S FIRST REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

REQUEST NO. 22: For Nolin RECC only, refer to the proposed tariff, PSC KY No. 2, Original Sheet No. 36, Appendix A – Application/Request to Attach, and Original Sheet No. 40, Appendix C – Bill of Sale. Explain why the Application/Request to Attach and the Bill of Sale have not been included in the proposed tariff and is instead only available upon request.

RESPONSE: Not applicable.

**ELECTRONIC INVESTIGATION OF THE PROPOSED POLE ATTACHMENT
TARIFFS OF RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CORPORATIONS
CASE NO. 2022-00106**

**TAYLOR COUNTY RECC'S RESPONSE TO
COMMISSION STAFF'S FIRST REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

REQUEST NO. 23: For East Kentucky Power Cooperative (EKPC) only:

a. Refer to the March 18, 2022 cover letter to EKPC's proposed tariff filing. Explain why Commission approval of the proposed tariff is required prior to developing an application for attachment owners to submit and a contract for any approved attachments.

b. Refer to EKPC's proposed tariff, P.S.C. No. 35, Original Sheet No. 102. Explain why a per pole estimate of survey costs is not included in the proposed tariff seeing as requesting attachment owners are required to prepay estimated modification costs.

c. Refer to EKPC's proposed tariff, P.S.C. No. 35, Original Sheet No. 102. Explain why the attachment charges and terms and conditions of service are not included in the proposed tariff and why they will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

RESPONSE: Not applicable.

