19004/18-E-0503

PSC Acts to Help Build Shelter for Homeless Veterans in Utica
— Commission Helps Reduce Costs to Build Critically Needed Mohawk Valley Facility —

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved a request by Utica Center for Development Inc. to waive certain metering requirements for a veterans' outreach center in Utica that will provide 18 apartments for homeless veterans. Under Commission rules, residential buildings are required to have individual electric meters unless the rule is waived.

 "The rules requiring individual meters in residential buildings makes perfect sense unless they cause unintended consequences," **said Commission Chair John B. Rhodes.** "Without the waiver, Utica Center would not be able to serve these veterans, and that is not acceptable. Therefore, the Commission finds that it is in the public interest to waive the Commission's individual residential living unit metering requirements so that shelter can be provided to these veterans."

The Utica Center is renovating the third and fourth floors of its Central New York Veteran's Outreach Center at 726 Washington St., Utica to include 18 living units. The company requested the waiver of the individual metering requirements for this building, because the project is part of an effort to provide transitional housing for homeless veterans.

The building will include a total of 14 efficiency units and four family units. Each of the efficiency units are self-contained and consist of an accessible toilet room and living space with a small kitchenette and room for a bed. The family units have the same layout, but with a separate bedroom. The developer said that the residents will be transient and will be provided a variety of services, including case management, assistance with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, employment, legal aid, and other supportive services.

In its decision, the Commission noted that it has granted waivers of the individual metering requirement to facilities that provide financial support for a specific population in similar situations. The developer noted that the building utilizes high-efficiency gas boilers, not electric heat. The individual living units are not air conditioned.

As indicated by the Utica Center, the building is designed for use solely by homeless veterans, so a price signal from an individual meter is unlikely to produce a meaningful conservation response since the developer will not charge the homeless veterans for any of the benefits provided by it, including the cost of their stay at the facility, nor for the other assistance and programs offered at the facility.

In light of this, the installation of individual meters, whether direct utility meters or submeters, for each living unit would not advance the goals which underlie the Commission's policy that new individual living units in multi-family buildings be individually metered and would reduce the resources available to Utica Center to accomplish its mission to assist homeless veterans in getting shelter and obtaining critically needed benefits. Finally, the project will enhance economic activity in the surrounding community, both temporarily through its construction, and in the longer term through job creation at the facility and among the residents.

Today's decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number 18-E-0503 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.

-30-